

Functional Flexibility: A New Conception of Interpersonal Flexibility

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Traditional conceptions of interpersonal flexibility emphasize two critical components: (a) a wide range of interpersonal responses and (b) situational appropriateness. Most current measures are based on standard trait ratings, which cannot address situational adjustment. In place of trait ratings, we suggest the use of capability ratings, that is, self-reports of the ease of performing social behaviors when required by the situation. Our proposed index of flexibility, the Functional Flexibility Index (FFI), is the composite of 16 interpersonal capabilities. In Study 1, factor analyses indicated that the FFI is distinct from other widely used flexibility measures. Study 2 supported the validity of the FFI by showing substantial correlations with peer ratings of interpersonal flexibility. In Studies 3 and 4, the FFI outperformed other flexibility measures in predicting adjustment. Another form of interpersonal variability, *situationality*, is the tendency to view one's personality as being dependent on the situation. Situational individuals reported *lower* self-esteem than nonsituational individuals. Measures of functional flexibility and situationality were found to be orthogonal.

Interpersonal flexibility has been defined as the ability to adjust one's behavior to suit changing interpersonal situations (e.g., Leary, 1957). Many personality theorists cite flexibility as being central to the healthy personality (see review by Scott, 1968). In this view, the behavioral variability of the flexible person is considered adaptive. Some varieties of behavioral variability, however, are clearly maladaptive, for example, the weak character (Shapiro, 1965), the social chameleon (Ring & Wallston, 1968), and the dependent character (Millon, 1981). A third view is that increasing flexibility is adaptive up to an optimal point, after which one is perceived as being wishy-washy (e.g., Block, 1961). In short, there is little consensus on how the tendency to vary one's behavior across situations is related to psychological adjustment.

In this article we focus on the conceptions in which behavioral variability is claimed to be adaptive. Variations of this construct appear in the literature under such diverse labels as role flexibility, self-monitoring, and androgyny. To distill the common features, a brief review of the literature is required.

Current Conceptions *Interpersonal Theory*

The only sustained interest in interpersonal rigidity-flexibility stems from the disciples of interpersonal theory (Carson,

1969; Leary, 1957; Sullivan, 1953; Wiggins & Holzmueller, 1978). Of these, Leary (1957) argued the most forcefully that one's interpersonal flexibility bears directly on one's psychological adjustment. Specifically, Leary claimed that maladjustment involves "the limiting of one's interpersonal apparatus and the compulsive use of certain inflexible, inappropriate interpersonal operations" (p. v). In contrast, adjustment is characterized by personality mechanisms that are flexible enough to deal with a wide variety of interpersonal situations and environmental pressures. As Leary put it, "In the adjusted, well-functioning individual the entire repertoire of interpersonal reflexes is operating spontaneously, flexibly and appropriately—when the survival situation demands aggression, he can aggress; when it calls for tenderness, he can be tender" (p. 118). Thus, for Leary, the index of adjustment is the proportion of flexible interactions appropriate to the interpersonal stimulus. Accordingly, in treating neuroses the therapist's goal is to increase the range of the client's interpersonal behavior (Carson, 1969).

Leary (1957) argued that two major motives govern interpersonal behavior. One motive is the minimization of anxiety: People behave in ways that preclude or reduce pain or discomfort. The second motive is the maximization of self-esteem. Interpersonal behavior is said to be guided by attempts to maintain or to improve self-esteem. However, anxiety or threat to self-esteem tends to evoke the individual's dominant interpersonal style. In trait-anxious persons, the continuing presence of anxiety will act to maintain a rigid style of responding.

Androgyny

A currently popular concept of interpersonal flexibility is Bem's (1974) description of psychological androgyny. Androg-

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ynous individuals are said to possess both positive masculine and positive feminine personality characteristics. Bem (1975) argued that because such individuals have a wide range of behaviors available to them, they "remain sensitive to the changing constraints of the situation and engage in whatever behavior seems most effective at the moment" (pp. 634–635). Thus, androgynous people are considered to be "interpersonally flexible." In contrast, rigidly sex-typed people have a restricted range of available behaviors (only masculine or only feminine) and are limited, therefore, in their interpersonal flexibility. Similar to Leary (1957), Bem (1974) argued that because of their interpersonal flexibility, androgynous individuals should be better adjusted and have higher self-esteem than would rigidly sex-typed people. For this reason, androgyny has been claimed to be an index of psychological health (e.g., Bem, 1974; Rebecca, Hefner, & Oleshansky, 1976). Androgyny has even been considered by some to be an "ideal psychological state" (e.g., Gilbert, 1981; Kaplan, 1976).

Self-Monitoring

Snyder's (1974, 1979) concept of self-monitoring¹ focuses directly on interpersonal flexibility. According to Snyder (1974), the self-monitoring individual is one who, "out of a concern for social appropriateness, is particularly sensitive to the expression and self-presentation of others in social situations and uses these cues as guidelines for monitoring his own self-presentation" (p. 528). Further, this strategy "gives the individual the flexibility to cope quickly and effectively with . . . diverse social roles" (Snyder, 1979, p. 109). As a result, high self-monitors show less behavioral consistency than low self-monitors when situational demands vary (Snyder, 1979).

Despite the ostensible differences in these three conceptions of flexibility, they share two fundamental features. One is that flexible individuals have a wide repertoire of behaviors available to them. The second is that flexible individuals adjust these behaviors to suit situational demands.

Measurement of Interpersonal Flexibility

Although there is some agreement regarding the nature of interpersonal flexibility, there is no agreement about how to measure it. Fortunately, the current measures may be conveniently partitioned into *stylistic* and *composite* measures. Stylistic measures assess attributes contributing to a flexible personality (e.g., openness to new ideas, social perceptiveness, acting skill). Two such measures, the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) Flexibility scale (Gough, 1957) and the Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974), are discussed later. Composite approaches assess the breadth of the repertoire of available responses by asking whether the respondent can perform a variety of specific behaviors. We discuss several such approaches: Leary's (1957) profile analysis, Bem's (1974) androgyny indexes, and Wiggins and Holzmuller's (1978, 1981) flexibility measure.

Composite Measures

Leary's (1957) method of assessing interpersonal flexibility involves self-reports on the Interpersonal Check List.² This

checklist comprises 128 items: 8 items for each of 16 interpersonal variables (e.g., aggressive, competitive, docile, rebellious). For each variable there is 1 item that reflects Level 1 intensity, "a mild or necessary amount of the trait"; 3 items that reflect Level 2 intensity, "a moderate or appropriate amount of the trait"; 3 items that reflect Level 3 intensity, "a marked or inappropriate amount of the trait"; and 1 item that expresses Level 4 intensity, "an extreme amount of the trait" (Leary, 1957, p. 455). Flexibility in aggressiveness, for example, would be assessed by having individuals rate whether each of the levels of the trait (e.g., Level 1, can be frank and honest; Level 4, hard-hearted) is self-descriptive. A profile of scores on each of the 16 interpersonal variables is derived from these item ratings. Flexibility is indexed by the number of Level 2 responses.

To measure psychological androgyny, Bem (1974) developed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). From judges' ratings, Bem selected a series of 20 positive traits to measure masculinity and 20 positive traits to measure femininity. The sum of the masculine items (M) was found to be orthogonal to the sum of the feminine items (F). Two methods of scoring androgyny have been widely used. One indicator is a low score on the absolute difference $|F - M|$. Alternatively, subjects are divided into four groups: sex-typed masculine (high M, low F), sex-typed feminine (high F, low M), androgynous (high M, high F), and undifferentiated (low M, low F). Here, androgyny is indicated by the tendency to claim both categories of positive traits. According to Bem (1975), androgynous individuals are interpersonally flexible, whereas sex-typed individuals are more rigid.

In a subsequent series of reports, Spence and Helmreich and their colleagues have countered that Bem's (1974) two measures are too narrow to measure global masculinity and femininity. Rather, the measures are said to tap two personality dimensions: instrumentality and interpersonal expressiveness (Spence, 1983, 1984; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975). Wiggins and Holzmuller (1978, 1981) accumulated more evidence to support this claim but argued that the more traditional personality labels of dominance and nurturance should be applied. Nonetheless, both groups of critics accepted the label *androgynous* as being appropriate for individuals scoring high on both measures. Thus, androgynous individuals are inarguably flexible in that they possess two desirable interpersonal traits.

Wiggins and Holzmuller (1978, 1981) went on to propose an alternative method for assessing interpersonal flexibility. Rather than two traits, they measured the 16 interpersonal traits (dominance, warmth, introversion, etc.) that form the interpersonal circumplex (Leary, 1957; Wiggins, 1979). By standardizing scores within each trait, subjects could be characterized by a profile of interpersonal traits. Profile variability was assumed to indicate degree of flexibility. Relatively flat profiles (in which each trait is given the same rating) were said to indicate flexibility, whereas profiles with peaks and dips indicated rigidity. Accordingly, the Wiggins and Holzmuller index of an individual's flexibility was the variance of the 16 standardized scores. Unfor-

¹ Those unfamiliar with Snyder's (1974, 1979) concept should not confuse it with the term *self-monitoring* used by behavioral clinicians. In both senses, the term does not refer to monitoring the self but to monitoring one's own behavior.

² The trait ratings can also be made by a clinician (Leary, 1957, p. 115).

tunately, the only study of external correlates of this variance measure yielded mixed results (Chartier & Conway, 1984).

Stylistic Measures

As noted earlier, stylistic measures of interpersonal flexibility focus on the psychological attributes conducive to a flexible personality. One commonly used measure is the Flexibility scale from the CPI (Gough, 1957). The scale was designed to "identify people who are flexible, adaptable, and even somewhat changeable in their thinking, behavior, and temperament" (Gough, p. 65). The items are designed to assess rejection of dogmatic assertions, tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, impulsivity, and a nonjudgmental attitude toward moral issues. Although the goal was to assess a broader form of flexibility, the items clearly emphasize cognitive style.

Another stylistic measure is Snyder's (1974) Self-Monitoring Scale, a 25-item true-false self-report scale containing questions about five aspects of self-monitoring. These aspects include (a) concern with the social appropriateness of one's self-presentation, (b) attention to social comparison information as cues to appropriate self-expression, (c) the ability to control and modify one's self-presentation and expressive behavior, (d) the use of this ability in specific situations. Thus, the Self-Monitoring Scale is designed to assess skills and techniques that the flexible person may use. Finally, the measure includes five items that are directly designed to assess behavioral variability. Respondents are assigned a single self-monitoring score based on the total number of items claimed. Lennox and Wolfe's (1984) revised Self-Monitoring Scale is a 13-item version that includes only two aspects: sensitivity to others' emotional expression and ability to modify self-presentation.

Another measure related to interpersonal flexibility is the Change scale from Jackson's (1967) Personality Research Form. A high scorer on Change is described as liking new and different experiences, disliking routine and avoiding it, readily changing opinions and values in different circumstances, and adapting to changes in the environment. On the basis of theory and factor analyses, Jackson conceived the scale in terms of sensation seeking and impulsivity. Therefore, we do not further consider the Change scale.

Critique of Current Measures

Having concluded that the two critical components of flexibility are a wide behavioral repertoire and the ability to adjust to situational demands, we may now evaluate each of the measures outlined earlier. Neither of the popular stylistic measures adequately meets the criteria. Stylistic measures will generally not meet the first criterion because they do not directly measure the breadth of repertoire by asking about specific traits or behaviors. The CPI Flexibility scale may also be rejected on more specific grounds. The scale is directed more toward cognitive flexibility (e.g., tolerance for uncertainty, cautiousness in judgments). The theoretical link with interpersonal flexibility, a wide and appropriate response repertoire, is tenuous. Moreover, the scale's poor showing in validity studies has led Megargee (1972) to conclude in the CPI handbook that "[it] is one of the least valid CPI scales" (p. 90).

Neither has Snyder's (1974) Self-Monitoring Scale proved to

be a satisfactory measure of interpersonal flexibility. In the most recent review, John and Block (1987) concluded that the Self-Monitoring Scale does not predict behavioral variability. The problem may lie in the multidimensionality of the scale. Gabreyna and Arkin (1980), as well as Briggs, Cheek, and Buss (1980), found the scale to be a combination of three factors: Extraversion, Other-Directedness, and Acting Skill. Given that external correlates of these factors show only mixed correspondence with Snyder's construct, the meaning of the overall scale score is unclear (Briggs & Cheek, 1986; John & Block, 1987). Snyder continues to claim a unitary construct (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986), but given the current evidence, the most prudent approach would be to consider separately each component of the Self-Monitoring Scale. Indeed, Lennox and Wolfe (1984) have developed a revised Self-Monitoring Scale that is more consistent with Snyder's original conception, as articulated in his 1974 article, and a separate measure of the second factor, which they titled Concern for Appropriateness.

Unlike the stylistic measures, the composite measures do assess the breadth of the behavioral repertoire. Most of these measures, however, fail to cover the full range of interpersonal behaviors. In addition, the composite measures generally tend to be inadequate for assessing flexibility because they fail to consider the ability to adjust to situational demands.

Although Bem's (1974) scale is a composite measure, it fails to satisfy either criterion. The range of the behavioral repertoire assessed in the BSRI is limited in two ways. First, all of the items were selected on the basis of being socially desirable so that there are no items representing neutral or undesirable attributes. Second, rather than assessing a large domain of traits, the BSRI assesses only two traits relevant to sex roles, namely, instrumentality/dominance and expressiveness/nurturance (Paulhus, 1987; Spence, 1984; Wiggins & Holzmueller, 1978).

Bem's (1974) approach also fails to address the adjustment of behavior to suit situational demands. The BSRI records trait ratings (i.e., estimates of average or typical behaviors) rather than assessing adjustment to situations. Bem assumed that people who report having a given trait will draw on this behavior when it is appropriate to do so, whereas those who do not claim the trait are incapable of such behavior. Some recent evidence suggests that this is a faulty assumption (Kaplan, 1979).

The extension of Bem's (1974) approach recommended by Wiggins and Holzmueller (1978, 1981) does assess a wider range of the behavioral repertoire. The 16 interpersonal traits are said to cover the complete domain of interpersonal variables (Wiggins, 1979) rather than only the 2 positive traits assessed by Bem (1974). These include socially undesirable traits (e.g., arrogant, quarrelsome) as well as socially desirable traits (e.g., gregarious, agreeable). Similar to Bem's approach, however, is the lack of consideration of the situational component. Subjects are asked to make standard trait ratings without regard for situational appropriateness. We hold that no index of flexibility using trait ratings can overcome this fundamental weakness.

Leary's (1957) original approach to flexibility assessment comes closest to assessing both components of flexibility. The full range of interpersonal behaviors in the circumplex is covered. The flaw is in the way the situational component is assessed. Rather than directly assessing whether a certain behavior occurs in the appropriate situation, Leary assumed that a moderate level of trait intensity indicates flexibility. Goldberg

(1981), however, has already demonstrated that a moderate level of trait does not necessarily indicate flexibility: An individual may be rigidly fixed at a moderate level. When an extreme level of behavior is required, the capability is not there.

We must conclude that none of the methods reported here is entirely adequate for assessing the behavioral repertoire and situational appropriateness of interpersonal flexibility. This lack of a good measure for such an important construct motivated our work on a new method for assessing interpersonal flexibility.

Interpersonal Functional Flexibility

We propose the term *functional flexibility* to describe the ability to adjust one's behavior to the interpersonal demands of a wide range of situations. This concept is based directly on the two central criteria gleaned from earlier conceptions of flexibility: (a) a large behavioral repertoire and (b) appropriate deployment.

The assessment of functional flexibility requires an appropriate methodology. The composite approach appealed to us because it gauges the range of personality attributes. Rather than a repertoire of traits, however, functional flexibility involves a repertoire of *capabilities*. Trait ratings are summaries of recent behavior (e.g., Wiggins, 1974); capability ratings assess the potential for performing the behavior (Paulhus & Martin, 1987). With trait ratings, a respondent would have to contradict himself or herself to claim certain combinations (e.g., dominant and submissive). In contrast, a respondent may reasonably claim both of these capabilities (Martin & Paulhus, 1984).

The BIC Inventory

In a recent report (Paulhus & Martin, 1987), we described a self-report inventory designed to assess a variety of interpersonal capabilities: the Battery of Interpersonal Capabilities (BIC). Respondents are asked four questions about their ability to enact each of a series of interpersonal attributes. For each attribute, subjects are asked a direct capability question, for example, "How capable are you of being dominant when the situation requires it?" Three additional questions were asked to assess (a) the difficulty of performing each behavior, (b) anxiety when performing each behavior, and (c) the tendency to avoid situations demanding such behavior. Responses to all questions are rated on 7-point Likert scales anchored by *very much* (7) and *not at all* (1).

To measure the full domain of interpersonal behaviors, we adopted the 16 interpersonal attributes used by Wiggins and Holzmüller (1978, 1981). These items cover a wide range of both socially desirable and socially undesirable traits. Also, the interrelations among the trait versions of these 16 interpersonal variables are clearly established (Wiggins, 1979).

We recently explored the properties of these interpersonal capabilities in a series of structural analyses (Martin & Paulhus, 1984; Paulhus & Martin, 1987). For each attribute, individuals were asked to rate themselves in terms of both traits and capabilities. Factor analyses showed a clear separation of trait measures from capability measures. This was an important preliminary demonstration that capability measures tap some com-

mon construct that is distinct from the more traditional trait concept.

The second structural analysis (Paulhus & Martin, 1987, Study 2) examined whether the usual circumplex structure of Wiggins's (1979) 16 interpersonal traits would be sustained for capability ratings. Although the circumplex was replicated for standard trait ratings, the capability ratings revealed a dramatically different structure. Here, the usual circular ordering collapsed into the first quadrant to form a positive manifold. The new structure was marked by two orthogonal traits, nurturance and hostility. Note that in the standard circumplex, these two traits are polar opposites.

Implications for Measuring Flexibility

This contrast in the structure of trait and capability ratings has important implications. Because trait measures require respondents to fix themselves at some point on the rating scale, a trait and its semantic opposite will be negatively correlated: It stands to reason that an individual who is typically warm cannot also be typically cold. The capability data, however, indicate that an individual who is capable of warm behavior will, as likely as not, be capable of cold behavior. Moreover, the individual who is incapable of warm behavior is not necessarily capable of cold behavior.

This emergence of a positive manifold structure (i.e., no negative correlations) for capabilities is a critical finding for the analysis of interpersonal flexibility. Respondents do not have to contradict themselves to report a wide range of capabilities. An individual who claimed all 16 capabilities in the circumplex would be maximally flexible, and the individual who claimed only one would be maximally rigid. An appropriate index of flexibility would be some composite of all 16 capabilities. In fact, given that there are no negative intercorrelations among the capabilities, the simple sum seems psychometrically reasonable.

In short, the BIC provides an ideal inventory for assessing functional flexibility. It assesses the two criteria of flexibility: the breadth of the interpersonal repertoire and the ability to adjust behavior in accordance with situational demands.

The Present Studies

Our research had three objectives. The first was to develop several new composite indexes of flexibility. The second was to compare the flexibility indexes with measures currently in use. The third was to assess the relations between measures of flexibility and various measures of mental health.

Study 1 was designed to investigate the relations among 10 composite indexes of flexibility, including 6 assembled from trait and capability measures derived from the interpersonal circumplex. Four composite indexes of flexibility were computed from the BIC capabilities; 2 other composite indexes were assembled from 16 standard Likert trait ratings and 16 trait ratings in Goldberg's (1981) format. The assumption underlying all of these composite measures is that the individual with the widest response repertoire is the most flexible. For comparison, Bem's BSRI and Snyder's Self-Monitoring Scale were also included.

Study 1

Method

Subjects. Respondents were volunteers from undergraduate psychology courses at a large university. A total of 383 respondents (160 men and 223 women) completed five questionnaires in large groups. The order of the scales was counterbalanced.

Instruments. Participants completed a battery of five instruments. As detailed earlier, the BIC consists of four questions about perceived capabilities on the 16 attributes that form the interpersonal circumplex. The standard trait version consisted of the same 16 attributes rated for self-descriptiveness on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 7 (*very much like me*). The Goldberg version included the same 16 attributes each rated for self-descriptiveness on Goldberg's (1981) 5-point rating scale: *accurate* (1), *not accurate* (2), *average* (3), *it depends on the situation* (4), and *don't know* (5). The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) consists of 20 masculine, 20 feminine, and 20 neutral characteristics rated for self-descriptiveness on 7-point Likert scales. The Self-Monitoring Scale comprises 25 true-false items concerning various aspects of self-presentation.

Results

This data set allowed us to compare 10 different measures of interpersonal variability. Four of the measures were composites derived from the BIC. The first measure of functional flexibility was the sum around the circumplex of the respondent's 16 capability ratings (SumCaps); we tentatively use this composite as our Functional Flexibility Index (FFI).³ Measures 2 through 4 consisted of similar sums for the anxiety, avoidance, and difficulty ratings (SumAnx, SumAvoid, and SumDiff, respectively). Measure 5 was an index of intradimensional flexibility (IDF) computed as follows: The eight bipolar dimensions of the circumplex were considered one at a time. The respondent received a 1 for each capability with a score above 4 on both bipolar opposites. Thus, each respondent received a score from 0 to 8.

Measure 6 was a situationality index based on Goldberg's (1981) trait report categories. A response of "accurate," "not accurate," or "average" was scored as 0 because the respondent is claiming a consistent, stable level of the trait. A response of "it depends on the situation" was scored as 1 because it indicates situational flexibility. Respondents choosing other alternatives ("don't understand" or "don't know") were dropped. Following Goldberg (1981), these scores were summed around the circle to form a situationality index.⁴

Measures 7 and 8 were indexes of Bem's concept of androgyny. The first was Bem's (1974) difference score, the absolute value of Femininity minus Masculinity ($|F - M|$). The second was the interaction of the Masculinity and Femininity scales as indexed by their product ($M \times F$). This product is the measure of emergent androgyny recommended by Lubinski, Tellegen, and Butcher (1981, 1983).

Measure 9 (trait variance) was the variance of the individual's 16 trait scores around the circumplex. This measure is similar to the variance index used by Wiggins and Holzmuller (1981). Measure 10 was Snyder's (1974) Self-Monitoring Scale.

The summary statistics for the 10 flexibility measures are presented in Table 1. The means and standard deviations for the commonly used measures (the Self-Monitoring Scale, $|F - M|$, $M \times F$) are consistent with previous studies.

Table 1
Statistics on Nine Flexibility Measures

Measure	M	SD	α
Capability composite (FFI)	85.9	9.8	.71
Difficulty composite	52.1	10.2	.75
Anxiety composite	56.6	12.0	.80
Avoidance composite	56.2	10.1	.61
Intradimensional flexibility	4.1	2.2	.58
Trait variance index	0.90	0.49	—
Situationality index	0.37	0.15	—
Androgyny $ F - M $	15.5	11.8	—
Androgyny ($M \times F$)	9,123.9	1,692.8	—
Self-Monitoring Scale	13.3	3.3	.70

Note. $N = 383$. The composites all have a minimum score of $16 \times 1 = 16$ and a maximum of $16 \times 7 = 112$. FFI = Functional Flexibility Index, M = Masculinity, and F = Femininity.

The correlations among 9 of the flexibility measures are displayed in Table 2. The IDF index was not included because it correlated .88 with SumCaps. The correlation matrix of 8 of these measures was factored using principal-component extraction followed by varimax rotation. The product measure of androgyny was not included because it is algebraically confounded with the difference measure. When the product was included in place of the difference score, similar factors emerged.

Three factors preceded the scree elbow, showed eigenvalues above unity, and together explained 63% of the variance. The loadings are displayed in Table 3.

As can be seen in Figure 1, Factor 1 is clearly marked by the four capability-related composites (SumCaps, SumAnx, SumAvoid, and SumDiff) and therefore was labeled Functional Flexibility. Factor 2 is marked by Goldberg's situationality index and to a lesser degree by the Self-Monitoring Scale. Accordingly, this factor was labeled Situationality. As illustrated in Figure 2, Factor 3 is marked by the product index of androgyny and the trait variance index. Accordingly, it was labeled Androgyny.

Discussion

It is remarkable how little association there is among all these measures targeted at interpersonal flexibility. The four flexibility measures derived from the BIC loaded on one factor, whereas the androgyny measures and the trait variance index loaded on a second factor. Self-Monitoring and Situationality loaded on a third factor. Despite the similarity of their underlying conceptions, the various instruments devised to measure flexibility are clearly not measuring the same construct.

³ Any of the four capability-related composites could be used as an index of functional flexibility. We chose the capability composite because it is worded in the flexible rather than the inflexible direction, unlike the other three composites.

⁴ We are aware that Goldberg (1981) found a negative correlation between situationality and self-esteem. However, Goldberg purposely covered the broadest possible selection of traits. Perhaps by confining the index to interpersonal traits, we may find a positive correlation between situationality and self-esteem.

Table 2
Correlations Among Nine Flexibility Measures

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Composites									
1. Capabilities (FFI)	—								
2. Difficulty	-.58	—							
3. Anxiety	-.38	.66	—						
4. Avoidance	-.28	.45	.52	—					
5. Situationality	.03	.05	.11	.10	—				
6. Androgyny F - M	-.03	.08	.00	-.04	.08	—			
7. Androgyny (M × F)	.21	-.16	-.11	-.10	-.21	-.20	—		
8. Trait variance	.09	-.06	.05	-.01	.06	.14	-.08	—	
9. Self-Monitoring Scale	.35	-.28	-.27	-.28	.19	-.07	.25	-.04	—

Note. $N = 383$. Decimal points have been omitted. FFI = Functional Flexibility Index, M = Masculinity, and F = Femininity.

Although they are also composites, the androgyny and trait variance measures might have loaded on a separate factor partly because they are trait based rather than capability based. Moreover, these measures focus only on the dominance/nurturance quadrant of the circumplex (Wiggins & Holzmüller, 1981). Thus, they tap only a small domain of socially desirable characteristics.

The situationality index, which tallies the number of "it depends" responses, and the Self-Monitoring Scale clustered separately from the other flexibility measures.⁵ Their distinctiveness from the trait-based measures is not surprising given that the situational individual reports a lack of traits (Snyder, 1979). More surprising is the finding that situationality is virtually orthogonal to functional flexibility ($r = .03$). The difference in these two forms of variability is intriguing.

The high correlation of the FFI with IDF (the intradimensional flexibility index) is flattering to the latter. Recall that the IDF is simply the number of bipolar traits (out of eight) on which the subject reports a capability for both poles. The logic of this measure is such that a respondent could report high scores on eight capabilities (e.g., all of the positive attributes) and still receive an IDF score of 0. Nevertheless, its high correlation with the FFI makes the IDF a reasonable proxy for the FFI. Thus, the essence of interpersonal flexibility may lie in this intradimensional flexibility. The flexible individual manages to over-

come the various pressures to remain consistent (e.g., Lecky, 1945; Swann & Read, 1981), particularly within the fundamental dimensions of personality.

In sum, the construct of functional flexibility, based directly on the two critical criteria for interpersonal flexibility, exhibits convergent and discriminant validity. Our four indexes of functional flexibility (including the FFI) cluster together on a unique dimension. Other available measures of interpersonal flexibility form separate clusters under factor analysis. These results are a first step in linking our conception and operationalization of functional flexibility to the elusive construct developed by Leary (1957).

Study 2

To provide some criterion validation for the FFI, we conducted a large-scale peer-rating study. Peer ratings are often considered the ideal criterion for validating a new instrument because they provide a summary of behavior over a number of situations by observers who know the subject well (Wiggins, 1974). Peer ratings of flexibility, however, are not as straightforward as ratings of standard traits.

One possible approach is to ask each rater to make a global rating of flexibility. As Burisch (1984) argued, global ratings are often as valid as item aggregates. We suspect, however, that the concept of flexibility may not have a consensual meaning for raters. An alternative approach, which avoids this problem, is to have raters make indirect ratings of flexibility, that is, the incidence of behaviors related to flexibility (e.g., the ability to adjust to new situations and the tendency to avoid problem situations). A third approach is to index flexibility according to the variety of capabilities that the individual displays. In this study, peer raters completed all three types of measures. We then used the participants' self-reports to predict these peer ratings.

The flexibility measures in the battery of self-reports (BIC, BSRI, and Goldberg's trait ratings) were selected to represent each of the three factors found in Study 1. If functional flexibil-

Table 3
Factor Loadings of Nine Flexibility Measures

Flexibility measure	Factor 1 Functional Flexibility	Factor 2 Situationality	Factor 3 Androgyny
Capability composite (FFI)	.68	.30	.05
Difficulty composite	-.85	-.07	.01
Anxiety composite	-.83	.08	.05
Avoidance composite	-.72	.09	-.05
Situationality index	-.18	.84	.15
Androgyny F - M	-.02	-.03	.75
Trait variance	.05	.06	.74
Self-Monitoring Scale	.43	.63	-.19

Note. $N = 383$. When $M \times F$ was included instead of $|F - M|$ as an androgyny measure, the results were highly similar. FFI = Functional Flexibility Index, M = Masculinity, and F = Femininity.

⁵ When the factor analysis was repeated with the Briggs, Cheek, and Buss (1980) subscales instead of the total Self-Monitoring score, the Other-Directedness scale fell directly on the Situationality factor, whereas the Extraversion and Acting scales fell on the Functional Flexibility factor.

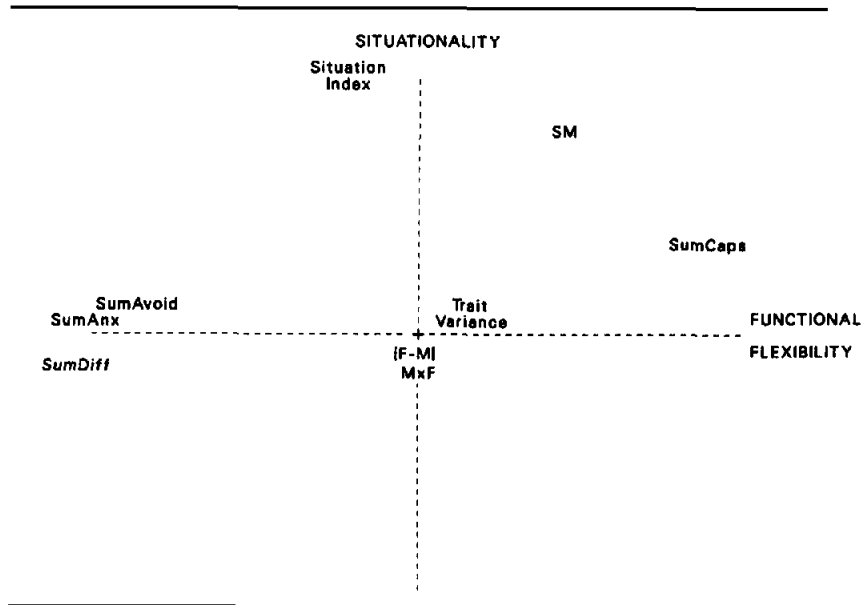


Figure 1. Factors 1 and 2 of variability measures. (The variables preceded by "Sum" are the various BIC composites summed over 16 attributes. $M \times F$ and $|F - M|$ are the product and difference measures of androgyny. They were not factored at the same time: The loadings for $M \times F$ were taken from a similar factor analysis with $|F - M|$ deleted. SM is the Self-Monitoring Scale.)

ity shows the highest correlation with the peer ratings, then we will have some assurance that the distinctiveness of this construct goes beyond some unique questionnaire method factor.

Method

Participants. Two hundred twenty students in a third-year personality course served as experimenters. Experimenters asked one friend, acquaintance, or family member to participate as the subject. Subjects' ages ranged from 14 to 54 ($M = 21.6$, $SD = 8.2$). Only 61% were university students; 25% had full-time outside jobs, 7% were homemakers, 5% were high school students, and 2% were retired. Sixty-three percent of subjects were women.

Procedure. Each experimenter administered the battery of questionnaires to his or her subject. It included the BIC, the BSRI, and the 16 trait ratings to be rated Goldberg-style. The experimenters distributed the peer-rating forms to three friends or family members who were willing to do the ratings. All subjects had to agree to having three people rate their personality without knowing who was rating them.

The peer-rating sheets began with a paragraph concerning confidentiality. The rater was assured that the experimenter would ensure confidentiality by removing names as soon as the information arrived. Moreover, raters were asked not to show their ratings to the subject. Subsequent pages contained several types of ratings. First, the rater was asked to rate the subject on a 7-point scale ranging from *inflexible* (1) to *flexible* (7). Next, the subject's interpersonal capabilities were rated using the capability mode of the BIC. Finally, five ratings of flexible behaviors were requested as follows:

1. Does X deal well with social situations?
Very poorly Poorly So-so Very well
2. Does X tend to avoid certain situations?
Never Seldom Sometimes Often Very often
3. How easily does X adjust to new social situations?
Very easily Easily So-so Has trouble A lot of trouble

4. Is X a likable person?

Not at all Not much Somewhat Likable Very likable

5. How often does X act inappropriately for the situation?

Never Seldom Sometimes Often Very often

Results

Of the 220 experimenters who completed their report of the study, 178 had conducted the study properly. Only these data were included in our analyses. Of the final 178 subjects, 80 were men and 98 were women.

One criterion for peer ratings of flexibility was the global flexibility rating. In addition, two indexes were compiled. The first was the sum of the 16 capability ratings. The second was the sum of the five ratings of flexible behaviors. The interrater reliabilities (intraclass correlation of three raters) for the three measures were .50, .75, and .84, respectively⁶ (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979; Case 1 for three raters). The alpha reliabilities for the two indexes (after summing across raters) were .60 and .73, respectively.

Table 4 shows the correlations of the four self-report flexibility measures with the three peer-rating flexibility criteria. For all three criteria, the correlation of the criterion with the FFI is significantly greater than the corresponding correlations with the other three self-report measures of flexibility (all $ps < .01$).

Although the global rating of flexibility is not a reliable enough criterion to show a strong validity (cf. Burisch, 1984), the two indexes work well. Respondents scoring high on the FFI

⁶ This estimate is based on three raters. The actual values of all intraclass correlations were actually slightly lower because 20% of this group had only two peer ratings returned.

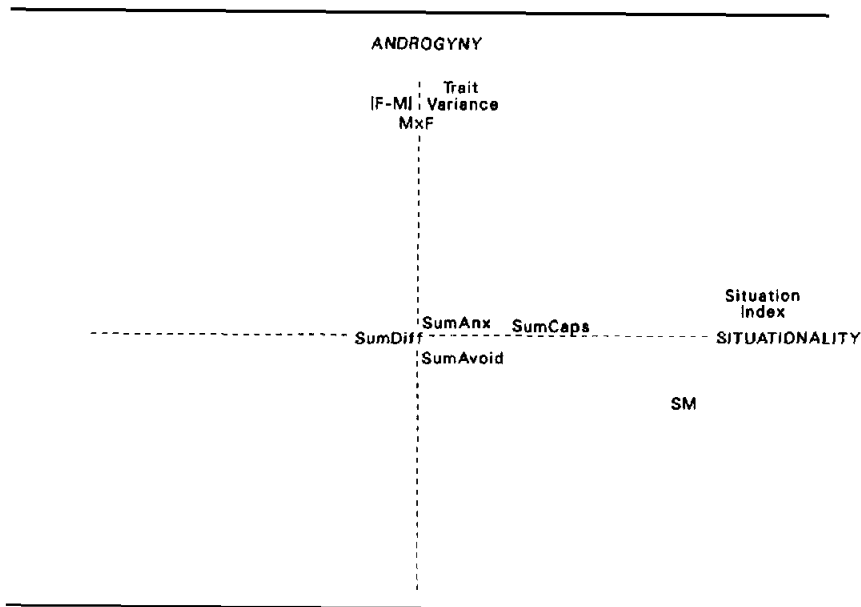


Figure 2. Factors 2 and 3 of variability measures. (The variables preceded by "Sum" are the various BIC composites summed over 16 attributes. M × F and |F – M| are the product and difference measures of androgyny. They were not factored at the same time: The loadings for M × F were taken from a similar factor analysis with |F – M| deleted. SM is the Self-Monitoring Scale.)

are rated by their peers as being interpersonally flexible. The other flexibility measures do not predict peer ratings. Thus, the criterion validity of the FFI receives some support. Functional flexibility is not just an artifact of self-reports.

Study 3

The claim that functional flexibility is adaptive (i.e., promotes psychological adjustment) has yet to be addressed. (Recall that the descriptor *functional* refers only to the situational appropriateness of behavior, not to ensuing psychological benefits.)

According to Leary (1957), the flexible individual adapts to environmental pressures in such a way as to minimize long-

term anxiety and maximize self-esteem. In contrast, the rigid character restricts his or her range of responses in an attempt to minimize anxiety in the short run. Unfortunately, this self-restraint perpetuates maladjustment. More recently, Shapiro (1982) went further by claiming that rigidity is a consequence of most forms of psychopathology and, in fact, a cause of many forms (p. 5). If Leary and Shapiro are correct, a valid measure of interpersonal flexibility should correlate positively with measures of adjustment. Accordingly, in Study 3, we administered a battery of adjustment measures and a battery of nine flexibility measures. This allowed us to evaluate the flexibility measures in terms of Leary's hypothesis.

On the basis of previous research, one can make predictions about which flexibility measures should be most closely associ-

Table 4
Correlations Among Self-Report and Peer Ratings of Flexibility

Flexibility measure	Self-reports				Peer ratings		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Self-reports							
1. Functional flexibility	—						
2. Androgyny F – M	-.07	—					
3. Androgyny (M × F)	-.09	-.65	—				
4. Situationality	.11	-.10	-.14	—			
Peer ratings							
5. Capability index	.50*	.01	.09	-.15	—		
6. Global flexibility	.19*	.12	.11	-.09	.60*	—	
7. Flexible behaviors	.44*	.12	.16	.12	.51*	.44	—

Note. N = 178. Correlations with M × F are actually partial correlations after controlling for direct effects of Masculinity (M) and Femininity (F). Because of the large sample size, we used a strict criterion for significance (p < .01).

* p < .01.

Table 5
Correlates of Flexibility Measures

Flexibility measure	Self-esteem (<i>N</i> = 71)	Anxiety (<i>N</i> = 45)	Ego-resiliency (<i>N</i> = 87)	Social desirability (<i>N</i> = 71)
Capability composite (FFI)	.33**	.08	-.03	-.01
Difficulty composite	-.30*	.05	-.08	-.11
Anxiety composite	-.32**	.17	-.22*	-.11
Avoidance composite	-.32**	.15	-.18	.11
Trait variance	.02	.08	.12	—
Situationality	-.28*	.13	.05	—
Androgyny F - M	.08	.10	.11	-.05
Androgyny (M × F)	.28*	-.25	.30**	.25*
Self-Monitoring Scale	-.15	.15	-.12	-.10

Note. FFI = Functional Flexibility Index.

* $p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

ated with adjustment. Although the Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974) was designed to assess flexibility, previous research has not shown a positive relation with adjustment (e.g., Briggs & Cheek, 1986). The situationality index, when computed in Goldberg's (1981) study, was found to be negatively related to self-esteem. Rather than including the full range of traits used by Goldberg, we assessed situationality only on interpersonal traits. Perhaps in this domain situationality will show a positive association with self-esteem. Finally, androgyny indexes have not been successful in predicting adjustment (Taylor & Hall, 1982). According to our criteria, there is no reason to believe that androgynous individuals, who report being typically dominant and nurturant, should show better adjustment than other individuals. Trait measures that assess typical behavior but not situational appropriateness should bear no necessary relation to adjustment. Finally, if Leary was right, functional flexibility should be positively associated with adjustment.

To be cautious, we must consider the possibility that the FFI is contaminated with socially desirable responding. An earlier study verified that individual capabilities show little contamination (Paulhus & Martin, 1987). Nonetheless, to check whether our index (a composite of 16 capabilities) was contaminated, we included the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960).

Method

Subjects. Respondents were from intact undergraduate classes. A total of 175 volunteers (75 men and 100 women) completed a self-report battery in large groups.

Instruments. All subjects completed the BIC inventory, Snyder's (1974) Self-Monitoring Scale, and Bem's (1974) BSRI. Measures of adjustment included Block's (1965) Ego Resiliency Scale, the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale (Taylor, 1953), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).

Results

We calculated correlations between the nine flexibility measures and the standard measures of adjustment and desirable responding. Given that sex differences in the correlations appeared to be minor, only the results from the pooled sample are presented in Table 5.

Self-esteem. All four of the capability-related composites correlated close to .30 with self-esteem.⁷ Neither the difference index of androgyny nor the circumplex variance index showed any trend.

Ostensibly, the product index of androgyny ($M \times F$) predicted self-esteem almost as well as the capability composites. However, the proper procedure requires entering the components of a product into a regression equation before entering the product itself (Lubinski et al., 1981). When M , F , and $M \times F$ were entered in that order, the product showed no predictive power above and beyond its components. As usual, only the Masculinity scale showed any substantial relation with self-esteem (Taylor & Hall, 1982).

It is intriguing that the situationality index showed a highly significant negative correlation with self-esteem. Thus, individuals reporting that their behavior depends on the situation also reported low self-esteem. The Self-Monitoring Scale also showed a negative but nonsignificant correlation.

Other measures of adjustment. The various BIC flexibility measures showed similar patterns of correlations with the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale and (with signs reversed) Block's Ego Resiliency Scale. However, all correlations were generally low and nonsignificant. The one exception was a significant correlation between ego resiliency and $M \times F$. As with self-esteem, this relation disappeared when M and F were partialled out.

Marlowe-Crowne social desirability. None of the capability composites correlated significantly with social desirability. This relieves an initial worry that self-reports of behavior capabilities may be contaminated with socially desirable responding (cf. Paulhus, 1984). The only significant correlate of the Marlowe-Crowne was the product index of androgyny.

Study 4

Given the intriguing findings of Study 3, we wanted assurance that this pattern was not restricted to the realm of self-reports. It is possible, for example, that the correlations we found with self-esteem were somehow an artifact of the method, namely,

⁷ Given the restricted range of adjustment in university students, the correlations reported here probably underestimate the correlations in the general population.

self-reports. If we could predict peer ratings of adjustment with the FFI, then we could draw firmer conclusions about the link between flexibility and adjustment.

Therefore, in Study 4, we had subjects' peers rate their adjustment. Participants were given a package to take home and complete. The package contained a battery of questionnaires plus three envelopes to be distributed to peer raters. Participants were told to pass the envelopes on to three friends, acquaintances, or family members who were willing to complete the form and mail it directly to the experimenter.

Method

Participants. Packages were distributed to 150 introductory psychology students who participated for course credit. A total of 105 returned packages were sufficiently complete to be analyzed, that is, the questionnaire and at least 2 peer ratings were returned. The respondents included 55 men and 50 women.

Procedure. Packages were distributed to participants at the end of class sessions. Participants were asked to take the package, distribute the peer-rating envelopes, and complete the battery of questionnaires. The battery included the BIC (capability and difficulty ratings only), Lennox and Wolfe's (1984) revised Self-Monitoring Scale and 16 traits to be rated Goldberg-style.

The peer-rating sheets began with a paragraph concerning confidentiality. The raters were advised to ensure confidentiality by not writing their names anywhere on the questionnaire. Moreover, raters were asked not to show their ratings to the participant. They were advised to mail the questionnaire back to us directly using the stamped envelope addressed to our laboratory.

Subsequent pages contained several types of ratings. The first page contained the 16 capability ratings as in Study 2. The next page contained ten 7-point rating scales related to adjustment: *Happy, Anxious, Depressed, Well-Adjusted, Feels Good About Self, Grouchy, Feelings Easily Hurt, Self-Confident, Positive About Life, and Worried*. These items were based on the items in Lanyon's (1971) General Maladjustment factor. The anxiety index comprised Items 2, 7, and 10.

Results

As in Study 1, the 16 capability ratings were summed to yield an overall index of flexibility. This index was then averaged across the two or three raters, yielding an intraclass correlation of .74 (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979; Case 1 for three raters). We added the 10 adjustment ratings (in the direction of adjustment) to yield an overall index; we averaged this index across the three raters (intraclass correlation = .72). Corresponding intraclass correlations for the flexibility index (5 items) and the anxiety index (3 items) were .72 and .65, respectively.

The correlations between the three predictors and the three criterion measures are displayed in Table 6. No correlations with the anxiety index were significant.

The correlation between the FFI and peer-rated flexibility was similar to that obtained in Study 1. This similarity suggests that the two methods of collecting peer ratings (student experimenters vs. subject distribution of envelopes), although distinctly different, are equally effective. The major result was the substantial correlation between the FFI and peer ratings of adjustment. This value ($r = .26$) was almost as high as the comparable result in Study 3 using self-reported self-esteem.

The other predictors did not fare as well. The Goldberg (1981) situationality index showed a nonsignificant negative

Table 6
Correlations of Flexibility Measures With Peer Ratings of Adjustment

Self-report measure	Peer-rating criterion		
	Flexibility index	Adjustment index	Anxiety index
Functional Flexibility Index	.41**	.26**	-.15
Situationality index	-.11	-.14	.14
Lennox-Wolfe Self-Monitoring Scale	.31**	.17*	-.12
Ability to Modify Self-Presentation	.35**	.19*	-.12
Sensitivity to Others' Expressive Behavior	-.06	.11	-.11

Note. $N = 105$. The criterion indexes were averaged across the three raters.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

correlation. The revised Lennox and Wolfe Self-Monitoring Scale showed a significant correlation with adjustment (.17), but this value was significantly lower than the .26 correlation for the FFI, $z(137) = 1.85, p < .05$. Note from Table 6 that one of the subscales, Ability to Modify Self-Presentation, was closer to the FFI in predicting adjustment.

Discussion

According to the Learian conception, a valid measure of functional flexibility should be correlated with adjustment. Study 3 indicated that functional flexibility, as indexed by the four capability-related composites derived from the BIC, showed significant correlations around .30 with self-esteem. None of the other flexibility measures considered here showed a significant positive correlation with self-esteem. In Study 4, the FFI outperformed other capability measures in predicting with peer ratings of adjustment.

The results of Study 3 failed to confirm Bem's (1974) claim that androgynous persons are better adjusted than others because of their interpersonal flexibility. As in previous research, reviewed by Taylor and Hall (1982), it was Bem's Masculinity scale alone that predicted adjustment; neither Femininity nor androgyny added any predictive power. Using the trait interpretation of the Masculinity and Femininity scales (Martin & Paulhus, 1985; Spence, 1984; Wiggins & Holzmuller, 1981), it is social dominance but not nurturance or their interaction that predicts self-esteem.

Snyder's (1974) Self-Monitoring Scale, perhaps the most widely used measure of flexibility, actually showed a (nonsignificant) negative correlation with self-esteem. This result is consistent with the Briggs and Cheek (1986) report that most self-esteem scales correlate negatively with the Self-Monitoring Scale. Clearly, self-monitoring as measured by the Self-Monitoring Scale is not consistent with the Learian (Leary, 1957) concept of flexibility. The Revised Self-Monitoring Scale, however, did show a significant positive correlation with self-esteem in Study 4.

The strongest negative correlation was between self-esteem and the situationality index based on Goldberg (1981). On our

version of this index, a maximum score is achieved by responding "it depends on the situation" to all 16 interpersonal trait ratings. The result indicates that situational individuals report low self-esteem. Perhaps the "it depends" response appeals to subjects who feel buffeted by interpersonal situations and therefore reflects indecisiveness, insecurity, and low self-confidence.⁸ Such individuals have an external locus of control in the interpersonal domain, an expectancy known to be associated with low self-esteem (Lefcourt, 1982; Paulhus, 1983). Another possibility is that the "it depends" choice is selected by individuals with a diffuse self-concept, that is, those who are chronically uncertain about who they are (Block, 1961; Campbell, 1986).

Recall that we tried to restrict this research to adaptive conceptions of flexibility. Although we were aware of previous evidence that situationality was associated with low self-esteem (Goldberg, 1981), we included the situationality index for two reasons. First, Goldberg's measure of situationality was aggregated over a broad range of attributes. In confining the domain to interpersonal traits, we speculated that the relation of situationality to self-esteem could turn positive. Clearly, it did not.

The second reason for including the situationality composite was that, superficially, it appears so similar to our capability composite. High scorers on each measure report inconsistent behavior on the same 16 traits. As it turns out, the opposite correlations of the two measures with self-esteem help clarify the link between adjustment and behavioral consistency. It is not inconsistent behavior per se that is associated with adjustment. The perception that behavior "depends on the situation" is associated with low self-esteem. In contrast, the perception that one can act "if the situation calls for it" predicts high self-esteem. The emerging image of high self-esteem individuals is not that they are especially variable but that variations in their behavior are self-directed rather than situationally compelled. Whether a flexible person is dominant depends on how appropriate⁹ dominance is; whether a situational person is dominant depends on the situational press.

Leary's (1957) hypothesis that flexibility is associated with low anxiety received mixed support: The FFI was negatively correlated with the anxiety composite but was uncorrelated with (self- or peer-rated) trait anxiety. The anxiety composite, however, is a composite of hypotheticals, the anxieties the subject would experience if required to perform certain behaviors. Our data show that inflexible individuals avoid known anxiety-arousing situations. Thus, they can maintain their trait anxiety at levels no greater than that of flexible individuals. In fact, there is evidence that avoidance strategies for coping with anxiety eventually become so automatic that anxiety is totally avoided (Greenwald, 1988; Solomon & Wynne, 1954). Similarly, the relation between flexibility and self-esteem, although significant, may be attenuated by the tendency of low self-esteem persons to avoid threatening situations.

Finally, there was no evidence for a curvilinear relation between interpersonal variability and adjustment. An examination of the scatter plots showed only linear trends for all of the functional flexibility composites and for situationality. Linearity was the rule for peer-rating criteria as well as for self-report criteria of adjustment.

The widespread assumption of curvilinearity is presumably based on the observation that some variable individuals tend to be obsequiously submissive, whereas other variable individuals

tend to adjust in an ideal fashion. In retrospect, the distinction appears to be one of quality not of quantity: One cannot predict from an individual's behavioral variability whether that individual is well adjusted. One must look closer to see if the variability is a result of functional flexibility or situationality.

General Discussion

For a variety of reasons, current measures do not adequately tap the critical components of flexibility. Generally, stylistic measures fail to assess the range of the behavioral repertoire because they focus on the kinds of skills related to flexible responding. Conceivably, if the correct syndrome were known in advance, an appropriate stylistic measure could be assembled. Recall that Snyder (1974) combined five different attributes (social sensitivity, inconsistency, etc.) in the *Self-Monitoring Scale*. The legacy of that amalgamation is a continuing debate about the factor structure of the scale (e.g., Briggs & Cheek, 1986; Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). In the *Revised Self-Monitoring Scale*, Lennox and Wolfe (1984) have narrowed the components to sensitivity to emotional expression in others and the ability to modify self-presentation. This revision of the scale was successful in swinging around the correlation with adjustment to be significantly positive. Among the stylistic measures, the Lennox-Wolfe *Revised Self-Monitoring Scale* most clearly taps adaptive flexibility.

Current composite measures, for example, those recommended by Leary (1957) and Wiggins and Holzmueller (1978), do measure a broad range of interpersonal behaviors. Other composite measures, specifically the BSRI, are more limited in

⁸ On the other hand, situational individuals may really be less consistent. This argument is supported by the fact that Brownfain (1952), Block (1961), and Campus (1974), all using different methods, found a similar relation between role inconsistency and maladjustment. For example, in Block's (1961) study, subjects rated their behavior on 20 adjectives as they thought they behaved in the presence of eight relevant others. The consistency of subjects' behavior was indexed by the concordance across the eight situations. Brownfain (1952) assessed inconsistency by the discrepancy between one's positive self-image and one's negative self-image summed over a number of attributes. Campus's (1974) measure of inconsistency was the variance of need scores across 16 Thematic Apperception Test card responses.

⁹ A critical phrase in assessing an individual's capabilities is that they are "appropriate" to the situational demands. In our earlier article (Paulhus & Martin, 1987), we discussed what it means for a behavior to be appropriate. It could be that certain situations generally elicit certain responses. For example, Carson (1969) has argued that when an individual is acting dominant, the situation created is one that elicits from others a submissive response. In contrast to the inherent "pulling" of specific behaviors by certain situations, one could argue that appropriate responding involves behaving in a way that protects self-esteem. Or, appropriate responding could be considered to be responses that minimize conflict or maximize smooth social interactions. Finally, skillful responding could be defined as behavior that is optimally effective in both the short term and the long term (Goldfried & D'Zurilla, 1969). We believe that subjects' judgments of appropriate behavior are multiply determined by such characteristics of situations and individuals. It is critical that the appropriateness judgment be left totally subjective. What is at issue is the subjects' perceptions of whether they can perform a social behavior that they perceive to be in their own long-term interests.

assessing only a few behaviors. Regardless of the range covered by those composite measures, none addresses the appropriateness of behavior to a situation: The underlying assumption is that possessing a trait ensures its appropriate deployment. Clearly, this assumption is unwarranted: The trait is simply not an appropriate unit for assessing flexibility.

By distilling the essence of previous conceptions, we have proposed a clearer specification of adaptive interpersonal flexibility, dubbed *functional flexibility*. Functionally flexible persons possess a great many interpersonal capabilities: They have a large repertoire of social behaviors and can deploy these behaviors in the situations they deem appropriate. The Battery of Interpersonal Capabilities was used to form a composite of capabilities: the Functional Flexibility Index (FFI). Thus, our measure was based directly on our new conception.

The first step in validating the FFI was to demonstrate adequate discriminant validity. We obtained empirical support for its conceptual distinctiveness in Study 1 by finding that the FFI loaded on a factor separate from the other flexibility measures. Moreover, all of the conceptually related composites clustered on the same factor as the FFI. Study 2 provided strong evidence of criterion validity for the FFI based on peer ratings. It is also encouraging that the FFI, the most carefully defined of 10 flexibility measures examined, was the best predictor of mental health in Studies 3 and 4. Although the correlations with adjustment were modest (and mixed for anxiety), the pattern of results suggests that the FFI and the three other BIC measures are tapping the construct of interpersonal flexibility described by Leary (1957).

Future Work

Our four studies strongly support the construct validation of functional flexibility and our four indexes for assessing it. Behavioral validity will be a necessary but challenging task. In the first laboratory study, we will have high- and low-flexibility subjects role playing several interpersonal situations. Given our evidence for the critical importance of intradimensional flexibility, we will start with two behaviors that are bipolar in the trait domain: hostility and nurturance. Each subject will role play hostility in a situation in which the confederate makes it easy and a situation in which the confederate makes it difficult. The same subjects will also role play nurturance under easy and difficult circumstances. Judges will rate the success of each performance from videotapes. Our conception of functional flexibility will be supported if the observed capabilities for hostility and nurturance (under difficult conditions) are orthogonal.

Future work will also include real-world studies on criteria such as occupational and marital success. Of particular interest is a study of the link between parental flexibility and children's adjustment. Our prediction is that flexible parents beget well-adjusted children.

Varieties of Variability

Recall from the introduction that we intended to include only measures of adaptive conceptions of behavioral variability. Nonetheless, some measures actually showed negative correlations with self-esteem. The situationality index, in particular, and the Self-Monitoring Scale must be viewed as maladaptive

forms of behavioral inconsistency. In contrast, functional flexibility is an adaptive form of behavioral inconsistency. Because of its intriguing contrast with functional flexibility, we will continue to include the situationality index in future research.

This contrast is reminiscent of Arkin's (1981) distinction between offensive and defensive impression management. Closely related is Lennox and Wolfe's (1984) contrast of concern for appropriateness and self-monitoring. The latter component resembles our functional flexibility but provides an interesting contrast. Like Cantor and Kihlstrom's (1987) social intelligence, the Lennox and Wolfe construct is much more cognitive: It involves strategic adjustment and selection of images to present.¹⁰ Functional flexibility has a more affective mechanism: Some people experience great anxiety in trying to do the things they know they have to do. One result is that their performance suffers. Future work must include clarifying the links between measures of impression management and the functional flexibility and situationality indexes.

Another interesting issue is whether the concept of flexibility extends beyond the two dimensions of the interpersonal domain. It seems unlikely that flexibility could apply to two of the remaining dimensions of the "big five": neuroticism and conscientiousness. Flexibility on the fifth dimension, intelligence, may denote an unusual breadth of interests. This form of flexibility may be equivalent to the "openness to experience" interpretation introduced by McRae and Costa (1985). Other dimensions to which the concept of flexibility may apply include moral reasoning, coping, political behavior, and androgyny.

Reconceiving Androgyny

Recall Bem's (1975) claim that individuals who can encompass both masculine (dominant) behaviors and feminine (nurturant) behaviors should have greater adaptability and therefore better adjustment. We found, as in previous studies (Taylor & Hall, 1982), that only the Masculinity scale predicted self-esteem. Even among writers who want to retain the androgyny concept, there has been some concern that merely having both categories of traits is not sufficient for healthy responding. Kaplan (1979) reported two cases of women who behaved in both masculine and feminine ways and were therefore variable in their behavior. Yet these women failed to demonstrate appropriate adjustment to various situations. Kaplan went on to suggest that there must be a transcendent type of androgyny that is, in essence, the ability to respond in appropriate ways to given situations. Although alluding to the same kind of flexibility we have been discussing, it is clear that trait notions are still the basis of Kaplan's thinking. She laments the difficulty of conceiving of individuals, for example, with both assertiveness and dependency. "We are a far cry from an ability to recognize, let alone assess, the presence of hybrid characteristics. In part, we are hampered by our language. What terminology is appropriate to signify, 'anger tempered by warmth,' or 'dependency tempered by assertiveness'?" (Kaplan, 1979).

¹⁰ Several other theories of self-presentation emphasize the different images an individual tries to project in different circumstances (Baumeister, 1982; Hogan, 1983).

Reconceiving androgyny in terms of capabilities helps to alleviate some of the problems Kaplan (1979) described. Whereas bipolar traits are mutually exclusive, (e.g., dominant and submissive), their associated capabilities are not (Paulhus & Martin, 1987). The capability of being cold and hostile does not necessarily preclude being warm and nurturant when it is functional to do so. In fact, the capabilities for hostility and nurturance are orthogonal. From our perspective, then, androgyny would be better defined as having the capability to be both hostile and nurturant. Among other things, this approach avoids the limitations of trait conceptions (see Martin & Van Oeveren, 1986).

Clinical Applications

The interpersonal flexibility measures derived from the BIC have unlimited potential for applications in clinical and counseling situations. The BIC is a straightforward questionnaire and takes little time to score. Thus, diagnosticians and therapists can use the BIC as a simple method of pinpointing critical deficits in a client's interpersonal capabilities as well as determining the client's total range of capabilities. Therapy can then be tailored to focus on increasing capabilities in specific areas and on increasing the full range of capabilities. The anxiety and discomfort indexes can provide the therapist with additional information about how the client feels when exhibiting various capabilities. If an individual is capable of behaving appropriately but is extremely anxious in doing so, the therapist can direct attention to methods of minimizing anxiety in these situations. The client's score on the avoidance index also provides valuable diagnostic information. In an attempt to reduce anxiety, an individual may create a limited social environment by avoiding specific kinds of situations. These types of situation-specific avoidance can be pinpointed by using the BIC.

In sum, our distinction between functional flexibility and situationality appears to clarify a long-standing ambiguity about the nature of interpersonal flexibility. In addition, our indexes of functional flexibility have many possible applications in the assessment of normal and abnormal populations. Leary's (1957) conception of interpersonal flexibility, if not his method of assessment, has finally been vindicated.

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