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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the validity of measures of teacher brinkmanship behaviors. These are behaviors which challenge the authority system of the school while avoiding its negative sanctions. These acts are generally satirical in nature. The subjects were teachers and principals representing schools located in a metropolitan school system in the southern United States. The data were analyzed using an O-technique factor analysis. The theory differentiating three types of brinkmanship behavior may require further elaboration. The three types of behavior are differentiated by the degrees of compliance which they reflect. The types are "subversive obedience," "tightroping," and "boundary testing." The results suggest that the measures may require further refinement, although they were developed in a thoughtful, multi-staged process and they have been employed by several researchers in substantive studies. (Author/DWH)

Validating Measures of Brinkmanship Behaviors

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the validity of measures of teacher brinkmanship behaviors, i.e, behaviors which challenge the authority of a social system while trying to avoid the negative sanctions which would normally result. The subjects in this study were 180 teachers and principals representing 43 schools located in a metropolitan school system in the southern United States. The data were analyzed using an O-technique factor analysis. The results suggest that the theory differentiating three types of brinkmanship behaviors may require further elaboration. The results also suggest that the measures may require further refinement, although they were developed in a thoughtful, multi-staged process and although they have been employed by several researchers in substantive studies.

Teacher brinkmanship behaviors refer to "teacher behavior which challenges the authority system of the school while avoiding its negative sanctions" (Stapleton, Thompson, Frankiewicz & Croft, 1979, p. 286). These acts are generally satirical in nature and are usually performed before an audience, but are disguised by some means so that the performer does not lose face or risk punishment (Licata & Willower, 1975b). Humor is probably the most frequently employed device with which sanction is avoided.

Licata and Willower (1975a) have suggested that three types of brinkmanship behaviors exist; the types are differentiated by the degrees of compliance which they reflect. As Melancon (1981, p. 38, emphasis added) explains, "'subversive obedience' is rule obeying behavior in which someone follows the letter but not the spirit of a rule, or the person complies in an exaggerated way in order to use the organization's rules to its own disadvantage." As Melancon and Thompson (1981, p. 5, emphasis added) explain, "'tightroping' is nether rule obeying nor rule disobeying behavior, it is behavior which exploits rule vagueness as a means to avoid organizational sanctions." As Frankiewicz and Thompson (1979, p. 2, emphasis added) explain, "rule disobeying behavior that will result in negative sanction, unless adequately protected through humor and satire, is termed boundary testing."

Stapleton (1978) developed a series of short stories which portray various teacher brinkmanship behaviors. Although these stories, hereafter called scenarios, have been employed in a number of investigations, the validity of the scenarios has received limited attention (Thompson, 1981a). The primary exception to this generalization has been the study reported by Thompson and Stapleton (1979/80). The authors used an extension of O-technique factor analysis to test the validity of the scenarios. The scenarios did not cluster exactly in the theoretically expected manner. Among the rival hypotheses which were considered as plausible explanations for this result was the possibility that the sematic differential scales used in the study may not have been appropriate for conceptualizing brinkmanship. However, the authors tended to discount this explanation since they employed scales which have previously been found to underlie most semantic meaning (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957).

The study reported here was conducted to determine empirically whether the results in the Thompson and Stapleton (1979/80) study may have been an artifact of scale selection. In this study subjects reacted to the brinkmanship scenarios on scales which have effectively been used in several studies investigating perceptions of teachers (Miller, Thompson & Frankiewicz, 1975; Thompson, 1980, 1981b; Thompson & Miller, 1978). Furthermore, in this study subjects were also asked to

react to a scenario portraying a non-brinking teacher, i.e., "of all the teachers who have taught me, the one best teacher." This additional scenario was employed to derive an ideal-standard baseline with which to compare perceptions of the various brinkmanship behaviors. This ideal standard has also been employed in previous research (Miller, Thompson & Frankiewicz, 1975).

The subjects (n = 180) in the study were teachers (n = 137) and principals (n = 43) employed in a metropolitan school system in the southern United States. The preponderance (81.7%) of the subjects were females. The subjects were employed in one of 43 schools which were represented in the study.

The subjects rated each of the six brinkmanship scenarios and the ideal standard using each of 13 adjective scales. Both the scenarios and the scales were randomly ordered during instrument administration. The median ratings of the scenarios are presented in Table 1. The matrix of rho's derived from this matrix is presented in Table 2.

INSERT TABLES 1 & 2 ABOUT HERE.

The rho matrix was factor analyzed using a principal components analysis followed by varimax rotation. Since three factors were theoretically expected, three factors were extracted from the rho matrix. The resultant factor pattern

coefficients are presented in Table 3. The rho matrix was also analyzed while excluding all correlations involving the ideal standard scenario. The varimax rotated pattern coefficients derived from this analysis are presented in Table 4.

INSERT TABLES 3 & 4 ABOUT HERE.

These results provide mixed evidence regarding the validity of the scenarios. The Table 1 results, for example, indicate that the tightroping scenarios are perceived as portraying more caring teachers than do the subversive obedience or the boundary testing scenarios; this result is somewhat counterintuitive, since tightroping is conceptualized as being at the middle of the compliance continuum, and not at an end of the continuum.

The Table 2 results also provide mixed validity evidence. For example, it is encouraging that the two tightroping scenarios are so highly correlated, even though they portray different contexts of behavior. However, it is discouraging that the correlation between the two boundary testing scenarios was negative.

The Table 3 results suggest that the second boundary testing scenario may be the cause of this negative convergent validity coefficient; this scenario defines a virtual "singlet" third factor. The Table 3 and 4 results also indicate that the second subversive obedience scenario may be

perceived as being distinct from the first subversive obedience scenario. It is, however, encouraging that all scenarios, with the exception of the second boundary testing scenario, define the first factor presented in Table 3; this result suggests that the subjects differentiated the ideal standard from the brinkmanship scenarios.

Overall, these results must be interpreted cautiously. Taken together with some previous research (Thompson, 1981a; Thompson & Stapleton, 1979/80), the results suggest that Stapleton's (1978) thoughtful, multi-staged development of the scenarios represents a helpful start in developirg measures of perceptions of various types of brinkmanship. However, these results suggest that the theoretical conceptualization of the types may require furtner elaboration. Finally, the results also indicate the importance of continuing effort to refine these measures.

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Table 1

Median Ratings

Adjective	IS	SO1	SO2	TR1	TR2	BT1	BT2
Caring	8.7	2.2	1.4	6.8	5.6	2.6	0.8
Warm	8.6	2.0	1.3	3.5	2.4	1.2	2.8
Humane	8.7	3.6	1.6	4.9	4.8	2.9	2.7
Scholarly	8.4	4.1	1.2	5.0	4.4	3.7	2.4
Intelligent	8.7	4.7	1.8	5.3	4.5	4.7	2.3
Analytical	7.9	5.5	2.6	6.4	5.8	5.0	1.6
Exacting	7.8	7.3	3.4	6.4	5.5	7.5	1.2
Rigorous	6.9	5.2	4.1	5.3	5.0	6.4	2.0
Profound	7.4	4.5	2.7	4.4	4.6	4.8	2.1
Easy	1.0	1.7	1.9	1.5	1.6	0.7	3.8
Undirected	0.4	3.9	5.0	2.1	2.9	2.5	5.1
Docile	2.2	1.4	1.0	1.1	1.1	0.5	1.9
Simple	1.1	3.1	5.5	2.8	3.3	2.6	4.9

NOTE: "IS" = Ideal Standard; "SO" = Subversive Obedience; "TR" = Tightroping; "BT" = Boundary Testing

Table 2

Rho Matrix

	IS	SO1	SO2	TR1	TR2	BT1	BT2
IS	---						
SO1	.16	---					
SO2	-.54	.47*	---				
TR1	.66	.68	.05	---			
TR2	.50	.72	.24	.92*	---		
BT1	.24	.96	.43	.74	.78	---	
BT2	-.46	-.37	.25	-.70	-.66	-.46*	---

* = convergent validity coefficient.

Table 3

Varimax Rotated Pattern Coefficients

Scenario	I	II	III
IS	.23	.95	.17
SO1	.94	-.06	.12
SO2	.59	-.69	-.28
TR1	.75	.44	.43
TR2	.81	.26	.42
BT1	.94	.00	.20
BT2	-.28	-.24	-.92

Table 4

Varimax Rotated Pattern Coefficients

Scenario	I	II	III
SO1	.31	.90	.26
SO2	-.08	.27	.95
TR1	.83	.48	.02
TR2	.82	.46	.22
BT1	.42	.86	.23
BT2	-.87	-.16	.28