

How Telling is Author Voice? Further Associations Between Personality and Writing

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A Note on Writing

“The problem of language acquisition is extremely complex. It is difficult to give precise definitions of the concept of ‘language’ and the concept of ‘acquisition’ and the concept of ‘children.’ There is much uncertainty about the interpretation of experimental data and a great deal of controversy surrounding the theories. More research needs to be done.”

- Steven Pinker, *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person’s Guide to Writing in the 21st Century!*

A Note on Writing

“When we open a cookbook, we completely put aside—and expect the author to put aside—the kind of question that leads to the heart of certain philosophic and religious traditions. Is it possible to talk about cooking? Do eggs really exist? Is food something about which knowledge is possible? Can anyone ever tell us anything true about cooking? ... We do not expect the writer to be immobilized by preliminary discussions of whether it is possible to talk about ‘cooking,’ if such a thing even exists.”

- Francis-Noël Thomas & Mark Turner, *Clear and Simple as the Truth: Writing Classic Prose*

Why Study Writing?

- The human condition
- Scientific interest
 - How variable are writing tendencies?
 - What is personality?
- Practical interest: anonymity/privacy

Where Do We Stand?

- “That people differ in the ways they talk and write is hardly a novel observation.” (Pennebaker & King, 1999)
- Writing is an individual difference for:



- Writing is associated with a variety of personality variables

Formal

Utilitarianism (Question 2)
Rule consequentialism claims that morally permissible actions are those that comply with the codes or rules that may be expected to result in as much or more good than any identifiable codes.
Rule consequentialism (RC) is an synthesis of consequentialism and deontology, because it is distribution-sensitive, meaning it is sensitive to fair well as well-being. Well-formulated rules consider how fairly equally people are treated in addition to the overall gain. The consequentialist nature of RC is that it aims to maximize good. The deontological nature of RC is that it accounts for goods, such as rights and justice.
ii RC is in a dilemma that it seems to either suffer from rule-worship objection or it collapses into act consequentialism. The rule-worship objection is that, while there may be good rules of thumb to follow, if one knows with certainty that breaking the rule would have better consequences than following the rule, isn't it irrational to follow the rule? One should break the rule, and to do otherwise is to engage in rule worship. The problem of collapsing into AC can be posed in two ways. Either one can say that the most optimistic rules are those with exceptions that don't kill except when killing would maximize goodness, which collapses RC into AC, or one can say that an overall rule that produces the most good is optimistic, which collapses RC into AC. These two claims collapse RC into Act Consequentialism. The rule worship objection at least seem to avoid the rule worship objection. The ~~claim~~ claim that RC naturally collapses into AC. First, in response to (b):

vs.

Informal

To Do

- Create poster for presentation
- Poster Run; Fri. 1:00
- 1-min video
- Research poster
- SSSJ volunteer training
- Cog Psych online quiz
- Register for classes
- Exercise @ 8:30
- Ethics paper by Monday

The Present Study: Participants/Measures

- Participants

- 86 cohabiting couples (82 opposite-sex, 4 same-sex)
- Age: $M = 23.02$, $SD = 4.07$
- Marital Status: Not married (83%), Married (11%), Engaged (6%)

- Measures

- Relational attachment style (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000)
- Mindfulness (MAAS; Brown & Ryan, 2003)
- Ruminative response style (RRS; Treynor, Gonzales, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2003; Whitmer & Gotlib, 2011)
- Self-trust not to commit relational transgressions

The Present Study: Procedure

1. Participants completed personality measures
2. Participants then wrote about a time when they felt emotionally vulnerable
 - Knew they would have a conversation about it with their partner
3. Almost all participants wrote informally (e.g. bullet-point lists)
4. Writing samples were linguistically analyzed using LIWC software (Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2001)
5. Correlational analysis was used to determine relationships between writing styles and personality variables

	Word Count	Diction	Personal Pronouns	I	She/He	Positive Emotion	Anxious
Mindfulness	-0.104	-0.172*	-0.122	-0.136	-0.022	-0.021	-0.152*
Anxious Attachment	0.143	0.116	0.166*	0.138	0.149	0.045	0.094
Avoidant Attachment	0.067	0.017	0.106	0.085	0.173*	0.059	-0.123
Rumination: Brooding	0.189*	0.203**	0.163*	0.223**	0.049	0.050	0.119
Rumination: Reflection	0.158*	0.143	0.069	0.088	0.086	0.064	0.063
Emotional Openness	0.068	0.059	0.073	0.158*	0.072	0.050	0.027
Emotional Infidelity	0.211**	0.092	0.133	0.061	0.184*	0.081	-0.026
Mean Self-Trust	-0.249**	-0.089	-0.200**	-0.185*	-0.097	-0.041	0.037
Self-Trust: Secrets	-0.108	0.114	-0.198**	-0.176*	-0.035	-0.007	-0.010
Self-Trust: Honesty	-0.187*	-0.074	-0.172*	-0.142	-0.014	-0.028	0.003
Self-Trust: End Rel.	-0.189*	-0.012	-0.049	-0.088	-0.022	0.037	-0.023
Self-Trust: Money	0.073	-0.079	-0.121	-0.161*	0.000	0.123	0.162*
Self-Trust: Physically Hurt	-0.399**	-0.064	-0.123	-0.025	-0.137	-0.056	-0.023
Self-Trust: Emotionally Open	-0.148	0.003	-0.124	-0.130	-0.167*	-0.192*	0.162*
Self-Trust: Sexually Faithful	-0.131	-0.001	0.010	-0.020	0.040	-0.037	0.007
Self-Trust: Emotionally Faithful	-0.204**	-0.095	-0.174*	-0.126	-0.136	-0.040	-0.012

*Significant at the 0.05 level

**Significant at the 0.01 level

Yellow = weak correlation

Orange = moderate correlation

Interpretation

- People who trust themselves not to commit relational transgressions write *less!*
 - Trust to not physically hurt one's partner explains 15.9% of WC variation
- People who brood use more words and a greater variety of words when writing about their vulnerability
- Weak effects across the board

Discussion (So what?)

- Even informal writing reflects personality
- Language use is an individual difference
 - Ecological validity
- Be careful what you write online!