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Personality, social distance and conflicts: Personality functioning, empathy and socioeconomic factors predicting social distancing and conflicts with minorities

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Abstract

Objective. Although previous studies pointed to various aspects of social distance and conflicts with representatives of otherness, associations with objectively measured aspects of personality in the form of a semi-structure interview combined with observation are less common. Based on previous studies, this study focused on the relationship between social distance and conflicts with representatives of otherness. It was hypothesized that the lower the personality functioning, the higher will be social distance and more conflicts with representatives of otherness will be reported. We assumed that impaired empathy would be associated with higher social distance in comparison with other variables of personality functioning derived from Alternative Model for Personality Disorders (AMPD) – identity, self-direction and intimacy. *Sample and methods.* Participants (N = 204) were recruited from several contrast groups including clinical and measures focused on conflicts, personality functioning (STiP-5.1), social distance (Bogardus Social Distance Scale). Additionally, several related methods were used. *Results.* Increased impairments in identity, self-direction, empathy, and intimacy were associated with a higher degree of subjective importance of conflicts with representatives of otherness. Greater social distance was associated with impairments in self-direction and empathy. However, social distance was found independent of subjectively experienced conflicts. Multivariate linear regressions showed that social distance was predicted by education, racism, and personality functioning (STiP-5.1 – Self-direction), BR and SR scores, explaining 58 per cent of the variance. *Conclusions.* The subjective importance of conflicts and social distance to representatives of otherness is associated with AMPD.

Keywords*:* social distance; conflicts; Alternative Model for Personality Disorders; STiP

1 Introduction

Gordon Allport (1954), a pioneer in prejudice research, perceived personality as one of the preconditions for the development of prejudices. This issue raised by Allport is up to date even now. Still, the key question is to what extent individual differences in prejudice are

driven by differences in social and ideological attitudes, which are relatively changeable, and differences in personality traits and other characteristics, which are relatively stable features of individuals (Lin & Alvarez, 2020). It seems there are approximately two lines of interpretation (Ekehammar & Akrami, 2003): differences in prejudice are due to differences in group membership (explanation of social psychology) or due to differences in personality (explanation of personality psychology). In both lines of interpretation, negative attitudes and prejudice were found to be directly, as well as indirectly, related to a plethora of variables with more or less convincing and stable results.

In the second line of thought, the function of various internal attributes of the individual is considered. Nevertheless, there is no agreement on whether personality directly influences prejudice or whether the influence is indirect (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Many personality traits and characteristics were examined in connection to prejudice (usually using self-report questionnaires), for example, the classic study of authoritarian personality theory (Adorno et al., 1950), right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1998), dual process model (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003), or numerous studies using the Big Five personality trait paradigm (e.g. Ekehammar & Akrami, 2003; Lin & Alvarez, 2020; Sibley et al., 2010; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Among other things, these studies showed that high levels of emotionality and the neuroticism trait serve as a predictor of negative attitudes and avoidance (Stürmer et al., 2013).

Allport (1954) perceived personality assumptions for tolerance, which he described as a 'tolerant personality.' He considered empathic ability to be a significant factor of tolerance and believed that 'empathic ability leads to tolerance' (p. 408). Allport expected (1954, p. 170) that cognitive processes of tolerant and prejudiced people differ. At the same time, Allport considered empathy a difficult trait to submit to laboratory or clinical investigation. However, recent research has shown that authoritarianism and social dominance positively predict generalized prejudice, as well as lack of empathy and principled moral reasoning (McFarland, 2010). Global human identification and citizenship is positively related (among others) to empathy, and the ideals of global human identification and citizenship correlate with variables that have significant genetic underpinnings: negatively with authoritarianism, and positively with empathic concern and openness to experience (McFarland et al., 2019).

Two central facets of empathy are empathetic concern (feelings of sympathy, compassion) and perspective taking (the ability to take the perspective of others). These seem antithetical to prejudice; compassion should make one more likely to sympathize with the plight of outgroups, and perspective taking more likely to appreciate their concerns. As a result, empathy should reduce the tendency to disparage others (McFarland, 2010). There is good reason to think that empathy may have been especially relevant during the refugee humanitarian crisis, which started in 2015 (Bruneau et al., 2018). Bruneau et al. (2018) found that empathy, measured as an empathic trait from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, played a significant role in the refugee crisis. It was associated with lower levels of blatant dehumanization of refugees and predicted less anti-refugee hostility. Nevertheless, other traits, such as self-control, might play a role as well, as it is known that children with better self-control have fewer behavioural problems in general, including fewer hostile conflicts with other children (Murphy & Eisenberg, 1997).

The current psychodynamic concept of personality pathology states that people with healthy personalities function relatively flexibly when stressed by external events or internal conflict, express impulses in a manner appropriate to the situation, conduct themselves in accordance with internalized moral values, and neither suffer undue distress nor impose it on others. Moreover, conflicts, tensions, and stressors detract from experienced vitality on both somatic and psychological levels, where both self and interpersonal functioning can be disrupted (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This notion is reflected in the alternative DSM-5 model for personality disorders (AMPD; American Psychiatric Association, 2013), in which personality disorders are characterized by impairments in personality functioning and pathological personality traits. Disturbances in self and interpersonal functioning constitute the core of personality psychopathology and in this alternative diagnostic model, they are evaluated on a continuum. Self-functioning involves identity and self-direction; interpersonal functioning involves empathy and intimacy. For example, empathy, which is an element of interpersonal functioning, is defined as 'comprehension and appreciation of others' experiences and motivations; tolerance of differing perspectives; understanding the effects of one's own behavior on others' (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 762).

Although traits have been repeatedly measured in the past in relation to prejudices (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008), we believe that personality functioning may be more sensitive to one's current life situation and thus more accurately relate to attitudes and prejudices. Variables that personality functioning covers, i.e. identity, self-direction, empathy, and intimacy, were connected to attitudes using various questionnaires (e.g. Altemeyer, 1998; Bruneau et al., 2018; Hogg, 2012). However, these variables are more accurately assessed by interviews combined with observation, which allow one to analyse individual variables from different angles. As far as we know, in-depth interviews examining personality or personality functioning in more detailed association with current personality models as related to prejudices have not been used.

In addition, it was found that attitudes are to some degree formed in the family, and that parenting styles can have an influence on several aspects covered by AMPD domain of interpersonal functioning, such as the degree of closeness or distance to other people in the future (e.g. Degner & Dalege, 2013; Miklikowska, 2016), or empathy development (Wagers & Kiel, 2019). For example, the study from Miklikowska (2016) showed a higher correspondence of prejudice between adolescents and parents who were perceived as supportive in general. However, very little is known about the long-term effects of parental bonding on negative attitudes and prejudice (Miklikowska, 2017).

There are also studies that found a connection between various demographic as well as socioeconomic variables and attitudes. Based on previous studies, it seems that men are more prejudiced than women in general (Ekehammar et al., 2003), and have tendencies to keep greater social distance from out-group members (Jonason et al., 2020). In addition, age was found to be associated with more blatant expressions of prejudice (Ford, 2008) and preferences for greater social distance (Jorm & Oh, 2009). Differences between people with different educational levels and their socio-economic position in society were also found (Verberk et al., 2002), especially in the expression of negative attitudes. Concretely, people with lower levels of education and an overall lower socioeconomic situation tend to be more overtly prejudiced than people with higher levels of education, and those with a more secure socioeconomic position.

Furthermore, there is agreement in the literature (Allport, 1954; Cuhadar & Dayton, 2011; Duckitt, 2003; Pettigrew et al., 1982) that prejudice may unfold through three psychological processes: in cognitive structures and processes (e.g. beliefs and stereotypes), as affect (e.g. negative feelings), and as behaviour (e.g. social distance, discrimination, and violence). Conflicts between different groups may or may not be related to prejudices, but prejudice is one of the essential ingredients of intractable conflicts (Cuhadar & Dayton, 2011). However, the latter are more serious forms of tension and dissatisfaction than prejudices, which can be more covert.

Development of conflicts can be understood by investigating situational dynamics (Bramsen & Poder, 2014). Furthermore, the situational context for understanding criminal events, especially violence, is traditionally recognized (Mullins & Miller, 2008). Specifically, it was found that negative contact with minorities has an influence on an individual's attitudes and can serve as a predictor of negative attitudes (Barlow et al., 2012). It is likely that conflict with people who are different from us may originate from prejudice, and that the presence of prejudice can be a catalyst for conflict. Conflicts with different representatives of otherness can thus communicate more about the participants in the conflict than about the conflict itself.

Even Allport (1954) stated that under the condition of heightened emotion, prejudice may lead to acts of violence or semi-violence. He proposed continuum with five steps, which start with antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and end with extermination. The fourth and the fifth steps can be combined into a previously mentioned conflict area; the first three steps can be grouped into a social distance variable.

The concept of social distance (Bogardus, 1947) was developed as a measure of 'the degree of intimacy and understanding that exists between individuals or social groups' (Hughes et al., 1950, p. 88). Social distance can be perceived as an indication of how acceptable or objectionable various ethnic groups are in society and as a general measure of prejudice (Weaver, 2008). Additionally, Corrigan et al. (2001) see social distance as a proxy for behavioural discrimination toward selected group used in research on racial and other outgroup stereotypes. Their proposed model identifies two person variables (familiarity and ethnicity) that inversely influence prejudicial attitudes (authoritarianism and benevolence), which in turn directly affect the person's social distance, i.e. prejudicial attitudes influence social distance. The method measuring social distance was developed at a time when conflict was caused by a surge of non-Protestant immigration and Bogardus himself was clearly concerned with racial issues. Since then, the Bogardus Social Distance Scale is a commonly used method measuring prejudice (Wark & Galliher, 2007). Bogardus himself emphasized the function of feelings in responding to items on the scale and perceived the answers as 'feeling reactions.' In his view, 'social distance studies rely upon promptness or quickness in filling out in the social distance forms' (Bogardus, 1947, p. 307).

2 Aim of the study

Recent studies show that negative attitudes toward 'otherness' and xenophobia are on a rise in the Czech Republic (Hoření et al., 2018). Due to the social realities of the Czech Republic, we propose several representatives of otherness – Romani, Vietnamese, foreigners,

homeless people, unknown people, tourists, migrants, people with mental disorders, and people with physical disability. Romani and Vietnamese are among the largest minorities in the country, while foreigners and tourists are categories of people that Czechs commonly meet – especially in the summer months. Homeless people are visually striking, especially in cities in which citizens have contact with them. Migrants are a relatively invisible group repeatedly discussed in the media in connection with the government's efforts to accept or not to accept migrants for staying in the Czech Republic. Unknown people are the most common manifestation of encounters with otherness, in which it is possible to project one's feelings and needs. People with mental health issues and people with physical disabilities represent other frequent forms of relatively visible otherness.

As mentioned, attitudes and prejudice toward others remain a continually researched topic in social and personality psychology. Through scientific investigations on these topics, relationships with various variables have been evaluated; still, much remains unclear. In this study, we decided to analyse the relationship between social distance and conflicts with representatives of otherness and its personality roots – personality functioning, especially the empathy element. Based on data from previous studies, we hypothesize that the higher the impairment in personality functioning, the greater social distance there will be and more conflicts with representatives of otherness with greater significance assigned to these experiences will be reported. More specifically, we assume that empathy will be more strongly (negatively) associated with social distance than with other variables of personality functioning such as identity, self-direction, and intimacy. To our knowledge, we do not know of a study examining the relationship between social distance, conflict, and personality functioning.

3 Sample

Participants were recruited from several contrast groups to ensure a continuum of diverse scores within the population – general population (n = 55), subjects with high level of neuroticism (n = 50), psychiatric outpatient/inpatients with personality disorders (n = 58), people with xenophobic attitudes (n = 10) and people with tolerance to otherness (n = 31). The whole sample (N = 204) was analysed. The general inclusive criterion was the willingness to participate in a detailed examination of personality, Czech citizenship and other specific requirements and exclusive criteria. The study was approved by the Ethical Committee of National Institute of Mental Health, Czech Republic, No. 107/18.

For the general population, the exclusionary criterion was the presence of a depressive or anxiety disorder (Beck Depression Inventory > 20 or Beck Anxiety Inventory > 18; Beck et al. 1996; Beck et al., 1986). For subjects with a high level of neuroticism, the inclusive criteria were 1) a high level of neuroticism according to Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire – Revised (EPQ/R; Eysenck et al., 1985) > 2SD compared to the general population (in-line with the finding of Gallego & Pardos-Prado, 2014), and 2) psychological issues operationalized as any current or previous psychiatric treatment. For psychiatric outpatient/inpatients with personality disorders, the inclusive criteria were 1) diagnosis of a personality disorder by a clinical psychiatrist or via a psychological examination, and 2) current or previous psychiatric hospitalization. For people with xenophobic attitudes, the

inclusive criteria were a tendency toward extremist groups manifested by 1) membership in an extremist organization, 2) public manifestations of xenophobia (e.g. in the press, in socially accessible documents, or in public speeches/performances), and/or 3) criminal prosecution for xenophobic manifestations. For people with tolerance to otherness, the inclusive criteria were 1) direct work in organizations focusing on human rights, cohabitating of different ethnicities, and/or work related to the support for inclusion of different groups, and 2) this work is considered to be personally significant and meaningful by the participant.

4 Methods

4.1 Conflicts

Conflicts were operationalized as a *concrete* negative experience per each representative of otherness (e.g. an item 'I have already had a personal conflict with the Vietnamese'). First, we asked respondents if they have had a conflict with a representative of otherness (yes/no). Then, participants rated how unpleasant the conflict was and how significant it was for them from today's point of view on an 11-point scale (0 = minimum; 10 = maximum). We interpret this variable as the subjective importance of the conflict. The sum score from both scales was used. Internal consistency measured by McDonald's ω for the scale in total was .78.

4.2 The Semi-Structured Interview for Personality Functioning (STiP-5.1)

The Semi-Structured Interview for Personality Functioning *DSM–5* (STiP-5.1), used as an independent variable in our project, was developed in 2014 (Heissler et al., 2021; Hutsebaut et al., 2017) as a relatively brief (i.e. between 30 and 60 minutes) interview schedule that would yield a reliable multi-item assessment of the facets constituting the Level of Personality Functioning Scale. The functional level of personality scale describes five levels of severity for each of the 12 aspects of personality functioning, from healthy functioning, negligible or no disorder (0), through mild (1), moderate (2), severe (3) to extreme (4) disorder. The STiP-5.1 is a clinician-rated interview, where clinicians are encouraged to use their clinical judgment in making the final ratings. The psychometric evaluation was based on clinical and community samples (Hutsebaut et al., 2017). The interview consists of 28 open questions with optional clarifying questions. In this project, we will measure the STiP-5.1 total score and the four main scores – identity and self-direction, and empathy and intimacy. The first two scores form self-functioning, the second two interpersonal functioning. The internal consistency of the STiP-5.1 is high, with Cronbach's alpha of .97 for the total scale. The interrater reliability is also good, with ICCs ranging from .81 to .92 in the overall sample and .58 to .80 in the clinical sample (Hutsebaut et al., 2017). In our study, the interviewers were trained in the administration of the STiP-5.1 by the author of the method. Several consensus meetings were held over the course of data collection to maintain raters' consistency.

4.3 Social distance

Bogardus Social Distance Scale (BSDS; Bogardus, 1925) was used for the measurement of perceived social distance toward various representatives of otherness. The BSDS is an example of a Guttman scale in that it is unidimensional and cumulative (Wark & Galliher, 2007). In this study, modified BSDS according to Weinfurt & Moghaddam (2001) was used. Respondents were asked to rate their willingness to admit a member of the presented group (representatives of otherness) on each of the seven levels of social distance (ranging from willing to marry to exclude from the country – 1. as a spouse; 2. as a close friend; 3. as a neighbour; 4. as a close co-worker; 5. as a country citizen; 6. as a visitor to my country; 7. would exclude from the country) using a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (No) to 3 (Yes). The score for each representative of otherness was calculated as a sum of seven scores. Total score of social distance was used. Higher scores indicate greater social distance. Internal consistency measured by McDonald's ω for the scale in total was .97.

4.4 Modern Racism Scale

The seven-item Modern Racism was originally designed by McConahay, Hardee and Batts (1981) to measure explicit attitudes toward African Americans. A 6-item version (Kašpárková, 2013) was used for research purposes, the items of which better correspond to the Czech cultural conditions. The original term 'Blacks' was replaced by the word Romani. Higher scores on the MRS indicated a higher degree of prejudice. Internal consistency measured by McDonald's ω = .85.

4.5 Blatant and Subtle Racism Scale

The Blatant and Subtle Racism Scale (BSRS) was developed by Pettigrew and Meertens (1995). While Obvious Racism (BR) describes a hot, fast and direct form of racism and hidden racism (SR) as a cold, thoughtful and indirect form of racism. We used a 9-item version of Kašpárková (2013). The original term 'Blacks' was replaced by the word Romani. Higher scores on the MRS indicated a higher degree of prejudice. Internal consistency measured by McDonald's ω = .86.

4.6 Parental Bonding Instrument

Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI; Parker et al., 1979; Parker, 1990; Čikošová & Preiss, 2012) is a 25-item self-report questionnaire initially designed to retrospectively assess perceived parenting style during childhood in adult respondents. Scores assess perceived overprotection and care of both parents, mother and father. McDonald's ω showed good internal consistency for all subscores, ranging from .88 to .94.

4.7 Demographic variables

Several variables were included: age (years), gender (male/female), education (secondary or lower, tertiary or higher), marital status (3 categories – single, married, divorced), income (below the average, average, above the average in the Czech Republic), time spent abroad (at least 3 months at a time), participation in the last parliamentary elections (2017).

5 Data analysis

Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, between-group comparisons, correlations, and linear regression models. Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0, and JASP v. 0.11.1.

Analyses focused on relationship between reported conflicts with minorities, attitude scales and social distances toward them. Differences in the main variables of interest (BSDS – Total, and Conflicts – Total) between demographic and other dichotomous variables were analysed using the Mann–Whitney U test (effect size given by the rank biserial correlation rrb) or ANOVA in the case of the marital status (single, married, divorced) and income (below the average, average, above the average in the Czech Republic), with effect size given by partial Eta-squared, whereby effect sizes lower than .06 and higher than .14 are considered small and large, respectively). Moreover, multiple linear regressions were used with Conflicts – Total and BSDS total scores as a dependent variables and socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, education level, marital status: single, married, divorced, and income: below the average, average, above the average in the Czech Republic), as independent variables in the first block, and four main scores of STiP in the second block, and socio-psychological variables (MRS, BR, SR, and PBI scores) in the third block.

6 Results

Demographics and other social variables of the sample are following – of the 204 participants there were 132 women (64.71 per cent), 120 people with a secondary education or lower education (58.82 per cent), mean age was 33.48 ± 11.67 (range 18–67). The martial statuses: 141 of them were single, 34 married and 27 divorced (2 missing); salary: 63 had a salary under the average, 65 an average, and 44 above the average (32 did not want to answer this question). At least 3 months at a time abroad spent 139 (68.14 per cent) participants, and 134 (65.69 per cent) respondents participated in the recent parliamentary elections. The results of the sample in all measurements are in Table 1.

Regarding conflicts, 5–74 per cent of the respondents reported conflicts with minorities: Romani (52 per cent), Vietnamese (11 per cent), Foreigners (21 per cent), Homeless (38 per cent), Unknown (74 per cent), Tourists (27 per cent), Migrants (5 per cent), Mental disorders (40 per cent) and Physical disability (17 per cent). If we define tolerance as a zero score in BSDS, 9 per cent (n=18) of participants had BSDS = 0.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of the included variables

	Range	Median	Mean (SD)
STiP – Self	0–4	1	1.07 (0.97)
STiP – Interpersonal	0–3	1	.86 (.94)
MRS	6–30	15	15.37 (5.92)
BR	6–27	12	13.22 (5.11)
SR	3–15	10	9.57 (3.22)
BSDS – Total	0–108	17	24.62 (23.52)
BSDS – Romani	0–21	2	4.17 (4.91)
BSDS – Vietnamese	0–17	1	2.48 (3.61)
BSDS – Foreigner	0–21	1	2.44 (3.75)
BSDS – Migrant	0–21	3	5.54 (6.09)
BSDS – Homeless	0–21	5	5.95 (4.75)
BSDS – Mental disorder	0–21	1	2.6 (3.45)
BSDS – Physical disorder	0–13	0	1.44 (2.36)
Conflicts – Total	0–108	22	26.66 (22.16)
Conflicts – Romani	1–20	10	10.56 (5.22)
Conflicts – Foreigner	0–20	10	9.93 (4.61)
Conflicts – Vietnamese	0–20	4	5 (4.53)
Conflicts – Tourists	0–20	6	6.59 (4.13)
Conflicts – Migrant	0–20	8.5	8.6 (6.42)
Conflicts – Homeless	0–18	8	7.99 (3.93)
Conflicts – Stranger	0–20	10	9.89 (4.7)
Conflicts – Mental disorder	0–20	11	11.33 (5.24)
Conflicts – Physical disorder	0–20	10	9.15 (5.16)

Note. STiP = Semi-structured Interview for Personality Functioning DSM-5; MRS = Modern Racism Scale; BR = Blatant Racism; SR = Subtle Racism; BSDS = Bogardus Social Distance Scale

Table 2 Results of multiple linear regression analysis predicting BSDS score

	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	B	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**	**B**	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**	**B**	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**
BSDS overall score												
	R^2 = .149, adj. R^2 = .109, F(7, 148) = 3.71, p = .001				R^2 = .207, adj. R^2 = .146, F(11, 144) = 3.41, p <.001				R^2 = .611, adj. R^2 = .56, F(18, 137) = 11.95, p <.001			
Gender[a]	-6.214	-.264	[-.058, .056]	.105	-5.856	-.249	[-.575, .077]	.133	-1.589	-.068	[-.315, .180]	.590
Age	.413	.203	[-.011, .418]	.063	.0363	.179	[-.033, .390]	.097	-.139	-.068	[-.228, .092]	.399
Education[b]	-6.647	-.283	[-.598, .033]	.078	-5.380	-.229	[-.546, .088]	.156	-4.413	-.188	[-.422, .046]	.115
Marital status												
Married – Single	3.142	.134	[-.358, .625]	.592	4.563	.194	[-.297, .685]	.436	4.749	.202	[-.165, .568]	.278
Divorced – Single	5.766	.245	[-.328, .819]	.400	6.82	.290	[-.274, .854]	.311	6.431	.273	[-.154, .701]	.208
Salary												
Below average – average	4.025	.171	[-.189, .532]	.350	1.832	.078	[-.294, .450]	.680	-2.808	-.119	[-.392, .153]	.388
Above average – average	-6.169	-.262	[-.657, .132]	.191	-5.920	-.252	[-.640, .137]	.202	.336	.014	[-.276, .304]	.923
STiP – Identity					.098	.004	[-.275, .283]	.976	2.283	.099	[-.109, .308]	.348
STiP – Self-direction					-5.073	-.183	[-.451, .085]	.180	-6.817	-.246	[-.444, -.048]	.015
STiP – Empathy					5.918	.201	[-.048, .449]	.112	2.116	.072	[-.111, .255]	.439
STiP – Intimacy					4.363	.170	[-.103, .443]	.220	2.724	.106	[-.096, .308]	.300

	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	B	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**	**B**	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**	**B**	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**
BSDS overall score												
	R^2 = .149, adj. R^2 = .109, F(7, 148) = 3.71, p = .001				R^2 = .207, adj. R^2 = .146, F(11, 144) = 3.41, p <.001				R^2 = .611, adj. R^2 = .56, F(18, 137) = 11.95, p <.001			
MRS									.646	.161	[-.014, .336]	.071
BR									3.451	.739	[.569, .910]	<.001
SR									-1.817	-.253	[-.412, -.094]	.002
Father – Care									-.150	-.059	[-.178, .061]	.331
Father - Control									.120	.037	[-.094, .169]	.574
Mother – Care									.153	.061	[-.084, .206]	.404
Mother - Control									.004	.002	[-.137, .140]	.983
Model comparison					ΔR^2 = .057; F(4, 144) = 2.6, p = .039				ΔR^2 = .404; F (3, 137) = 20.33, p <.001			

Note. N = 204. BSDS = Bogardus Scale of Social Distance. In Model 1, we entered the control demographic characteristics, i.e., age, gender, education level, marital status, and salary comparison to predict social distance scores. In Model 2, we also entered STiP personality functioning domains, i.e., Identity, Self-direction, Empathy and Intimacy, as predictors. In Model 3, we added socio-psychological variables: results in Modern Racism Scale, Blatant Racism, Subtle Racism, and scores from Parental Bonding Instrument. [a] Gender: Women – Men, [b] Education level: Higher – Lower

Table 3 Results of multiple linear regression analysis predicting conflicts

	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	B	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**	**B**	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**	**B**	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**
Conflicts overall score												
	R^2 = .060, adj. R^2 = .0154, F(7, 148) = 1.35, p = .232				R^2 = .183, adj. R^2 = .121, F(11, 144) = 2.93, p = .002				R^2 = .303, adj. R^2 = .211, F(18, 137) = 3.30, p <.001			
Gender[a]	-.606	-.028	[-.365, .309]	.870	-1.996	-.092	[-.423, .239]	.583	-3.774	-.174	[-.506, .157]	.301
Age	.094	.050	[-.175, .275]	.660	.056	.030	[-.185, .245]	.783	.017	.009	[-.205, .223]	.934
Education[b]	-3.766	-.174	[-.505, .157]	.301	-.982	-.045	[-.367, .276]	.781	1.042	.048	[-.265, .361]	.762
Marital status												
Married – Single	-1.799	-.083	[-.60, .434]	.751	-.378	-.017	[-.516, .481]	.945	.720	.033	[-.457, .524]	.894
Divorced – Single	-11.837	-.546	[-1.149, .057]	.075	-10.577	-.488	[-1.06, .084]	.094	-10.432	-.482	[-1.053, .090]	.098
Salary												
Below average – average	7.56	.349	[-.030, .728]	.071	3.083	.142	[-.235, .520]	.457	3.963	.183	[-.182, .548]	.323
Above average – average	6.60	.305	[-.110, .720]	.149	6.105	.282	[-.112, .676]	.160	6.891	.318	[-.070, .706]	.108

	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	B	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**	**B**	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**	**B**	**β**	**95% CI**	**p**
Conflicts overall score												
	R^2 = .060, adj. R^2 = .0154, F(7, 148) = 1.35, p = .232				R^2 = .183, adj. R^2 = .121, F(11, 144) = 2.93, p = .002				R^2 = .303, adj. R^2 = .211, F(18, 137) = 3.30, p <.001			
STiP – Identity					5.532	.262	[-.021, .544]	.070	3.636	.172	[-.107, .451]	.226
STiP – Self-direction					-7.400	-.290	[-.562, -.018]	.037	-6.250	-.245	[-.510, .020]	.070
STiP – Empathy					5.580	.206	[-.046, .457]	.109	4.673	.172	[-.073, .417]	.167
STiP – Intimacy					4.063	.172	[-.105, .449]	.222	1.697	.072	[-.198, .342]	.600
MRS									.226	.061	[-.173, .295]	.606
BR									-.052	-.012	[-.240, .216]	.916
SR									.309	.047	[-.166, .260]	.664
Father – Care									-.148	-.063	[-.223, .097]	.436
Father - Control									-.190	-.064	[-.240, .111]	.471
Mother – Care									-.040	-.017	[-.212, .177]	.859
Mother - Control									.932	.370	[.185, .556]	<.001
Model comparison					ΔR^2 = .123; F(4, 144) = 5.42, p < .001				ΔR^2 = .119; F (7, 137) = 3.35, p =.002			

Note. N = 204. In Model 1, we entered the control demographic characteristics, i.e., age, gender, education level, marital status, and salary comparison to predict social distance scores. In Model 2, we also entered STiP personality functioning domains, i.e., Identity, Self-direction, Empathy and Intimacy, as predictors. In Model 3, we added socio-psychological variables: results in Modern Racism Scale, Blatant Racism, Subtle Racism, and scores from Parental Bonding Instrument. [a] Gender: Women – Men, [b] Education level: Higher – Lower

Examining the differences in BSDS and Conflicts between demographic and social characteristics showed that there were significant differences in BSDS–Total between those with a secondary or lower (Mdn = 19), and those with a tertiary or higher education (Mdn = 15), with a small effect size (U = 6032.5; p = .017; rrb = .2), but no significant differences in Conflicts–Total (p = .115). There were no differences in total scores of Conflicts and BSDS between genders (both p > .05). Age correlated significantly only with BSDS–Total (ρ = .36; p < .001).

There were no differences between those who were or were not abroad for a longer period of time in both BSDS–Total and Conflicts–Total (both p > .05). On the other hand, there were differences in Conflicts–Total between those who voted (Mdn = 18) and those who did not (Mdn = 29.5) in parliamentary elections, with a small effect size (U = 5524; p = .014; rrb = .21), but no differences in BSDS-Total (p > .05). Comparison of education and election showed significant differences as 82.9 per cent of those with higher education voted, and only 55 per cent of those with lower education went to elections (χ^2 (1, N = 202) = 15.8, p < .001, Cramer's V = .29).

ANOVA results showed differences between marital statuses only in BSDS–Total with medium effect size (M of singles = 19.56 ± 21.1; M of married = 29.18 ± 24.76, M of divorced = 39.26 ± 23.47; F (2,199) = 9.76, p < .001, = .089). Differences between salaries were also only in BSDS–Total with a small effect size (M of below average = 30.86 ± 25.72; M of average = 26.72 ± 26.05, M of above average = 18.19 ± 17.97; F (2,169) = 3.25, p = .041, = .037).

Subsequently, we run multiple linear regressions to predict BSDS overall score and Conflicts – Total using socio-demographics (age, gender, education level, marital status, and income), personality functioning, and socio-psychological variables (MRS, BR, SR, PBI) as independent variables.

First, the BSDS models fit the requirement of no multicollinearity (VIF range 1.03–1.98), and also show absence of autocorrelation (DW 1.84–2.01, p > 0.05). Table 2 shows the results of the final models. The analysis indicates that 61.10 per cent (or 56.00 per cent, when adjusting for the number of independent variables and sample size) of the variance in the BSDS overall score is explained by the independent variables. In the models, the majority of explained variance came from the third block including socio-psychological variables when controlling for socio-demographics in block 1 and personality functioning in block 2 (all p < 0.05). The final model showed that the significant predictors of BSDS score were STiP – Self-direction from the personality functioning, and BR and SR scores from socio-psychological variables.

Subsequently, the Conflicts models also fit the requirement of no multicollinearity (VIF range 1.03–1.98), and also show absence of autocorrelation (DW 2.05–2.14, p > 0.05). Table 3 shows the results of the final models. The analysis indicates that 30.2 per cent (or 21.1 per cent, when adjusting for the number of independent variables and sample size) of the variance in the Conflicts total score is explained by the independent variables. In the models, only the first model including only the socio-demographics was not significant, the majority of explained variance came from the third block including socio-psychological variables when controlling for socio-demographics in block 1 and personality functioning in block 2. In the first model, the socio-demographics were not significant predictors of conflicts. In the second model, a significant predictor of conflicts was STiP – Self-direction. The third model showed that the significant predictor of conflicts was perceived control from mother (STiP – Self-direction became not significant with p = .070).

7 Discussion

We decided to analyse the relationship between social distance and conflicts with representatives of otherness, and its personality roots – personality functioning (using STiP-5.1), especially the empathy element (in addition to empathy, identity, self-direction, and intimacy comprise the four STiP-5.1 variables). We used STiP-5.1 for good psychometric properties and sufficient reliability even with only brief training (Hutsebaut et al., 2017) and for practical feasibility.

In our analyses, we have focused on predicting social distance and conflicts by employing models that have included various socio-demographics, personality functioning, and socio-psychological variables. The regression models predicting social distance showed that 61.10 per cent of its variance was explained by our variables. The majority of it came from the block that included socio-psychological variables when controlling for socio-demographics and personality functioning, and the significant predictors were STiP – Self-direction from the personality functioning, and BR and SR scores from socio-psychological variables. Similarly, STiP – Self-direction was a significant predictor of conflicts in the second regression model focused on prediction of Conflicts, with in total 30.2 per cent of variance explained by the variables. Notably, in the third model including socio-psychological variables, only perceived control from mother was a significant predictor.

Gordon Allport (1954) considered empathy a difficult trait to submit to laboratory or clinical investigation. For empathy assessment in this study, we used the semi-structured interview measuring personality functioning (STiP-5.1), which is a fairly new method allowing for detailed diagnosis of the aspects of personality functioning (i.e. empathy) according to Criterion A of the Alternative DSM-V model for Personality Disorders (Krueger & Hobbs, 2020). More and more research suggest that the utilization of personality functioning assessment goes beyond diagnostics of personality disorders, and that it captures important information about individual strengths and weaknesses regardless of the diagnosis (Di Pierro et al., 2020; Doering et al., 2018; Doubková et al., 2022; Heissler et al., 2021).

We assumed that STiP-5.1 Empathy would be (negatively) associated primarily with social distance in comparison with other STiP-5.1 variables such as Identity, Self-direction, and Intimacy. As the results suggest, this assumption was not confirmed – Empathy did not have a statistically significant relationship with either social distance or conflicts. In the regression model, however, Self-direction contributes more significantly to the BSDS compared to Empathy. Self-functioning (of which Self-direction is a part) seem to be important for understanding social distance. For Self-direction, the higher the level of disturbance, the lower the distance. More generally, it can be concluded that the pursuit of coherent and meaningful short-term and life goals is important for understanding social distance as well as emotions and social cognition – tolerance of differing perspectives and understanding the effects of one's own behaviour.

Conflicts measured in our study are related to the direct experience of respondents with specific people from a certain minority or social group. Contrary to the assumption that conflicts are more situational, our data show that Self-direction and mother's control predict conflicts. This may indicate the importance of conflicts with respect to the personality, which is described primarily by psychodynamically oriented authors (Psychodynamic diagnostic manual: PDM-2). Future analysis could focus on the extent to which such a conflict has been tractable. Intractable conflicts concern goals of high importance and

such conflict is perceived as unsolvable (Böhm et al., 2020). Our results thus support the influence of socio-psychological variables, prejudice and Self-direction, which is part of Self functioning as it, in contrast to Interpersonal functioning, predicts both conflicts and social distance to a certain degree. Similarly to our results, one Czech study found a relationship between social distance and prejudice toward some minorities, such as Romani and homeless people (Kudrnáč, 2017).

The measurement of social distance consists of the generalization of ideas about a particular group and is generally understood as a uniquely sociological concept, irreducible to spatial or biological (genetic) distance, which can be understood from four perspectives – affective, normative, interactive, and cultural (Karakayali, 2009). Given that mutual sympathy and affectivity are the key elements of social distance (Bogardus, 1925), a closer relationship to Self than to interpersonal personality functioning can be assumed. This assumption was fulfilled by a higher association between social distance and Self than Interpersonal functioning.

In the presented study, we were also interested in the association of reported conflicts and social distance with demographics and socio-economical characteristics. First, men and women did not differ in reported conflicts and their subjective importance, neither in the degree of social distance ($p < .05$, similarly e.g. Firat & Koyuncu, 2021, but differently from e.g. Kovačević & Radovanovic, 2020; Jonason et al., 2020). Age correlated significantly only with social distance ($\rho = .36$; $p < .001$), but not with conflicts. The increasing social distance with age can perhaps be explained by changes throughout the life span – openness to experience decreasing in old age (Roberts et al., 2006), or increasing preference for greater social distance with age (Jorm & Oh, 2009).

Given that age was previously found to be associated with more blatant expressions of prejudice (Ford, 2008) or as having a minor role in stereotype ratings (Hřebíčková & Graf, 2014), we expected to find an association between reported conflicts and age. The absent association between age and conflicts can perhaps be explained by the relative randomness of conflicts and their situational dependence. In other studies in Czech youths (15–20 years) no relationship was found between age and prejudice (which is close to social distance) toward social minorities in general, but a relationship between social distance and prejudice toward specific minorities was found, i.e. Romani and homeless people (Kudrnáč, 2017). Differences between marital status in BSDS and conflicts were not found. Therefore, we think that it is more plausible to consider the effect of age rather than the effect of marital status as such. People with higher education reported lower social distance than people with lower education (19 vs. 15, $p = .017$), which is a well-known fact, indicating the protective effect of education (e.g. Yang, 2021). We also found differences between people with different incomes, with those having below average income claiming overall greater social distance then those with average and above average income. This result is in line with Verberk et al. (2002) who explain that these differences are due to competition over resources between social groups. People who feel that their position in society is threatened, which are usually people on relatively low ranks of social stratification, tend to be more prejudiced and express their attitudes more blatantly in order to secure and improve their position in society.

Moreover, people who did not vote in the 2017 national elections reported more significant conflicts than those who went to the polls (29.5 vs 18, $p = .014$), which is also relat-

ed to lower education levels. As data about the 2017 parliamentary election (Linek, 2018) indicate, these results could be a sign of a more general trend showing that a higher percentage of people with higher education levels votes. We can suspect, that consequently, people who do not vote in elections might feel like their voices are not represented by politicians, which can foster the need for resource competition and prejudiced attitudes (Verberk et al., 2002). However, it must be noted that in the regression models, the socio-demographic variables were not a significant predictors of either social distance or conflicts.

We did not find differences between people who were or were not abroad for a longer period of time in both social distance and conflicts. Rather, we would assume a reduction in social distance and an increase in tolerance in people who spent time abroad, which could be reflected in a reduction in the intensity of conflict perception, because it is generally assumed that the interchange of people, knowledge, and ideas is viewed as a positive way to increase understanding between groups of people (Hendrickson, 2016).

More than half of the respondents had conflicts with Romani (52 per cent) and strangers (74 per cent). The fewest conflicts were reported with Vietnamese (11 per cent). The highest frequency being conflicts with strangers is not surprising – although we assume that the most common conflicts are with family members, but our respondents were not interviewed. At the end of 2020, 62,884 Vietnamese (Czech Ministry of Interior, 2021) lived in the Czech Republic (9.9 per cent of the share of all foreigners, 0.6 per cent of the total population of the Czech Republic), which is the third largest foreign community in the Czech Republic. The number of Romani people, probably the largest minority living in the Czech Republic, is difficult to determine because of the combination of historical, political, and ethical reasons. The estimated number of Romani citizens in the Czech Republic is about 250,000 (Czech Statistical Office, 2021), but different sources of information vary. It can be roughly estimated that there are four times more Romani in the Czech Republic than Vietnamese, which (also) may potentiate the possibility of the frequency of mutual conflict. However, Romani in the Czech Republic encounter prejudices and conflicts more often than other minorities (Hoření, 2008; Kašpárková, 2013) and it is probable that their numerical representation in the population may not be essential for the negative bias of the majority population.

More conflicts with Romani are accompanied by an increased social distance (1.68 times) toward the Romani (4.17) compared to the Vietnamese (2.48). It seems that negative contact between two groups, i.e. between majority and Romani people, is a better predictor of mutual relationship and attitudes than positive contact (Barlow et al., 2012). However, conflicts can also be the start of healthy opportunities (Edwards & Haslett, 2011), especially if they do not contain violence – unfortunately our data do not allow us to analyse this.

Historically, physical conflicts with other representatives of otherness have been common. Allport (1954) stated that in the time of Bismarck, verbal attacks on representatives of otherness – Jews – were relatively mild, yet after Hitler's accession, they were loud and officially sanctioned. Jews were blamed for all conceivable crimes, from sexual perversion to world conspiracy. Even in subtler forms, the conflicts between the children of different ethnicities in Czechoslovakia during Franz Kafka's childhood were so significant that Kafka's friend Oskar Baum permanently lost his sight due to a scuffle as a child (Murray, 2004). Unfortunately, similar attacks continue to be repeated in modern Czech history. In 1990, a Turkish citizen was mistaken for a Romani citizen in the Czech Republic

and killed by a group of neo-Nazis. In 1991, neo-Nazis hosed a Romani to death and several others Romani were seriously injured, followed by more deadly attacks (*Oběti rasových útoků od roku 1990*, 2007). There are still life-threatening attacks on Romani – for example, in 2009 four neo-Nazis injured two-year-old Natalia, who suffered life-threatening third- and fourth degree burns to more than 80 per cent of her body (*Žhářský útok ve Vítkově*, 2021).

As psychoanalysis suggests, conflicts between groups can be not only a reflection of internal conflicts, but also of contradictions among in-group members. Freud noted: 'The evidence of psychoanalysis shows that almost every intimate emotional relation between two people which lasts for some time—marriage, friendship, the relations between parents and children—contains a sediment of feelings of aversion and hostility, which only escapes perception as a result of repression' (Freud, 1985, p. 130).

In our study, we also examined parental influence. Concretely, participants were asked to retrospectively evaluate their parents during their first 16 years. Afterwards, scores for parental dimensions of care/indifference and overprotection/autonomy for both mother and father are calculated. Nonetheless, there is very little evidence about a possible long-term effect of parental bonding on prejudice (Miklikowska, 2017). We found in the regressions conducted that only maternal overcontrol was positively related to conflicts with higher subjective significance. These results suggest the impact of maternal control on conflict mitigation and perception. This appears to be in line with what previous studies have indicated, that parenting style has an influence on interpersonal functioning development, including empathy (Degner & Dalege, 2013; Miklikowska, 2016; Wagers & Kiel, 2019).

Tolerant people do not avoid contact with members of an out-group. If we define absolute tolerance as a BSDS zero = 0.9 per cent of participants had BSDS = 0, which represents an identical and non-distancing attitude toward all representatives of otherness. These participants would require a deeper psychometric and psychological analysis and understanding in-depth (this sample was small in our study, with n = 18) in order to acquire a deeper understanding. However, we know that prejudice might be influenced by friendships. Friendship, generated through affective ties, is a key factor in reducing prejudice, and is expected to be included in the generic framework of the contact hypothesis (Pettigrew, 1998).

8 Limitations

The sample is relatively small (N = 204). The depth of insight into personality functioning, even if measured face to face, is relatively low (one meeting with the participants) and does not include long-term and systematic data collection and objectification of personality functioning, e.g. by comparing different data sources (interview, observation of loved ones, functioning at work, functioning in leisure activities, etc.). We measured how unpleasant the conflict was and how significant it was from today's point of view, which allows a distance from the conflict. Nevertheless, we have no information on the more detailed nature of the conflict and their quantities, due to the subjective nature of their perception. The measurement of the subjective importance of conflicts would deserve further elaboration; compared to personality functioning it was reduced to a categorized yes/no answer and two scales. Social distance was measured only by the self-report (BSDS).

9 Conclusions

In summary, our study shows the subjective importance of conflicts and social distance to representatives of otherness as well as the association of both internal and external realities with the Alternative Model for Personality Disorders (AMPD).

Social distance is related to prejudice and racism and together with conflicts is influenced by self-direction. Additionally, we revealed the importance of maternal control on perception and mitigation of subjectively experienced conflicts.

Overall, our study shows the importance of measuring personality psychopathology as a variable related to social distance and experienced conflicts with minorities (e.g. Romani), people living on the margins of society (e.g. homeless people) and people who differ from the majority in general.

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