

ON LIKING AND PERCIEVED AUTHENTICITY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	1
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	2
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	3
II. METHODS	4
Participants.....	4
Design	4
Measures	5
III. RESULTS	7
IV. CONCLUSION.....	8
WORKS CITED	9
APPENDIX.....	10

ABSTRACT

On Liking and Perceived Authenticity

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Previous studies in our lab have found that liking is a significant predictor of authenticity (Kelley, Schlegel, Hicks, & Kim, manuscript in prep). The current study seeks to examine whether this relationship holds over and above a variety of other possible predictors, such as perceptions of a target's personality, character, and social power. Specifically, we predict that the more a participant reports liking a target, the higher they will rate the target's authenticity. The study consisted of an interaction task where a research assistant led a group 2-5 participants in a discussion of their most embarrassing moments and their favorite memories. Afterwards participants rated the other group members on their perceived authenticity, similarity, liking, mood, Big 5 personality traits, and power. We tested our hypothesis by using bivariate correlation and multiple regression models.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Subjective authenticity is the feeling that one's actions align with his or her true self (Sedikides, Slabu, Lenton, & Thomaes, 2017). Research has shown that people tend to view the true self as inherently good (Newman, Bloom, & Knobe, 2014; Christy, Kim, Vess, Schlegel, & Hicks, 2017). For example, people believe that if someone changes for the better, they become more like their true self (Bench, Schlegel, Davis, & Vess, 2015; DeFreitas, Cikara, Grossman, & Schlegel, 2017). Morality is also positively linked to liking (Hartley, Furr, Helzer, Jayawickreme, Velasquez, & Fleeson, 2016). Specifically, if people perceive that someone is highly moral, there is a higher chance that they will like that person compared to someone they perceive as less moral. While perceptions of authenticity and liking are both related to morality, research between perceptions of authenticity and liking is limited.

Preliminary research in our lab suggests that liking is a significant predictor of perceptions of another person's authenticity (Kelley, Schlegel, Hicks, & Kim, manuscript in prep). The current study extends these preliminary findings by exploring whether the relationship between authenticity and liking persist when controlling for other possible predictors, such as extraversion, positivity, or power. We predict that the higher a participant reports liking a person, the higher they will rate that person's authenticity. We also expect this relationship to work over and above any other possible predictors.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

Participants

To research our hypothesis we recruited 66 undergraduate students from psychology classes at Texas A&M University. The group was predominately female (N = 48) and Caucasian (73%). Participant's ages ranged from 18 to 23, with a mean age of 19.

Design

Interaction task.

Research assistants brought 2-5 participants into the lab and seated them around a table with colored placards. Participants were given time to read and agree to consent forms. The group was then prompted to introduce themselves by saying their first name or nickname and the color that was on the placard in front of them. The participants were told they needed to know the other participants' colors for the second part of the study. To help with this, participants were provided with a sheet of paper to makes notes.

The research assistant explained to the group that the goal of the first part of the study was to share about themselves and learn about other members of the group. The participants were then asked to think of their most embarrassing moments and were given a minute to think of a story with as many details as possible. Each group member then took turns sharing their story. After all the participants said their part, the group ranked the moments in order of how embarrassing they were. Participants were then instructed to think of their favorite memory with as much detail as possible. After a minute of thinking, the participants took turns sharing their

moments. Following the last participant's story, the research assistant informed the group that the first part of the study was ended.

Post interaction survey.

The group was instructed to take their notes and move to a computer room to take an online survey related to the interaction task. The survey consisted of several measures designed to quantify their perceptions of the other participants. Each measure was repeated for each of the different participants in the group.

Measures

Authenticity.

Perceived authenticity was measured with four questions using seven-point scales (1 = "Strongly Disagree," 7 = "Strongly Agree"). The questions included statements such as "He/she seemed authentic during the interaction." Answers were averaged together to form a composite variable ($M = 4.60$, $SD = .94$).

Liking and similarity.

Liking was measured by asking the participant to rate their agreement with five statements. On a seven point scale (1 = "Strongly Disagree," 7 = "Strongly Agree"), participants responded to statements like "I enjoyed working with this participant," and "I could imagine being friends with this participant." The five items were averaged together to form a composite variable ($M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.47$). Similarity was measured by responding to a single statement ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .95$). Participants would select 1 for "We are not at all similar" up to 7 indicating "we are extremely similar."

Big 5.

Personality was overall measured by agreeing to 15 words associated with the Big 5 personality traits. Participants rated each group member on a seven-point scale (1 = “Not at all,” 7 = “Extremely”) to measure perceptions of Extraversion ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.54$), Agreeableness ($M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.03$), Openness ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.20$), Conscientiousness ($M = 5.10$, $SD = .99$), and Neuroticism ($M = 3.22$, $SD = .82$).

Mood.

The participants rated the perceived emotions of the other participants. 10 mood words (e.g. “Frustrated,” “Anxious,” and “Happy”) were presented and participants responded on a seven-point scale (1 = “Very slightly or not at all,” 7 = “Extremely”). Mood had two subscales; positive affect ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.32$) and negative affect ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.03$).

Power.

Power was measured by asking participants to rate the other group members on four seven-point statements. Items such as “He/she can get others to listen to what he/she says,” were rated on a seven point scale (1 = “Not at all Descriptive,” 7 = “Extremely Descriptive”). The answers were averaged to form a composite variable ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.26$).

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

We analyzed that data with bivariate correlations and a three step hierarchical regression. The bivariate correlation, as shown in Table 1, revealed that similarity, big five personality, mood, and power are all significantly related to authenticity. To better understand how these predictors interacted with each other, we created a three stage hierarchical regression with authenticity as the dependent variable. This analysis is shown in Table 2. The first step included personality characteristics because these are enduring and stable variables. Positive affect, negative affect, power, and similarity were included in the second step. Liking was entered in the final step in order to assess its unique relationship with authenticity over the other variables. The model revealed that agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion contributed significantly to authenticity, $F(5,191) = 17.48, p < .001$, and accounted for 31.4% of the variance. At the second level, none of the predictors contributed significantly to authenticity, $F(4,187) = 1.86, p = .12$, and together they accounted for 2.6% of the variation. However, liking significantly contributed to the model, $F(1,186) = 35.53, p < .001$, and exclusively accounted for 10.6% of the variance. Therefore our hypothesis was correct because liking was a significant predictor of authenticity over and above other predictor variables.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The results from our analysis support our hypothesis. There was a correlation between liking a person and perceiving them as authentic, and liking was a significant predictor of authenticity over and above other variables, suggesting a strong and robust relationship between liking and perceptions of authenticity. However, due to the correlational design in our study, the causal direction of this relationship is uncertain. Liking someone may cause us to see them as authentic or perceiving someone as authentic may cause us to like them.

Our data also reflects the impact of a first impression. The first part of the study had participants share two brief experiences. These stories did not include their personal details/favorite things (TV show, sports team, etc.) which could have affected liking. We also controlled for participants that were familiar with each other by excluding their answers during our analysis. This way the relationship between liking and authenticity was based only on the interaction task.

In future research we would like to also control for participants' own personality traits or mood. In the present study, participants were not surveyed for their own mood or big five personality traits, just for their perceptions of other group members. But this could affect the validity of their perceptions. For example, if a participant was in a positive mood this could cause them to rate all group members higher than if the participant was in a negative mood.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. *Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables predicting Authenticity*

Variable	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1				.56	.31	.31
Extraversion	.12	.05	2.56*			
Agreeableness	.27	.08	3.25**			
Conscientious	.23	.08	3.04**			
Neuroticism	-.08	.08	-.94			
Openness	-.07	.07	-.99			
Step 2				.58	.34	.03
Positive Affect	.07	.07	.94			
Negative Affect	.1	.08	1.18			
Power	.12	.07	1.62			
Similarity	.06	.04	1.31			
Step 3				.67	.45	.11
Liking	.35	.06	5.96***			

Note. $N=66$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 2. *Correlations Between Key Study Variables*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Authenticity	-										
2. Liking	.59***	-									
3. Similarity	.32***	.5***	-								
4. Extraversion	.36***	.52***	.32***	-							
5. Agreeableness	.5***	.6***	.32***	.4***	-						
6. Conscientious	.46***	.46***	.28***	.27***	.65***	-					
7. Neuroticism	-.29***	-.54***	-.32***	-.45***	-.35***	-.29***	-				
8. Openness	.37***	.63***	.31***	.59***	.65***	.5***	-.42***	-			
9. Positive Affect	.43***	.61***	.41***	.66***	.59***	.46***	-.35***	.68***	-		
10. Negative Affect	-.31***	-.65***	-.21**	-.58***	-.56***	-.37***	.55***	-.58***	-.54***	-	
11. Power	.38***	.63***	.32***	.7***	.46***	.29***	-.52***	.62***	.59***	-.66***	-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$