



Ruminating on the nature of intelligence: Personality predicts implicit theories and educational persistence



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ABSTRACT

Research in schools has shown that those who hold Incremental Theories of Intelligence (i.e. intelligence can grow and improve) generally outperform those who hold Entity Theories of Intelligence (i.e. intelligence is 'fixed' and cannot improve). Recently, there have been attempts to establish a stronger theoretical explanation for individual differences in educational success, by relating the Big Five's Conscientiousness to higher school attainment. In this study, we aimed to demonstrate further relationships between Implicit Theories of Intelligence and a well-known neurologically based theory of personality, namely Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory (RST). A sample of 319 adults completed personality measures of RST, the Big Five and Implicit Theories of Intelligence, as well as a proxy measure for educational persistence (highest academic qualification achieved). The results showed that participants who hold an Incremental (growth) Theory of Intelligence score higher on the RST Behavioural Approach System traits oriented toward future reward and the Big Five's Conscientiousness. Those that hold an Entity (fixed) Theory of Intelligence score higher on RST Behavioural Inhibition System and the Big Five Neuroticism measure. The paper discusses the implications of these relationships and explores the benefits of the simultaneous use of both theoretically underpinned and applied measures of individual differences.

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1. Introduction

Individuals' approaches to learning and their understanding of intelligence is highly varied. This variance can make the work of teachers and the education system difficult. Because of this, there have been efforts to develop measures that detect and predict individuals' beliefs regarding learning and intelligence. For example, Dweck (1999) developed measures of 'Implicit Theories of Intelligence'. Dweck reported that individuals' generally hold Incremental (intelligence can continually improve) or Entity (intelligence is fixed from birth) beliefs in intelligence. Implicit Theories have previously described individual differences in learning styles (such as Entity beliefs being related to avoiding challenges) but there has not been thorough research on the *source* of Implicit Theories. More recently, data driven trait models, such as the Big Five's Conscientiousness (organisation in thought and behaviour), have been used to predict educational success (Dumfart & Neubauer, 2016). This is important because personality traits have come to be considered behaviour 'generators' (Möttus, 2016) and could be the 'source' of Implicit Theories. In this study, we test for a relationship between Big Five and

Implicit Theories measures and also ask if another popular, theoretically driven, personality theory (Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory [RST], see Corr, 2016) relates to Implicit Theories. RST is interesting as it has rarely been used to quantify applied behaviours, but it explains behaviour in approach and avoidance terms, much like the behaviours associated with Implicit Theories.

In education settings, research has demonstrated that academic performance and persistence are often related to an individual's belief about the malleability of their intelligence, referred to as Implicit Theories of Intelligence (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; De Castella & Byrne, 2015; Dweck, 1999; Renaud-Dubé, Guay, Talbot, Taylor, & Koestner, 2015; Robins & Pals, 2002). Dweck (1999) proposed that individuals tend to 'theorise' that intelligence is either an 'entity', in that it is fixed and unchanging, or that intelligence grows 'incrementally' and can be developed through effort and persistence in the face of challenge (typically, the former are referred to as 'entity theorists' and the latter as 'incremental theorists').

More recently, Implicit Theories of Intelligence have been used to explain malleability in social perception (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997; Hong, Chiu, Dweck, & Sacks, 1997) and business acumen (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2007). It is a robust finding that incremental theorists tend to outperform entity theorists (Chen & Pajares, 2010; Dupeyrat & Mariné, 2005; Rhodewalt, 1994). Further, interventions that train incremental theorising have been shown to benefit school children's

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attainment (Blackwell et al., 2007). The literature demonstrates that, typically, those that believe in growth, *do* grow and develop; and, thus, they show superior performance in a range of educational, work and social tasks (Burnette, O'Boyle, VanEpps, Pollack, & Finkel, 2013). Research demonstrates that those with an entity theory tend to avoid difficult tasks since failure is a threatening outcome (punishment), rather than a learning opportunity with an eventual positive outcome of learning (reward). As Dweck and Leggett (1988) notes, the behavioural consequences of Implicit Theories are similar to 'approach' and 'avoidance' learning styles. In Huang's (2012) meta-analysis it was found (across 172 samples) that approach learning style was associated with higher academic achievement. As such, it could be the case that a better understanding of Implicit Theories in the context of individual differences approach and avoidance behaviours could help explain the relationship between Implicit Theories and academic behaviour.

The idea of individuals being divided based on their tendencies to engage (or approach) and disengage (or avoid) with opportunities for reward in their environment is not unique to implicit theory research. In fact, neuropsychology literature on personality differences in approach/avoidance behaviours explores the same phenomenon via 'Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory' (RST, for reviews see Corr, 2004; Leue & Beauducel, 2008). RST describes the processes by which an individual may show trait tendencies toward *approach* or *avoid* actions in relation to an aspect of one's environment. The three main systems of RST are the Behavioural Inhibition System (BIS, which inhibits approach to a potentially risky or punishing stimulus in the environment); the Behavioural Approach System (BAS, which drives a person to seek rewards from the environment); and the Flight-Fight-Freeze System (FFFS, which drives avoidance of aversive aspects of the environment). The various RST questionnaires have been tested in the psychological literature: in neuropsychology (Sutton & Davidson, 1997) and risk taking (such as; Voigt et al., 2009) research. However, RST has rarely been examined in applied settings. Specifically there is no thorough literature considering how RST may be manifest in an applied setting, such as a school.

We include also the Big Five theory of personality (McCrae & Costa, 1987) in our study. This theory of personality is the most frequently cited and used theory in personality psychology. It is important to note that Eysenck and Eysenck's (1978) work on Extraversion and Neuroticism is arguably the source of both the Big Five (see McCrae & John, 1992), as well as RST (see Corr, 2004). The Big Five is frequently used in contemporary education research, with Conscientiousness being a predictor of success (Dumfart & Neubauer, 2016; Zhang & Ziegler, 2016). Interestingly, recent research has shown that goal orientation (which features in both RST and Implicit Theories) mediates the influence of Conscientiousness at predicting success (Debicki, Kellermanns, Barnett, Pearson, & Pearson, 2016). Research has also shown that the Big Five can relate to education avoidance and achievement (Komarraju & Karau, 2005). It is also known that adults higher in Conscientiousness pursue higher levels of education (Almlund, Duckworth, Heckman, & Kautz, 2011). If we find that Conscientiousness correlates with goal directed RST traits (as has been shown elsewhere; Corr & Cooper, 2016) and Implicit Theories of Intelligence, it could be the case that BAS and Incremental Theories explain part of the variance in the pursuit of higher education. Thus we argue that the Big Five measure provides a psychometric and conceptual link between RST and Implicit Theories of Intelligence, making it worthy of inclusion here.

What is clear is that both measures - one theoretically underpinned and the other informed by application - are conceptually similar and could be related to the same neurologically-based phenomena that underpin learning and intelligence. The current study explores this notion. It may well be the case that the applied implicit theory measures share psychometric properties with the more theoretically underpinned and lab bound RST approach. Exploring these links could provide a theoretical and neuropsychological underpinning for Implicit Theories of

Intelligence and provide RST with an indication of its value in an applied setting (e.g. education), which is rare in current RST research.

We expect those with more Entity Theories of Intelligence to be more vulnerable to anxiety and more hesitant to act, for fear of failure (demonstrated by the RST BIS or Big Five Neuroticism). We would expect those with more Incremental Theories of Intelligence to be those who engage with more diligently and pursue higher levels of learning (demonstrated by the RST BAS, Big Five Conscientiousness and measures of educational persistence).

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were recruited from the general population using online advertising distributed to volunteers who had signed up to UK University research databases, with encouraged snowball sampling. They received an automated summary of their personality traits in return for participation. Our sample ($N = 319$) had an average age of 31.16 years ($SD_{Age} = 11.27$; range 18–70 years of age; 8 participants withheld response), were predominantly female (79.20%) and most had achieved at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent (38.30% bachelors, 29.70% various postgraduate qualifications).

2.2. Procedure and materials

The study was conducted online, using Qualtrics online survey platform. After providing informed consent, participants reported their age, sex and highest level of educational attainment - highest level of education served as a proxy for academic persistence. We coded the highest level of education into four groups: engagement with pre-16 years old or *Mandatory Education*, such as 'GCSEs' (which we code as 1), engaged with post-16 or *Further Education*, such as 'A levels' (coded as 2), engaged with *Undergraduate* degree or equivalent (3) or pursued *Postgraduate* study, in masters, doctoral or equivalent (4).

The first personality measure completed by the participants was the RST-PQ (Corr & Cooper, 2016). The response format for the RST-PQ is a four point scale with the anchors being *Not at all* (1), *Slightly* (2), *Moderately* (3) and *Highly* (4). We computed the mean response to each of the RST-PQ traits to show average endorsement of the behaviours. The RST-PQ measures an individual's dispositional anxiety and rumination (BIS, 23 items, in our dataset the reliability of this factor was $\alpha = 0.93$), avoidance of aversive stimuli (FFFS, 10 items, $\alpha = 0.77$), tendency to respond aggressively (Defensive Fight, 8 items, $\alpha = 0.81$) and there are four subscales measuring the Behavioural Approach System (BAS): Reward Reactivity (tendency to spontaneous behaviour; 10 items, $\alpha = 0.77$); Impulsivity (fast and unplanned responding; 8 items, $\alpha = 0.70$); Goal-Drive Persistence (persistence in striving to achieve goals; 7 items, $\alpha = 0.85$); and Reward Interest (pursuit of potentially rewarding experiences; 7 items, $\alpha = 0.80$).

Second, participants completed the measures of Implicit Theories of Intelligence. We used two tools commonly in use: Dweck's (1999) four question for adult implicit theories of intelligence and Abd-El-Fattah and Yates' (2006) Implicit Theories of Intelligence Scale (ITIS). This scale has been shown to have adequate internal reliability. Participants responded to both of these measures using the recommended scale of *Strongly Disagree* (1), *Slightly Disagree* (2), *Slightly Agree* (3) and *Strongly Agree* (4). We averaged the responses to the questions on Dweck's scale to produce a value between 1 and 4 for each participant, where 4 is an endorsement of fixed theories of intelligence and 1 is a sign of a more growth theory of intelligence (in our dataset the reliability of this factor was $\alpha = 0.93$). Abd-El-Fattah and Yates' ITIS has two subscales, one measuring Entity Theories of Intelligence (7 items, $\alpha = 0.62$) and one measuring Incremental (7 items, $\alpha = 0.71$). Again we use the average score for all items in both of these subscales (where 4 is strongly agreeing with that sub-factor and 1 is strongly disagreeing). We also use this

value to compute a 'Net Implicit Theory' measure by subtracting the fixed theory sub-factor from the growth theory subscale which produces a value showing a scale of preference of fixed implicit theories (-3) to growth implicit theories ($+3$). Thirdly, participants responded to a ten item measure of the Big Five (Rammstedt & John, 2007). Although there are potential risks in losing validity when using short-form measures (Smith, McCarthy, & Anderson, 2000) we include the Big Five in this study only to investigate how it may relate to our two main measures of interest. This is important as there is research showing that Conscientiousness relates to educational success (Dumfart & Neubauer, 2016) just as there is with Implicit Theories (Blackwell et al., 2007), so there may be similarities in the concept being measured by the ITIS and the Big Five inventories. The Big Five Inventory-10-item short scale was used to collect responses to Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience and Extraversion. Participants responded to the two items per dimension using a scale of *Disagree strongly* (1), *Disagree a little* (2), *Neither agree nor disagree*, (3) *Agree a little* (4) and *Agree strongly* (5). The relevant items were reverse scored and an average response to each trait was calculated so that the final value is between 1 and 5 and shows the extent to which the participant generally agreed with the trait.

3. Results

3.1. Implicit Theory of Intelligence measures

Our study has four possible indices of Implicit Theories of Intelligence: Dweck's (1999) measure, the Entity Theory score from the Implicit Theory of Intelligence Scale (ITIS), the Incremental Theory score from the ITIS, and the Net Theory score from the ITIS. We investigated in the relationship between the four measures, with the interest of finding one, overall measure that could represent Implicit Theories of Intelligence going forward. The Net Theory score from the ITIS was a good reflection of the responses to the Incremental Theory ($r_s(319) = 0.77$, 95% CI [0.72, 0.81]) and Entity Theory ($r_s(319) = -0.81$, 95% CI [-0.85, -0.76]) subscales of the ITIS that it was derived from. The Net Theory measure from the ITIS also showed the strong, expected, correlation with Dweck's (1999) measure of entity theory endorsement ($r_s(319) = -0.61$, 95% CI [-0.68, -0.53]). The Net Theory score reflects both the subscales of the ITIS and Dweck's measure and is computed from a wider pool of information (all 14 items of the ITIS have an influence on Net Theory). To avoid running tests with multiple

variables with the same function, we opt for the most analytically conservative choice. As Net Theory is an efficient reflection of the subdomains of the ITIS and is typical of the literature precedent of a unidimensional theory of implicit theories (Dweck, 1999), we use Net Theory as our main dependent variable of implicit theories.

3.2. Implicit Theories and Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory

The correlations between the factors of the RST-PQ and the ITIS Net score are presented in Table 1. The strongest correlation between the RST-PQ's traits and Net Theory was with BIS: those who showed more Entity Theories of Intelligence were more prone to rumination and anxiety. The RST-PQ scales of FFFS and Defensive Fight did not correlate with Net Theory.

There were also small, but notable, correlations between Net Theory and the 'future' oriented BAS behaviours. These were BAS-Goal-Drive Persistence, related to dedication to achieving a future aim and BAS-Reward Interest, active pursuit of a future reward. There was a weaker correlation between Net Theory and BAS-Reward Reactivity and no correlation with BAS-Impulsivity. The overall picture being that a more incremental view of intelligence (i.e. that intelligence can change over time) is related to trait interest in achieving a future reinforcement.

3.3. Implicit Theories and the Big Five

Given the aforementioned correlation between BIS and Net Theory and the conceptual similarities between BIS and Neuroticism, it should be no surprise that Neuroticism is the strongest correlate of Net Theory in the Big Five (see Table 1). It is interesting that Conscientiousness also shows a notable correlation with Net Theory, a finding which parallels the Net Theory correlation with future oriented BAS reported above. Net Theory showed smaller correlations with Agreeableness and Extraversion and no correlation with Openness to Experience. In summary, it could be said that a growth theory of intelligence relates to diligence of behaviour and thought, and emotional stability.

3.3.1. 'Future' BAS and Conscientiousness

Here, we also have data to highlight the relationship between BAS-Goal-Drive Persistence and BAS-Reward Interest with Conscientiousness. We have post hoc reasons to explore this relationship due to the similar pattern in the correlations with Net Theory as above. It is not a main focus of this paper to explore the relationship between the RST-

Table 1

The correlations (as Spearman's rho with bias corrected 95% CI in square brackets) between the Implicit Theories of Intelligence Scale, the Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory Personality Questionnaire and the Big Five Inventory-10.

	ITIS	C	A	N	O	E
ITIS	–	0.20 [0.08, 0.30]	0.17 [0.07, 0.28]	–0.27 [–0.38, –0.16]	0.04 [–0.07, 0.17]	0.16 [0.05, 0.27]
BIS	–0.37 [–0.47, –0.27]	–0.36 [–0.47, –0.25]	–0.24 [–0.34, –0.13]	0.71 [0.65, 0.76]	0.01 [–0.10, 0.12]	–0.26 [–0.36, 0.17]
FFFS	–0.11 [–0.23, 0.00]	–0.01 [–0.12, 0.11]	–0.12 [–0.23, 0.00]	0.46 [0.36, 0.55]	–0.08 [–0.19, 0.04]	–0.01 [–0.12, 0.10]
DF	0.10 [–0.00, 0.22]	–0.06 [–0.17, 0.06]	–0.21 [–0.32, –0.11]	–0.10 [–0.21, 0.01]	0.05 [–0.07, 0.15]	0.22 [0.12, 0.32]
BAS-GDP	0.18 [0.06, 0.28]	0.42 [0.33, 0.50]	0.13 [0.03, 0.24]	–0.16 [–0.27, –0.05]	0.08 [–0.04, 0.19]	0.21 [0.11, 0.32]
BAS-RI	0.17 [0.06, 0.27]	0.36 [0.27, 0.45]	0.16 [0.05, 0.27]	–0.36 [–0.46, –0.26]	0.14 [0.03, 0.25]	0.31 [0.19, 0.41]
BAS-RR	0.16 [0.05, 0.26]	0.01 [–0.11, 0.13]	0.10 [–0.02, 0.21]	0.00 [–0.12, 0.12]	0.19 [0.08, 0.31]	0.31 [0.21, 0.42]
BAS-Imp	0.04 [–0.07, 0.15]	–0.21 [–0.33, –0.10]	–0.12 [–0.24, –0.01]	–0.00 [–0.11, 0.11]	0.12 [0.01, 0.22]	0.36 [0.26, 0.44]

Notes:

ITIS = Implicit Theory of Intelligence Scale, where a more positive score is a more Incremental Theory and a more negative score is a more Entity Theory.

C = Conscientiousness, A = Agreeableness, N = Neuroticism, O = Openness to Experience, E = Extraversion.

BIS = Behavioural Inhibition System, FFFS = Fight/Flight/Freeze System, DF = Defensive Fight, BAS-GDP = Behavioural Approach System-Goal-Drive Persistence, BAS-RI = Behavioural Approach System-Reward Interest, BAS-RR = Behavioural Approach System-Reward Reactivity, BAS-Imp = Behavioural Approach System-Impulsivity.

PQ and the BFI-10. However, here we will highlight the interesting correlation between Conscientiousness and BAS-Goal-Drive Persistence (see Table 1) and BAS-Reward Interest. These correlations are very different to the correlations with Conscientiousness and the more ‘immediate’ BAS factors. BAS-Reward Responsiveness shows only one correlation with Conscientiousness and BAS-Impulsivity negative correlates with Conscientiousness. This result would suggest that Implicit Theory of Intelligence, BAS-Goal-Drive Persistence and BAS-Reward Interest are more ‘future’ oriented traits, linked to Conscientiousness and belief in growth and incremental improvement, whereas BAS-Reward Reactivity and BAS-Impulsivity are more ‘immediate’ oriented traits.

3.4. Convergence between the three measures

Another way to look at the shared variance between the three measures used in this study is to factor analyse the subscale scores. An orthogonal (Varimax rotation) factor analysis using Net Theory, all the RST-PQ factors and the Big Five suggested a five factor solution (eigenvalue = 1.00, explaining 67.35% of variance). This forms a strong group of ‘Nervousness’ factors: Neuroticism (0.86), BIS (0.76) and FFFS (0.75), with Net Theory appearing to belong to this group (−0.36). Net Theory also shows a similar relationship (0.32) with a ‘Determination’ factor: Conscientiousness (0.78), BAS-Goal-Drive Persistence (0.83) and BAS-Reward Interest (0.65). Other factors generated by this analysis included a factor centred around BAS-Impulsivity (0.78) and its conceptual cousins of BAS-Reward Reactivity (0.68) and Extraversion (0.68), and a factor showing Agreeableness (0.83) and disagreeableness in the form of Defensive Fight (−0.65). Openness to Experience strongly loads by itself (0.92). This factor analysis shows how Net Theory is a belief that reflects both goal persistence as well as anxiety. Fig. 1 presents the results of this factor analysis graphically.

3.5. Academic persistence

We also investigated the relationship between our ‘academic persistence’ measure and the personality metrics used in this study. This is not a measure of ‘intelligence’ or academic success, per se, but it is interesting to explore which of our measures of typical performance predict persistence with optional education. There was no correlation between age and academic persistence ($r(319) = 0.03, 95\% CI [-0.09, 0.14]$), but, as our measure could be sensitive to the age of participant (an older participant has had more time to pursue higher levels of education), we control for age of participant, using partial correlations, in the following tests. There was a reasonable positive correlation between BAS-Goal-Drive Persistence ($r_p(313) = 0.24, 95\% CI [0.13, 0.34]$) and BAS-Reward

Interest ($r_p(313) = 0.22, 95\% CI [0.11, 0.33]$) on academic persistence. There was a negative effect of BAS-Impulsivity on academic persistence ($r_p(313) = -0.21, 95\% CI [-0.31, -0.10]$). All other personality measures in this study showed smaller relationships with academic persistence (all $r_p < 0.10$). Altogether this would suggest that the future-oriented aspects of BAS (persistence of a desired future reward) are the better predictors of pursuing higher education. Whereas, impulsivity disinclines one from pursuing higher education.

The variation in the personality scores of those who have only engaged in Mandatory education was much larger than the other groups, and is important to note. This pattern existed in the measures that did not predict academic persistence too. This would suggest that personality predicts persistence but not disengagement from education (see Fig. 2).

4. Discussion

This paper investigated convergence between measures of Implicit Theories of Intelligence (Abd-El-Fattah & Yates, 2006; Dweck, 1999), the Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory traits (Corr, 2016; Corr & Cooper, 2016) and the Big Five personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1987; Rammstedt & John, 2007). We find that those who have more of an Incremental Theory of Intelligence, the belief that intelligence is malleable and can improve with practice, is positively related to RST BAS measures of activity in pursuit of goals and Big Five Conscientiousness. We also find that those who hold more Entity Theories of Intelligence, the belief that intelligence is the fixed attribute of a person and they cannot improve, is associated with anxiety and rumination prone traits, such as the RST’s BIS and the Big Five’s Neuroticism. These results demonstrate agreement in theoretically derived personality tools, such as the RST-PQ, and tools created from investigating individual differences in applied settings, such as in the education system with the ITIS.

Here, we present evidence of implicit theories being associated with core personality traits. It is generally understood that implicit theories are a pattern of behaviours that are learned and can be intervened with (see Blackwell et al., 2007). As such, it is logical to infer that long-term, stable, personality traits (Cobb-Clark & Schurer, 2012) may be, in part, generators of flexible implicit theories. This is important to consider when it has been suggested that the implicit theories could be a consequence of teacher’s (Mueller & Dweck, 1998) and parents’ (Gunderson et al., 2013) choice of praise. It could be the case that Implicit Theories of Intelligence are also intrinsic theories of intelligence which can then be intervened on.

The results of the current study could inform a more holistic approach to investigating personality influences in applied settings. For example, the results presented here could suggest that there are

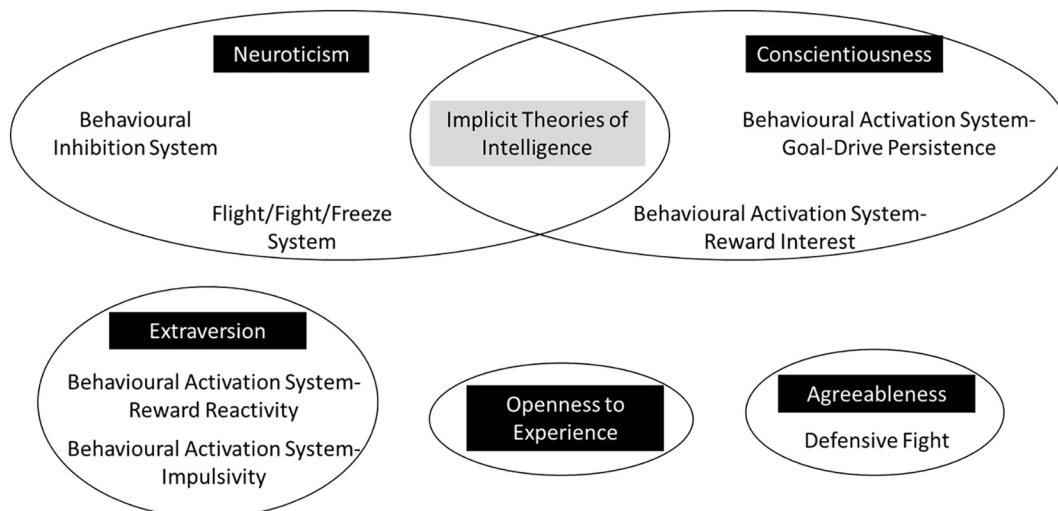


Fig. 1. A graphical representation of the factor analysis which grouped the personality traits in this study.

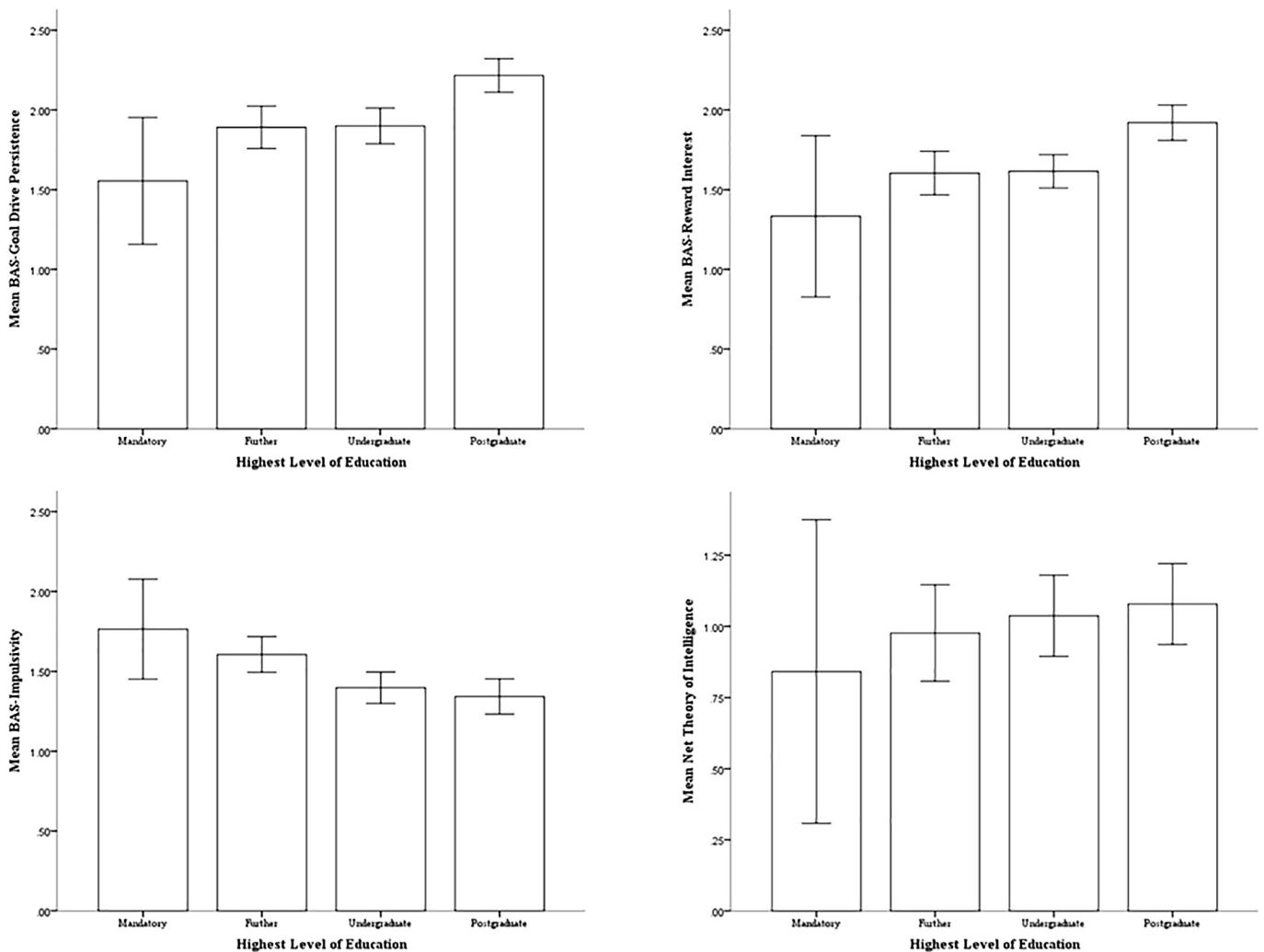


Fig. 2. The mean personality traits (with 95% CI) of participants reporting different levels of education. Clockwise from the top left these figures show two positive, one neutral and one negative relationship between personality and academic persistence. The personality traits are Goal-Drive Persistence (top left), Reward Interest (top right), Net Theory of Intelligence (bottom right) and Impulsivity (bottom left).

neurological substrates related to beliefs in education. Future research could investigate the functioning of the post-central gyrus (known to correlate to some measures of BAS, Sander et al., 2005) or the middle frontal gyrus in the lateral prefrontal cortex (known to be related to Conscientiousness, DeYoung, 2010) in learners who are planning learning-related behaviours. A better understanding of the neurology of Implicit Theories could help inform interventions and therapies to benefit those who do not believe they can improve or change.

Our paper also benefits RST research too. Whilst RST has a strong background in investigating individual differences neuropsychology (such as; Sutton & Davidson, 1997), there are benefits to considering behaviours outside the typical laboratory environment as informative to defining personality traits. In this study we find that persistence with education was mainly predicted by BAS measures. This behaviour and others in educational settings could help understand how RST personality traits manifest in everyday life. It has been suggested that personality psychology has moved away from its origins in trying to understand the everyday behaviour of individuals (Furr, 2009). A potential consequence of this can be seen in the fact that popular theories of personality show weak (albeit reliable) predictions of job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). There is some evidence that more narrow sub-domains of larger theories, for example the Big Five, can predict applied behaviours (Paunonen & Ashton, 2001), however for personality psychology to be of value to applied settings, future research should continue to

bring together more theoretically derived measures of personality with those typically used in applied settings.

Our measure of 'academic persistence' was a simple one, but it produced results which should be discussed. The more long term focused aspects of BAS (Goal-Drive Persistence and Reward Interest) were the only predictors of academic persistence, with those who chose to engage with further stages of optional education being those who were more persistent in their achievement of future reward. Perhaps what was more interesting about this finding is the spread of personality traits in those who had chosen to engage with Mandatory education alone. This suggests that there are more important factors than these personality traits in choosing to pursue optional education.

Overall our results also suggest the need for a more broad theory-to-classroom approach to understanding engagement with learning. Approach and avoidance behaviours, are essential components in many theories of individual differences beyond RST, such as attachment theory (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004) and regulatory focus theory (Keller & Bless, 2008). Our choice was to focus on a theory of approach and avoidance behaviour which would allow future research to relate neurological individuality with behavioural individual differences (see Corr, 2016), however future work could focus on these other theories of approach and avoidance. The use of many converging theories on one important issue will be of great benefit to the literature on educational engagement and theories of intelligence.

5. Conclusion

There are similarities in measures of theoretically defined measures of personality (such as the RST-PQ) and those derived from applied settings (such as Implicit Theories of Intelligence). This research should encourage further collaboration between applied and research psychology, with the hope of sharing methods and everyday behaviours which would benefit research and applied assessment of personality traits.

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