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ABSTRACT

Historically pesonality has been predicated on behavioral consistency. To demonstrate the uniqueness of personality using three methods, 23 female college students initially recorded self-descriptive words at the end of each of 23 days. These words were then assigned favorability values from the Adjective Generation Technique norm list. First, uniqueness was demonstrated because variability of favorability within lists of most used words was significantly less than variability between lists. Second, to determine whether subjects' lists of most frequently used words tended not to overlap, and were thereby unique, a catalogue of 49 words from which subjects drew the labels most frequently used in self-description was compiled and compared to the estimated chance probability of overlap in label selection. Third, 46 raters provided Semantic Differential reactions to the behavioral descriptions of each subject. An analysis of the results showed that subjects varied day to day in favorability of self-description more than they differed from one another in overall favorability of self-description, thereby showing little consistency. The observed overlap of at least one label among the subjects' actual lists of most frequently used words was not significantly different from the estimated chance probability. Raters' reactions indicated that they clearly saw the corresponding subjects to be unique. These findings present a dilemma in that although the labels used were unique, intrasubject behavioral consistency was not great, suggesting that not only attributions by others but also dramaturgical quality (precision, clarity, and effectiveness of performed behavior) and dramaturgical value (uncommon behavior directed to several targets) may lead to behavioral consistency. (Author/BL)

Beyond Consistency in the Definition of Personality: Dramaturgical Quality and Dramaturgical Value

Bem P. Allen

Running head: Beyond Consistency

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Beyond Consistency in the Definition of Personality: Dramaturgical Quality and Dramaturgical Value

ABSTRACT

Historically personality has been predicated on behavioral consistency. Assuming that a unique behavioral repertoire is the minimum requirement for the existence of a personality, three methods were employed to demonstrate uniqueness. Twenty-three women recorded self-descriptive words at the end of each of 23 days (Adjective Generation Technique Technique or AGT). The words generated in daily self-description were assigned favorability values from the AGT norm list. Subjects varied day to day in favorability of self-description more than they differed from one another in over all favorability of self-description, thereby showing little consistency. First, uniqueness was demonstrated because variability of favorability within lists of most used words was significantly less than variability between lists. Second, to determine whether subjects' lists of most frequently used words tended not to overlap, and were thereby unique, a catalogue of 49 words from which subjects drew the labels most frequently used in self-description was compiled. A microcomputer program was written to estimate the probability by chance of overlap among 22 lists drawn from a population of 49 entities (one S dropped). The observed overlap of at least one label among the subjects' actual lists of most frequently used words was 93, not significantly different from 88, the estimated chance probability. Third, raters Semantic Differential reactions to the 22 lists indicated that they clearly saw the corresponding subjects to be unique. Results present a dilemma in that subjects' lists of most used labels showed little overlap and were thereby unique, but behavioral consistency was not

great. Criteria for personality other than behavioral consistency are implied and can be derived from Hogan's (1983) theory of personality. That theory suggests each individual incorporates into his personality all the strong and clear attributions made to him by other people. Behavioral consistency may lead to such attributions, but so would Dramaturgical Quality and Dramaturgical Value. Dramaturgical quality of a behavior refers to the precision, clarity and effectiveness with which the behavior is performed. A behavior has dramaturgical value to the extent that it is uncommon and is directed toward several different targets. It is noted that these notions are entirely consistent with the theorizing of Snyder, Tanke and Berscheid (1977).

BEYOND CONSISTENCY IN THE DEFINITION OF PERSONALITY: DRAMATURGICAL QUALITY AND DRAMATURGICAL VALUE

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Historically personality has been largely predicated on behavioral consistency (Allen & Potkay, 1983a; Allen & Potkay, 1983b; Allen & Potkay, 1981; Allport, 1961; Bem & Allen, 1974; Bronfenbrenner, 1951; Byrne & Kelly, 1981; Cattell, 1950; Diener, Note 1; Diener, 1984; Epstein, 1977; Fehr, 1983; Gatchel & Mears, 1982; Lamiell, 1981; Pervin, 1980; Potkay & Allen, in press; Sullivan, 1953). For example, Pervin (1980 p. 6) writes that personality "...represents those characteristics of the person or of people generally that account for consistent patterns of response to situations." Byrne and Kelly (1981, p. 33) define personality "...as the sum total of all of the relatively enduring dimensions of individual differences." To Bronfenbrenner (1951, p. 158) personality is "...a system of relatively enduring dispositions..."

Although "behavioral consistency" may have dominated definitions of personality, stability seems not to have been the minimum requirement for the existence of a personality. Rather the presence of a unique behavioral repertoire confirms its existence. The importance of "uniqueness," above and beyond the emphasis on consistency, is at least implied by most definitions (see above cites), and is explicitly stated by some theorists (e.g., Fehr, 1983; Gatchel & Mears, 1982; Guilford, 1959; Ryckman, 1978). For example, Guilford defines personality as "...a person's unique pattern of traits" (1959, p. 5). That uniqueness can be shown even when consistency is low is the major hypothesis of this study.

The procedure reported below involved daily recordings of labels for the behaviors that subjects performed. The method employed is called the Adjective Generation Technique or AGT (Allen & Potkay, 1983a). Based on previous studies employing the AGT, it is expected that subjects will use behavioral labels at low frequencies, implying low behavioral consistency (Allen & Potkay, 1973; 1977; Potkay & Allen, in press). However, informal examination of labels most frequently recorded by subjects in previous studies involving the AGT suggests that lists of labels are different for different subjects (see Allen & Potkay, 1983a). First, uniqueness can be shown if there is less variance within lists of labels than between lists. That is, each list would be coherent. containing interrelated labels that are different from the sets of labels found on other lists. The reader will recognize that such coherence represents yet another emphasis in the consideration of personality, organization of components of personality. Some theorists have stressed the relationship among aspects of personality (e.g., Eysenck, 1970; Murray, 1938). Second, it is expected that catalogues of labels most frequently produced by subjects will. be so dissimilar, and thereby unique, that the lists will overlap no more than would be expected by chance. Third, uniqueness is expected to apparent to the naked eye. Lists of labels most frequently used by subjects are expected to be so different that raters can readily discriminate among them.

Method

Subjects

Twenty-three women were recruited from two senior level psychology classes during the summer of 1981 (53% of the total enrollment in those classes). They were asked to begin participation

on July 13 and end on August 5. Since most students were juniors, seniors and graduate students they were older than participants in typical psychology research. Each received points to be added to test scores, if she contributed data for the majority of the 24 days. The mean number of days during which subjects participated was 22.5.

Procedure

Each day at the end of the day subjects were to record as many words as they felt applied to themselves during the day. Next they were to write a sentence or two describing any significant events that occurred during the day. Finally subjects wrote a couple of sentences describing the behaviors they performed in response to the events that had occurred. Instructions for all three tasks were typed on masters, duplicated on single sheets and periodically distributed to subjects. Exact instructions are presented in Table 1. It should be noted that Allen and Potkay (1983a) report no effects of varying instructions across several studies. Thus, reference to daily recordings or lack of the same does not set subjects to think that "mood" is or is not being measured (Allen & Potkay, 1981).

Because classes were held five days a week, each subject could deposit her sheet with the data for the previous day in a special receptacle available in the classrooms. Data for the weekend were deposited on Monday. With this method of data collection, subjects had minimal exposure to data from previous days, when they recorded data for a given day.

Insert Table 1 about here

Decoding Data

The words that subjects generated each day were referred to a list of 2200 words and accompanying favorability values (the entire list is contained in Allen and Potkay, 1983a). The mean of values thus assigned constituted the favorability score for that day. Most of the assignments were made by use of a microcomputer program (Apple Soft Basic) that automatically assigns values from the list of 2200 words and calculates means per day, along with making several other calculations. Descriptions of behaviors for each day were typed on separate sheets and two copies were made of each (significant event data will not be discussed further in this paper). Forty-six female raters, two for each subject, were recruited to provide a means of scoring the behavioral descriptions. Each of two raters was provided with a booklet containing behavioral descriptions for a given subject, arranged in random order, and asked to implement the following instruction in the case of each description: "read the entire description found on each sheet and then write down five words that you believe would accurately describe a person, yourself or someone else, who would behave in such a way." The same procedure for scoring AGT records was used to score the words provided by raters.

Results

First, the two ratings of behavioral favorability for each day were correlated within subjects, the coefficients converted to Fisher's Zs, averaged, and the mean converted back to an r value. The resultant reliability value was $r = .39$. Next, the two behavioral values for each day were averaged and the means thus obtained correlated with favorability of AGT daily self-descriptions. The

coefficient of .41 thus obtained provides some support for the assumption that words used in AGT self-description amount to labels for behaviors that subjects have performed (Allen & Potkay, 1983a).

To determine the day-to-day variability or (in)consistency displayed by the mean favorability values assigned to behavioral labels (AGT), the ratio of intraindividual variability to interindividual variability was computed (see Allen & Potkay, 1977, 1983a). The numerator of the ratio was the sum of subjects' day-to-day variances in AGT favorability divided by N, the number of subjects (23). The denominator was the variability of subjects' overall AGT favorability of self-description (the mean of daily favorability) about the grand mean of subjects' overall favorability values, divided by N-1 (22). The obtained $F = 7.19$ ($df = 494/22$, $p < .01$) indicated that subjects varied day-to-day in favorability of AGT self-description more than they differed from one another in overall favorability of AGT self-description.

Lists of labels that subjects generated with frequencies of at least five were compiled. In this analysis, one subject's data was eliminated, because all labels were generated at a frequency of less than five. Also, the data of one subject was retained, although some the labels she employed most frequently were not recorded on five days. Thus, N was equal to 22 in this analysis. The 22 lists are depicted in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

In the course of initially examining the 22 lists, it was immediately obvious that situational effects were present. "Tired" was used by 15 subjects, "happy" by 19 subjects and "anxious" by 10 subjects. Students at the university where the study was conducted tend to "party" late most nights of the week. The orientation to revelry is a part of the university's history and has recently been a subject of debate, even well outside the area surrounding the institution (Peoria Journal Star, 3/3/84, p. B8). That typical life-style ensures subjects will be "tired" when they make AGT self-descriptions, just before retiring. In terms of situational effects, nightly "partying" makes students "happy," but also "anxious," due to missed opportunities for study. Accordingly, it was assumed that situational effects common to most subjects were present in the form of "tired," "happy" and "anxious." These effects were partialed out of the data by elimination of the three words. Of course, this method extracts situations as emphasized by the "situationalists" and social psychologists (Bowers, 1973), leaving mainly situations that are unique to individuals because many of these are chosen on an individual basis, in line with the tenets of "interactionism" (Diener et al., 1984).

First, a simple one-way analysis of variance (unweighted means) was performed to determine whether each list is coherent, containing interrelated labels that are different from the sets of labels found on other lists. The effect of this analysis was to ascertain whether variance of favorability within the lists was smaller than variance between lists. Results showed that, as expected, variance between lists exceeded variance within lists ($F = 2.94$, $df = 21/76$, $p < .01$). The same result was obtained with the inclusion of "tired," "happy"

and "anxious" ($\underline{F}$ = 2.03, $\underline{df}$ = 21/121, $\underline{p}$ < .01). Thus, there was coherence within lists of words most frequently used throughout the course of the study, and those lists differed one from the other (note that variance within a static list of words is not comparable to variance within the words subjects used on a daily basis).

To determine whether overlap was so small as to support uniqueness, it was necessary to estimate the amount of overlap displayed by lists that would be expected by chance alone. Such is the case, because any set of lists of any entities drawn from a limited population would show some overlap by chance. Uniqueness is shown if overlap is no more than that expected by chance. The first step in that process was begun by typing all labels most frequently used by the subjects into the Screen Writer II Word Processing Program. The resultant file was next submitted to the Sensible Speller Program, which revealed that 96 labels were most frequently used by subjects. This list amounted to a frequency distribution with each of 49 words being used one or more times by subjects. In effect, the 49 words constituted a list from which subjects chose their self-descriptive labels, with several subjects selecting some words and only one or a few picking other words. Thus, the 49 words were considered to be the population from which subjects drew the labels they most frequently used in self-description.

Next, a microcomputer program (Apple) was written to generate 22 sets of random numbers drawn from a population of 49, each set exactly duplicating the length of a list actually produced by one of the 22 subjects (lists of labels most employed by subjects varied in length from three to eight). The program was run ten times and, for each run, a count was made of the number of overlaps of at least one number

that occurred among the 22 sets (in the few cases where a duplicate number occurred within a set, it was replaced by an additional random number). The mean number of overlaps across the ten runs, 88 out of 231 possible overlaps, was taken as the index of overlap by chance.

The actual number of overlaps of at least one label among the lists of labels most frequently used by subjects was 93. The observed (93) versus chance (88) overlap was contrasted by reference to the normal approximation to the binomial (Hays, 1963). The obtained Z of .68 indicated that the observed overlap did not exceed the amount of overlap expected by chance ($p > .24$). That is, subjects' lists were so different, that they exhibited no more overlap than would be expected by chance.

Finally, to show that the uniqueness of subjects is apparent to the naked eye, 20 students were recruited to rate the persons represented by the lists of labels. Each subject reacted to each of the 22 lists by use of Semantic Differential Scales (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957). Results of a simple one-way analysis of variance (unweighted means) of Evaluative Scale responses showed that the students did see the 22 subjects as different from one another (good-bad, wise-foolish, and successful-unsuccessful; $F = 44.30$, $df = 21/399$, $p < .001$). Results were identical when "tired," "happy" and "anxious" were included ($F = 22.53$, $df = 21/525$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

Uniqueness

Two sources of evidence indicated that behavioral consistency was not great for the present subjects. First, intraindividual variability significantly exceeded interindividual variability. That is, variability day-to-day was greater than individual differences in

overall favorability of self-description. Although this outcome is typical, it does not occur when demand character or instructions to subjects would logically dictate otherwise. In the constancy of a mental hospital setting (Schroeder & Pendleton, 1983) or when "true self" instructions are given (Allen & Potkay, 1983a) intraindividual variability does not exceed interindividual variability. Second, examination of Table 2 indicates that, at most, behavioral labels were repeated 16 times in an average of 22.5 days, implying little behavioral consistency. The mean repetition of labels was only 6.58.

Despite relative lack of behavioral consistency, there was clear evidence that subjects were behaviorally unique. First, subjects' lists of most used labels were coherent. The differences among words within the lists were small relative to the differences among the lists as a whole. Second, a statistical comparison between actual overlap among the 22 lists of behavioral labels and overlap due to chance revealed that the observed number of overlaps did not depart from chance expectancy. Ninety-three overlaps were observed, and 88 expected by chance. This outcome was obtained in a rather uniform context, where subjects were faced with many of the same situations. To be sure, situational effects were present in the case of college students enrolled in the same kinds of courses during the same summer session, even beyond those represented by "happy," "tired" and "anxious." In view of such strong situational pressures common to most subjects, it is particularly noteworthy that subjects displayed behavioral uniqueness. Third, an analysis of raters' Semantic Differential responses to the lists indicated that they clearly appreciated subjects' uniqueness. One can confirm this outcome by application of the "eyeball test" to Table 2. It is evident that

subjects really were behavioral different from one another, that is, unique. It is easy to can see that these people are dissimilar from one another. There is not even an approximation to total overlap among lists of behavioral labels. Also, subjects L and V's lists show no overlap with that of any other subjects.

Dramaturgical Quality and Value

These results present something of a dilemma for traditional notions of personality. Subjects met the minimum requirement for possession of personality, uniqueness, but did so without the behavioral consistency that is almost universally assumed in definitions of personality. One way out of the predicament is to propose criteria for personality, other than behavioral consistency.

Consistent behavioral performance can be the source a personality attribution that a person might recieve, but as Kelly (1973) indicates it is not the only stimulus for an attribution. The writer (in Potkay & Allen, in press) has interpreted Hogan's (1983) theory as relevant to additional criteria for personality. Hogan seeks to unite social psychological research and theory concerning attribution with traditional personality theory and research. In so doing, he has cast people in the process of personality construction as actors whose behavior is observed by others who then feedback an analysis via attributuon. Although it is an oversimplification (see below), Hogan's theory might be summed up in the statement "you are your perceptions of how other people view you." That is, individuals incorporate into their personalities all the strong and clear attributions directed to them by other people. Certainly if a person behaves consistently, she may be the object of attributions which she may appreciate and eventually incorporate into her personality.

However, Dramaturgical Quality and Dramaturgical Value might also determine attributions that become components of personality (Coe & Sarbin, 1977 and Sarbin, 1978 suggested these terms). Dramaturgical Quality refers to the precision, clarity and effectiveness with which a behavior is performed. If the Dramaturgical Quality of a person's behavioral performance is high, other people will not only notice, but may also make attributions to the individual that correspond to his behavior. With high Dramaturgical Quality, attributions are likely to be clearly communicated, appreciated by the targets and incorporated into their personalities. For example, suppose that a large crowd gathers around a child who is crying uncontrollably and resisting efforts to provide comfort. Suppose further that a person makes his way through the crowd and manages to calm the child where all others have failed. Perhaps witnesses have never seen the person perform such a behavior before, and in fact, he does not behave in that way very often. Nevertheless, onlookers are likely to attribute "nurturance" or its equivalent to the man and do so with openness that he cannot miss. The result could be incorporation of "nurturance" into the man's personality.

A behavioral performance has Dramaturgical Value to the extent the behavior involved is uncommon and is directed to several targets. If a person performs an uncommon behavior and directs it to several targets, it is likely to stick in the minds of observers, so much so that attributions are made corresponding to the behavior. On the other hand, even if the behavior in question is uncommon, should it be directed to only one target, the target rather than the performer may be seen as the source of the behavior (cf. Kelly, 1973). As an example, suppose that a meeting of disgruntled industrial employees is

being held and management is again spouting platitudes about "employee-employer cooperation," while failing to address issues relating to employee discontent. Suppose that people who complain about such hypocrisy risk demotion and eventual dismissal. At first, workers sit in angry silence, as is usual for them. However, on this occasion, an employee suddenly rises out of the audience, boldly approaches the current speaker, lectures him, then turns on the vice presidents and finally the company president. Assume she has never done anything like this before, and that, being inarticulate, her performance lacks quality. She may still be attributed with "courage" by many bystanders. Such attributions are likely to be strong leading to an expansion of the worker's personality.

The data presented here suggest the concepts "Dramaturgical Quality" and "Dramaturgical Value." The observation that subjects showed uniqueness in the absence of strong behavioral consistency implies that behavioral consistency was not the only means by which their personalities were constructed. Subjects may have displayed Dramaturgical Quality and Value in their behavioral performances thereby being recipients of strong attributions that were eventually incorporated into their personalities. Also, these data are not presented as "disconfirmation of behavioral consistency." Behavioral consistency has been vigorously defended elsewhere (e.g., Monson et al., 1982 and Epstein, 1977). To the contrary, consistency is assumed to be one source of attributions that contribute to personality, but not the only, or even necessarily the primary source. Dramaturgical Quality and Dramaturgical Value are also sources. The plea is for a broader approach to personality, not the elimination of traditional approaches.

Hogan's Theory

Hogan's (1983) view unites "attribution process" with familiar notions of "personality," thereby promoting theoretical parsimony and amalgamating the somewhat estranged areas of social psychology and personality. If attribution, a social psychological process, underlies the construction of personality, the two areas may once again be considered part and parcel of the same thing. If Dramaturgical Quality and Dramaturgical Value help to explain how attribution contributes to personality, these notions aid in the pursuit of parsimony and the thorough reunion of personality and social psychology.

Of course, the simple summary of Hogan's (1983) point of view given above does not do justice to the richness of his theory. Besides attributional processes, Hogan includes biology and early experience as determinants of personality. Self-presentation is strongly emphasized. Thus, people are seen as working hard at self-presentations that will garner attributions capable of reinforcing already existing components of personality, rather than just passively receiving attributions that lead to new components. However, these additional characteristics of Hogan's theory do no damage to Dramaturgical Quality and Value. The two concepts can just as readily be used to explain how existing components of personality are reinforced, as to explain how new components are acquired. High Dramaturgical Quality and high Dramaturgical Value manifested in behavioral performances can yield strong attributions that reinforce existing components of personality or lead to the installation of new components.

Snyder, Tanke and Berscheid (1977)

Dramaturgical Quality and Dramaturgical Value might fit neatly into other theoretical frameworks. Snyder, Tanke and Berscheid (1977) elegantly demonstrated that stereotyping people may make them targets of highly salient behaviors. Targets, in turn, respond with behaviors that confirm the stereotypes, leading to attributions that stimulate still more self-confirmatory behavior on the part of targets. Dramaturgical Quality and Dramaturgical Value can be used to explain the circumstances under which attributions are likely to be clearly communicated to targets, leading to behaviors that confirm stereotypes. The degree to which behaviors of targets are clearly, precisely and effectively performed and are uncommon is the degree to which strong attributions are likely to be directed to targets, yielding self-confirmatory behaviors. Further, the two concepts offer an explanation concerning how stereotyped attributions may eventuate in permanent additions to targets' personalities. Attributions based on clear, precise and effective performances of uncommon behaviors are likely to be recognized by targets and incorporated into their personalities, rather than being only temporary stimuli for behavior.

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Table 1

Instructions Included on Subject's

Daily Record Sheets

At the end of this day, reflect on yourself and write-down as many or as few adjectives as are needed to accurately describe yourself, but be sure to record at least five adjectives.

Indicate what happened to you on this day, by briefly recording any events that occurred to you which you regard as significant.

Indicate how you reacted to what happened to you on this day, by briefly recording the behavior you performed in response to the events that occurred to you.

Table 2

Subjects' Lists of Most Used Behavioral Labels
(numbers after words are frequencies)

Subject A		Subject B		Subject C		Subject D		Subject E	
bored	6	frustrated	8	depressed	6	nervous	9	rested	7
frustrated	6	hungry	7	moody	6	excited	7	bored	6
angry	7	excited	6	rapturous	6	relaxed	7	excited	5
		busy	5	satisfied	6	relieved	6	irritated	5
								nervous	5
								relaxed	5

Subject F		Subject G		Subject H		Subject I		Subject J	
ready	7	bored	9	irritated	10	busy	10	excited	16
accomplished	6	lonely	8	energetic	8	worried	7	content	9
glad	5	depressed	7	content	7	content	6	upset	9
pleased	5	nervous	5					depressed	5
positive	5	grouchy	5					angry	5

Subject K		Subject L		Subject M		Subject N		Subject O	
excited	7	spiritual	13	relaxed	13	weary	11	worried	10
nervous	4	challenged	7	nervous	8	depressed	8	exhausted	10
outgoing	3	wondering	6	rushed	5	sad	8	unhappy	7
bored	3	empathetic	5	energetic	5	pleased	8	fat	5
		alive	5	lazy	5	relieved	7	excited	5
						surprised	6		
						bored	6		
						apprehensive	5		

Subject P		Subject Q		Subject R		Subject S		Subject T	
relieved	6	content	7	excited	8	excited	11	concerned	6
frustrated	5	relaxed	7	pressured	8	relieved	6	relaxed	6
upset	5	relieved	5	rushed	6	frustrated	6	pleased	6
lazy	5	satisfied	5	upset	6	down	6	busy	5
				relieved	5			warm	5

Subject U		Subject V	
relaxed	8	secure	7
studious	5	calm	5
pleased	5	confident	5
thoughtful	5		