

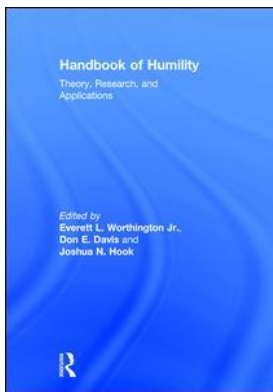
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Part II

PREDICTORS, CORRELATES, AND
SEQUELAE OF HUMILITY



PERSONALITY PREDICTORS AND CORRELATES OF HUMILITY

*Joseph Leman, Megan C. Haggard,
Benjamin Meagher, and Wade C. Rowatt*

Humility is a dimension of personality correlated with a range of social behaviors. We begin with a review of the HEXACO model of personality and honesty-humility associations with psychopathy, risk-taking, and antisocial processes in the workplace. We then focus on positive associations between humility and prosocial process like cooperation and forgiveness. Finally, we synthesize research using other measures of humility, discuss a few measurement issues, and consider future directions of social-personality research about humility. Honesty-humility (HH) emerges as a sixth dimension of personality in many languages around the world (Ashton, Lee, & Goldberg, 2004; Ashton et al., 2004; Brocklebank, Pauls, Rockmore, & Bates, 2015; Lee & Ashton, 2004) and uniquely predicts a range of psychological traits and behaviors. Among researchers who study humility, however, there are legitimate questions about the construct validity of the HEXACO “honesty-humility” dimension (Davis et al., 2010), in part because honesty and humility are measured together and because humility and modesty are assumed to be synonymous. One can make a reasonable argument that humility is distinct from honesty and modesty, but that is not our task here. Rather, our primary aim is to provide some background on the HH facet and synthesis about what HH and other measures of humility predict (or do not predict). As reviewed later, we find measures of HH and humility predict a range of fascinating positive psychological qualities.

Method of the Review

To locate articles, we searched *PsychInfo* in August 2015 for articles with both terms “humility” and “personality” anywhere in the text. This search returned 433 results. We then subjected each result to two criteria. The first criteria was that use of “humility” and “personality” in the text be related to the topic of this chapter and not refer to something else (e.g. current events or post-modern

literature). The second was that the article be in a journal with an impact factor above 1. One hundred thirty-three articles met both of these criteria.

Humility within the HEXACO Model and Initial Psychometric Studies

Humility Definition

The majority of studies we review take a trait-based approach that assumes humility to be a relatively stable, enduring quality. Generating a widely accepted definition of humility is difficult given its overlap with related qualities like honesty, modesty, and arrogance. Within the HEXACO model of personality, Honesty and Humility are combined into one overarching factor (HH) with four facets or subscales: Sincerity, Fairness, Greed Avoidance, and Modesty, with the latter two facets comprising the Humility portion of HH.

Initial Development of HEXACO

Prior to the twenty-first century, substantial research converged to support a basic view of personality with five underlying factors—Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness—which comprise the Big Five (Goldberg, 1990) or Five-Factor Model (McCrae & Costa, 1987) of personality. A sixth factor that includes humility can be found in several languages (Dutch, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Polish; Ashton et al., 2004; Brocklebank et al., 2015; Lee & Ashton, 2004). In German, for example, the sixth factor was labeled “sincerity/boastful” (Ashton et al., 2007), “trustworthiness” in Italian (Ashton et al., 2006), and “integrity” in Hungarian (Boies, Yoo, Ebacher, Lee, & Ashton, 2004). These results parallel a psycho-lexical investigation of 1,710 English words in which the sixth factor emphasized trustworthiness, modesty, lack of greed, and lack of slyness and was named Honesty-Humility (Ashton et al., 2004).

The emergence of the sixth factor of Honesty-Humility (HH hereafter) was best seen after rotating the Big Five original factors of Agreeableness and Emotional Stability (Ashton et al., 2004). Ashton and Lee showed that by adding a sixth factor, HH, content related to having an even temper and a lack of irritability shifted from the Emotional Stability factor to the Agreeableness factor, and items involving bravery, toughness, and sentimentality made the opposite shift from Agreeableness to Emotional Stability (Ashton & Lee, 2005).

NEW HEXACO-PI MEASURE (LEE & ASHTON, 2004)

The emergence of the HH factor and shift of content between Agreeableness and Emotional Stability factors led to the development of the HEXACO-PI (Lee & Ashton, 2004). The HH scale has been found to have high estimated internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$) and was correlated with Conscientiousness ($r = .28$) and Agreeableness ($r = .21$; Lee & Ashton, 2004). Lee and Ashton

emphasize the HEXACO factor rotation has an empirical basis that is at least as plausible as that of the traditional Big Five axes, while the higher variation in individual facets and the addition of the HH factor allow for greater predictive ability for certain dispositions (Lee & Ashton, 2004).

EARLY CONSTRUCT VALIDATION

Ashton and Lee conceptually tested their new measure by comparing two facets from NEO-PI-R Agreeableness (Straightforwardness and Modesty) and the new HH factor to predict social adroitness and self-monitoring. These constructs were picked because they involve deceit and affectation without rudeness and hostility, and thus more accurately discriminate HH from aggression and other related Five-Factor Model (FFM) facets. Not only did HH better predict these constructs, but the correlation between HH and Agreeableness was primarily driven by the Straightforwardness and Modesty facets (Ashton & Lee, 2005). In a similar study, Ashton and Lee (2008b) compared the Big Five and Five-Factor Model to HH in the prediction of criterion variables seductiveness, unethical business decisions, and sexual quid pro quo. HH outperformed the older models and also beat out a proxy factor made from the facets of the Five-Factor Model that are most correlated with HH, leading the authors to conclude that materialistic and delinquent tendencies are better predicted by HEXACO.

Lee et al. (2005) compared the Big Five to HEXACO for 10 traits found by Paunonen and Jackson (2000) to have low loadings on Big Five models. HH accounted for substantial variation ($r = .65$) in the first unrotated factor of 10 supernumerary traits. Thus, the authors concluded that HH subsumes aspects of some personality traits that lie just out of Big Five status, further cementing its importance as a domain of personality (Lee, Ogunfowora, & Ashton, 2005).

Ashton and Lee point out the similarities between the HH and Agreeableness factor with regard to reciprocal altruism (Trivers, 1971). HH involves fairness and sincerity, whereas Agreeableness involves tolerance and forgiveness, all conceptually involved in social interactions with conspecifics and at play in reciprocal altruism (Ashton & Lee, 2007). Furthermore, the authors theorize that HH is inversely related to negative phenomena like crime, sexual abuse, materialism, power seeking, etc. Specifically, risk of social maladjustment is higher when HH is low and combined with low Conscientiousness (impulsivity), low Agreeableness, (angry), or low Emotionality (fearlessness and sentimentality) (Ashton & Lee, 2008a).

Correlates with Honesty-Humility

Negative Correlates of Honesty-Humility

Although humility is often construed as a positive quality, it has been the focus of researchers who investigate the darker side of human nature (Furnham,

Richards, & Paulhus, 2013; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Next we review studies in which largely negative traits are predicted by (or potentially overlap with) more general personality traits, such as neuroticism, agreeableness, and HH (Ashton, Lee, & Goldberg, 2004).

The Dark Triad

One recent contribution to the study of antisocial personality traits comes from Paulhus and Williams (2002), who coined the phrase “dark triad” to describe three basic, aversive attributes: (a) *psychopathy*, characterized by reckless impulsivity and callousness towards others; (b) *Machiavellianism*, characterized by being manipulative and self-serving when interacting with others; and (c) *narcissism*, characterized by feelings of entitlement, grandiosity, and a desire for social admiration. Paulhus and Williams (2002) originally characterized these traits as conceptually distinct but linked by what they called a “disagreeable core.” However, subsequent research employing the HEXACO model indicates this core is characterized less by low Agreeableness than low levels of HH (Jonason & McCain, 2012; Lee & Ashton, 2005, 2014; Lee et al., 2013). This discovery is notable, as Ashton and Lee (2007) proposed the key distinction between HH and Agreeableness is their respective association with either active or reactive beliefs and behavior. Whereas Agreeableness entails beliefs about whether one can or will be exploited by others, HH represents one’s motives and beliefs about successfully exploiting others.

Thus, the common element linking psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism appears to be this proactive, antisocial tendency to pursue one’s own needs and interests irrespective of others. Consistent with this theoretical claim, a pair of studies (Lee & Ashton, 2005; Lee et al., 2013) found that HH and the common element of the Dark triad were nearly identical in terms of variance, with latent correlations averaging near -0.90 for both self and observer reports. This finding suggests that the HEXACO model provides a more parsimonious personality measurement than measuring the Five-Factor Model with dark triad traits (cf. Aghababaei, Mohammadtabar, & Saffarinia, 2014) (Lee & Ashton, 2014).

Psychopathy is conceptualized as a constellation of antisocial thoughts, behaviors, and emotions, including low empathy, minimal affect, high impulsivity, and exploitativeness (Hare, 1991). HH shows a consistently negative association with psychopathy, whether it has been measured using the Hare (1991) Psychopathy Checklist (de Vries & van Kampen, 2010; Lee & Ashton, 2005), or a brief, four-item subscale of the Dirty Dozen measure (Aghababaei et al., 2014; Jonason & McCain, 2012), although the magnitude of the correlation has generally been stronger with Hare’s method. Moreover, Lee et al. (2013)

found similar patterns of correlations between HH and psychopathy regardless of whether the measures were collected through self-report or observer report. Of the individual facets constituting HH (fairness, sincerity, greed avoidance, and modesty), both Lee and Ashton (2005) and Jonason and McCain (2012) found fairness to be most strongly correlated with psychopathy, although all four facets showed the expected negative relationship.

Machiavellians possess a highly pragmatic, duplicitous, and self-serving social strategy characterized by a willingness to manipulate others and a belief that the ends justify the means. Several studies reveal negative correlations between HH and a few different measures of Machiavellianism and related constructs, such as the Mach-IV scale (Lee & Ashton, 2005), items from the International Personality Item Pool (de Vries & van Kampen, 2010), the brief four-item Dirty Dozen subscale (Aghababaei et al., 2014; Jonason & McCain, 2012), and both self and observer reports (Lee et al., 2013). Similar to psychopathy, the HH facets of fairness and sincerity most strongly correlate with Machiavellianism and the grandiose component of narcissism.

Antisocial Behavior in the Workplace

HH is inversely related to a range of undesirable workplace behaviors (Lee, Ashton, & de Vries, 2005; Lee, Ashton, & Shin, 2005; Lee, Gizzarone, & Ashton, 2003; O'Neill et al., 2013). For example, HH correlates negatively with sexual harassment proclivities (Lee, et al., 2003); workplace delinquency in Australian, Dutch, and Canadian samples (Lee et al., 2005); and general delinquency (Dunlop, Morrison, Koenig, & Silcox, 2012). O'Neill et al. (2013) found low levels of HH were associated with a greater willingness to lie about their levels of agreeableness during pre-employment personality tests, increasing the probability of being hired on false pretenses.

Risk Taking and Status Seeking

One potential explanation for the relationship between HH and these types of deviant workplace behaviors is the association between low HH and a willingness to engage in high-risk behaviors as a means of enhancing one's own status (Ashton, Lee, Pozzebon, Visser, & Worth, 2010). Interestingly, individuals low in HH not only appear to have greater expectations about the benefits of risky behavior, they also evaluate these behaviors as being less risky—a finding demonstrated both attitudinally (Weller & Tikir, 2011) and behaviorally (Weller & Thulin, 2012). Fairness and greed avoidance facets in particular were predictive of risk seeking in circumstances that involved either trying to achieve high gains or avoid potential losses (Weller & Thulin, 2012). Thus, low HH appears to be

characterized both by a greater sensitivity for opportunities to enhance one's status and a greater aversion to possible losses of status (Ashton et al., 2010).

More broadly, this tendency to seek and attempt to maintain high status among those low in HH is also manifested interpersonally in other ways. For example, Lee et al. (2013) found self- and peer-reported low HH predicted a number of attitudes related to acquiring social status and resources, including power (e.g., social dominance orientation and desire for power), money (materialism and conspicuous consumption), and sex (short-term mating strategies). Low HH also predicts a number of antisocial mate retention strategies, such as emotional manipulation, jealousy induction, and threatening violence against rivals (Holden, Zeigler-Hill, Pham, & Shackelford, 2014). These types of threatening behaviors also extend to interactions with peers. For example, in Dutch and Canadian samples, HH was negatively correlated with all facets of antagonism from the personality inventory for the DSM-5, which includes manipulateness, deceitfulness, and callousness (Ashton, Lee, de Vries, Hendrickse, & Born, 2012). Book, Volk, and Hosker (2012) also found that HH correlated negatively with both reactive and instrumental forms of aggression, and it (but not Agreeableness) predicted bullying frequency after controlling for these forms of aggression. Across all these studies is a common element of HH correlating negatively with motivations to acquire greater status and resources at the expense of others.

Humility and Positive Traits

Complementing evidence of inverse associations between humility and dark traits, we find the presence of humility corresponds with bright traits linked to prosociality. Consistent with the theorized relationship between HH and reciprocal altruism, persons lacking HH could be expected to exploit others or treat them unfairly, whereas honest-humble persons are expected to be more cooperative and helpful, even when they could exploit (Ashton & Lee, 2007).

Cooperation

Several studies indicate HH predicts cooperation. For example, self-reported HH correlates with fair resource allocation (Hilbig, Zettler, & Heydasch, 2012) and cooperation in a prisoner dilemma game (Zettler, Hilbig, & Heydasch, 2013). A few studies reveal general humility predicts helpfulness. Among American college students, self-reported humility and self-reported helpfulness correlated positively ($r = .27$) and humility continued to predict self-reported helpfulness when the Big Five personality dimensions and impression management were statistically controlled ($\beta = .22$; LaBouff et al., 2012). Note: humility

was measured with the 16 “humility” items (Greed Avoidance and Modesty) ($\alpha = .88$) from the 32-item HH subscale of the HEXACO-PI.

LaBouff et al. (2012) also found implicit humility relative to arrogance predicted the total number of hours participants volunteered to help a student in need. A combined variable (made up of both implicit and explicit measures of humility) also predicted helping behavior when social pressure to help was low (LaBouff et al., 2012). That humility predicted helping even when social pressure to help was low (but not when social pressure to help was high) suggests humble persons may help more when altruistic motives are evoked. De Vries et al. (2009) found an inverse relationship between HH and egoism among Dutch participants (even when the Big Five were controlled). Hilbig et al. (2012) found social value orientation mediates the effect of HH on cooperativeness. Taken together, we conclude humility does predict cooperation and helping as theorized by Ashton and Lee (2007) and that specific motivations to help or social values could mediate the relationships between humility and helping.

Apology and Forgiving

Among Australian and Canadian participants, self- and other-reported HH accounted for unique variability in the proclivity to apologize (Dunlop et al., 2015). HH also correlates with several measures of trait forgiveness (Shepherd & Belicki, 2008).

Harmony at Work and Schools

Among Germans and Americans, inverse relationships were found between HH and counterproductive work and academic behaviors (Marcus, Lee, & Ashton, 2007), even when controlling for integrity and the other five personality dimensions. HH correlates inversely with insensitivity as well (van Kampen, 2012), which has important implications for workplace harmony.

Self-Control and Disgust

Among Dutch college and community participants, HH accounted for unique variability in self-reported self-control (De Vries et al., 2013) and both moral disgust and to a lesser degree sexual disgust (but not pathogen disgust; Tybur & de Vries, 2013) when other dimensions of personality were statistically controlled.

Low Sociopolitical Dominance

Among Koreans, Canadians, and Americans, HH correlated negatively with social dominance orientation (Lee, Ashton, Ogunfowora, Bourdage, & Shin,

2010). However, among Italians, the humility component (Greed Avoidance and Modesty facets) of HH uniquely predicted social dominance orientation ($\beta = -0.43$), but the honesty component (Sincerity and Fairness facets) of HH did not ($\beta = -0.07$). The inverse relationship between humility and social dominance orientation was stronger among those with high interest in politics than low interest in politics. Among Italians, HH (and openness to experience) uniquely predicted liberal political ideology and voting for a left-wing party candidate or coalition (Chirumbolo & Leone, 2010).

Non-Self-Report Measures

Many researchers recognize non-self-report scales can advance our understanding of humility (Chancellor & Lyubomirsky, 2013; Davis, Worthington, & Hook, 2010). Landrum (2011), drawing on Tangney's (2000) description of humility, examined the perceptions associated with humble individuals and found positive correlations with self-consciousness, self-esteem, and need for achievement. Similarly, Bronk (2008) investigated humility using youth exemplars in the United States. In a single interview, these purposeful youth spontaneously described over 100 instances of humility, which included moments of openness, accurate assessment, forgetting the self, and appreciation for others (Bronk, 2008). Gregg and colleagues' (2008) prototype analysis of modesty revealed that being humble was in the central cluster of exemplar categories and seen as positive and mostly observable.

Rowatt and colleagues (2006) used semantic differentials, a single thermometer item (very arrogant—very humble), other-report measures, and an implicit association test to assess humility relative to arrogance. Scores on the humility semantic differentials were positively correlated with implicit self-esteem, Rosenberg self-esteem scale, satisfaction with life, agreeableness, openness, spiritual transcendence, forgiveness, and gratitude but negatively correlated with unhealthiness and neuroticism. Similarly, the humility thermometer item showed a similar pattern of correlations.

Discussion

Limitations Due to Self-Enhancement and Measurement Methods

Most researchers use self-report measures of humility and related constructs on which participants could easily self-enhance or self-efface. For example, humility/modesty and self-appraised intellectual ability are inversely related despite no relationship between humility/modesty and actual cognitive ability (Hilbig, Heydasch, & Zettler, 2014). Although excellent evidence for the convergent validity of the modesty component of the “humility” facet of the

HEXACO personality model, it's also an indication that humble-modest people could underestimate their ability or virtuousness in other domains. For example, Veselka et al. (2010) suggest the small positive associations between HH and emotional intelligence among twins could be due to the complex structure of the HH facet in the HEXACO model.

When considering correlates of HH, it is important to keep in mind that common method variance inflates correlations between constructs (Lee & Ashton, 2004). Yet most researchers, including us, continue to use self-report methods. Alternative measurement options are to use an implicit measure (see Rowatt et al., 2006), other-report by family or peers, or relational measures of humility (Davis et al., 2011). Self- and other-reported HH correlate positively ($r = .50$; Lee & Ashton, 2004). Over the course of a few months, groups of people can reach consensus about the intellectual humility of a target person (Meagher, Leman, Bias, Latendresse, & Rowatt, 2015).

Practical Applications

Humility researchers should keep in mind that the HEXACO HH factor contains four separate facets: Sincerity, Fairness, Greed Avoidance, and Modesty. Of these facets, the latter two comprise humility. Depending on the operationalization of humility in a study, researchers may want to limit correlations between dependent variables and HH to just the facets that matter.

Future Directions for Research and Questions

Measures of humility account for unique variability in myriad traits and behaviors. Future research is needed from a developmental perspective. Given children are egoistic/self-focused, when and how does humility develop? What does the formation of humility look like across time, given what we know about the stability of other personality traits (Roberts & Wood, 2007), and how might life circumstances such as success or failure affect humility? In addition, future research should expand on predicting humility in certain contexts. Just as day-to-day changes in humility are useful in predicting certain positive traits over and above baseline humility (Kruse et al., 2014), humility as a state experience may be more relevant in some situations than humility as a trait. For instance, when (and how) would state humility lead to internally lowering one's self-image vs. outwardly displaying deference of self-interest to a group? How does humility or arrogance affect individual and group performance? In a group, is it advantageous to have all humble persons, a blend of humble and arrogant persons, or one humble person among the arrogant?

Conclusion

Humility is a fundamental component of personality. In broad terms, humility (HH) correlates negatively with motivations to acquire greater status and resources at the expense of others and is correlated positively with altruism, social harmony, and low sociopolitical dominance. Although issues with self-report measures of humility remain, this construct is intimately connected with many psychological variables and will continue to be important to understanding how individual differences shape our psychological and social landscapes.

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