Behaviors predict outcomes better than the Big Five

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Tables 1-5: The ten behaviors most highly correlated with each Big Five scale (95% C.I.: ±.04).

Table 1: Intellect

Behavior	Corr.	Behavior Scale
Learned a new skill.	.35	Self-Improv.
Tried something completely new.	.34	Creativity
Read poetry.	.31	Understanding
Read in bed before going to sleep.	.31	Reading
Produced a work of art.	.30	Creativity
Read an entire book in one sitting.	.29	Reading
Wrote poetry.	.29	Creativity
Studied some subject.	.29	Self-Improv.
Read a book.	.28	Reading
Bought a book.	.28	Reading

Table 2: Conscientiousness

Behavior	Corr.	Behavior Scale
Cleaned the house.	.36	Housekeeping
Made a bed.	.29	Housekeeping
Wrote a thank-you note.	.29	Writing
Took a child on an outing.	.25	Child-Related
Bought or picked flowers.	.24	Gardening
Ironed linens or clothes.	.23	Housekeeping
Worked on a retirement plan.	.23	Financial
Bought plants for a garden or yard.	.23	Gardening
Prayed (not including blessings at meals).	.23	Religious
Cared for a potted plant.	.22	Gardening

Table 3: Extraversion

Behavior	Corr.	Behavior Scale
Entertained six or more people.	.48	Partying
Went to a large party.	.42	Partying
Planned a party.	.41	Partying
Had someone over for dinner.	.39	Partying
Went to a small party.	.38	Partying
Went dancing.	.34	Romance
Wrote a thank-you note.	.32	Writing
Bought a fashionable item of clothing.	.30	Fashion
Went on a date.	.29	Romance
Bought or picked flowers.	.29	Gardening

Table 4: Agreeableness

Behavior	Corr.	Behavior Scale
Played with a child.	.38	Child-Related
Wrote a thank-you note.	.36	Writing
Took a child on an outing.	.35	Child-Related
Donated money to charity.	.33	Political/Org.
Bought or picked flowers.	.33	Gardening
Had someone over for dinner.	.32	Partying
Entertained six or more people.	.32	Partying
Let a child win a game.	.32	Child-Related
Planned a party.	.32	Partying
Read a story to a child.	.31	Child-Related

Table 5: Emotional Stability

Behavior	Corr.	Behavior Scale
Ate too much.	−.21	Food-Related
Spent > an hour thinking about what to wear.	−.20	Fashion
Spent > minutes thinking about what to wear.	−.19	Fashion
Watched too much television.	−.19	TV
Obtained stock market prices.	.18	Financial
Read a book on a financial topic.	.17	Financial
Went on a hike.	.16	Summer Act.
Ate or drank while driving.	.16	Food-Related
Read a fashion-related magazine.	−.15	Fashion
Worked on a retirement plan.	.15	Financial

Figure 1: Correlation matrix of traditional Big Five scales, behavioral Big Five scales (composed of items from Tables 1-5), four outcomes, and four empirical scales formed from items most highly correlated with each outcome (composed of items from Tables 6-9). Color-coded for size and sign. All correlations corrected for item overlap. Lower diagonal: raw correlations. Upper diagonal: corrected for attenuation. Diagonal: alphas.
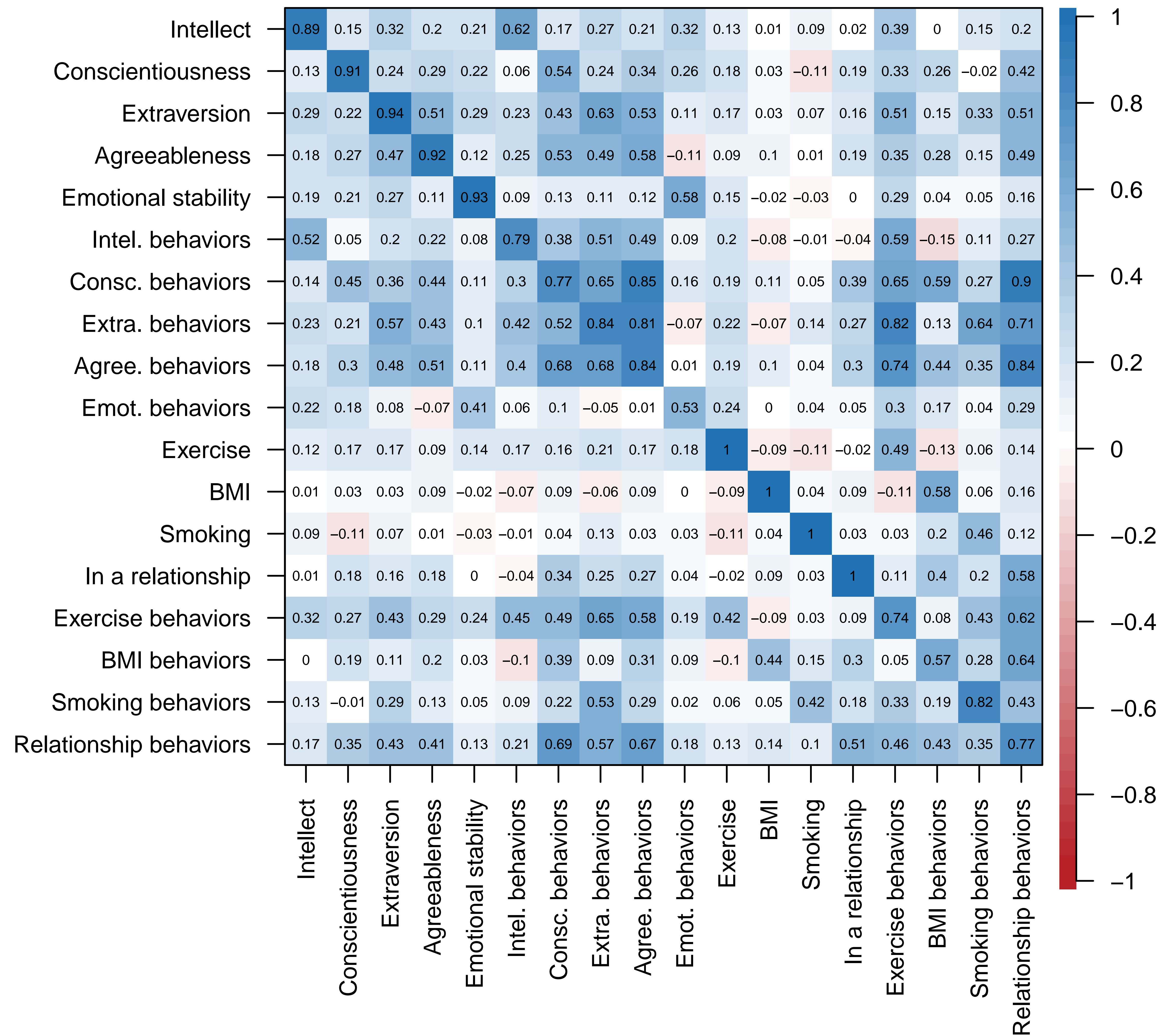
Tables 6-9: The thirteen items (behaviors and personality) most highly correlated with each of four outcomes (95% C.I.: ±.06). Personality items are in red text.

Table 6: Exercise*

Item	Corr.	Scale
Went on a hike.	.32	Summer Act.
Played a team sport.	.26	Sports
Attended an athletic event.	.26	Sports
Went swimming.	.21	Summer Act.
Went backpacking or camping.	.20	Summer Act.
Gardened.	.19	Gardening
Am good at many things.	.19	Intellect
Went to a small party.	.19	Partying
Played tennis or golf.	.19	Sports
Discussed sports.	.18	Sports
Learned a new skill.	.18	Self-Improv.
Get chores done right away.	.17	Conscientiousness
Walked or rode a bicycle to work.	.17	Green Act.

*Behavioral items from the "Exercise" scale were removed for this analysis.

Table 7: BMI

Item	Corr.	Scale
Ate too much.	.25	Food-Related
Used public transportation.	−.20	Green Act.
Went running or jogging.	−.19	Exercise
Took a child on an outing.	.19	Child-Related
Purchased a scratch ticket.	.18	Gambling
Ate or drank while driving.	.17	Food-Related
Bought a car, truck, or motorcycle.	.17	Vehicles
Checked the sales ads in a newspaper.	.17	Shopping
Traveled by train or plane.	−.16	Travel
Recorded a television program.	.15	TV
Walked or rode a bicycle to work.	−.15	Green Act.
Cooked a meal.	.15	Housekeeping
Bought a fashionable item of clothing.	−.14	Fashion

Table 8: Smoking

Item	Corr.	Scale
Had a hangover.	.44	Drinking
Became intoxicated.	.40	Drinking
Drank hard liquor.	.34	Drinking
Drank beer or wine.	.32	Drinking
Drank in a bar or night club.	.28	Drinking
Went to a large party.	.19	Partying
Went to a small party.	.17	Partying
Ordered food to be delivered.	.17	Food-Related
Gambled on a slot machine.	.17	Gambling
Volunteered for a club or organization.	−.16	Political/Org.
Gambled with cards or dice.	.15	Gambling
Ate or drank while driving.	.15	Food-Related
Purchased a scratch ticket.	.15	Gambling

Table 9: In a relationship

Item	Corr.	Scale
Went on a date.	.41	Romance
Wrote a love letter.	.31	Romance
Bought plants for a garden or yard.	.27	Gardening
Took a child on an outing.	.26	Child-Related
Bought or picked flowers.	.26	Gardening
Had someone over for dinner.	.25	Partying
Dined by candle light.	.24	Romance
Bought or sold real estate.	.24	Financial
Chose to spend a day by myself.	−.23	Being Alone
Checked the sales ads in a newspaper.	.23	Shopping
Bought a car, truck, or motorcycle.	.22	Vehicles
Ate dinner alone.	−.22	Being Alone
Worked on a retirement plan.	.22	Financial

Summary of study

- Participants ($n = 31$k; 51% female; median age = 22 yrs) were recruited from 166 countries using an online assessment.
- Tables 1-5: Behavioral items (from the 200-item Oregon Avocational Interest Scales) were correlated with Big Five scales (from the 100-item IPIP BFFM) to find the ten behaviors that were most associated with each personality scale.
- Figure 1: Each set of ten behavioral items was formed into a scale and correlated with the Big Five scales. Each behavioral scale was highly correlated with its corresponding Big Five scale ($r \approx .50$). Traditional and behavioral scales of the Big Five had correlations of a similar magnitude with three outcomes of interest (exercising, BMI, and smoking). Behavioral scales better predicted being in a relationship than the traditional Big Five.
- Tables 6-9: The thirteen behavioral and personality items most highly correlated with each outcome were found. Of the 52 total items, only two were personality items; behavioral items were superior for predicting these outcomes.
- Figure 1: As scales, these sets of items were more highly correlated with their respective outcomes than traditional or behavioral Big Five scales. Clusters of behavioral items may better predict outcomes than clusters of personality items.