endorsement rates in straight-take administrations. The low endorsement rates for such items permit room for manipulators to deliberately enhance impressions of their agency. Examples are "I am very brave" and "No one is more talented than I." Such items tend not to be claimed, even by narcissists, under anonymous conditions. But the endorsement rate is higher under agency-motivated conditions than under anonymous conditions (Lonnqvist, Verkasalo, & Bezmenova, 2007).

The impression management scales—Agentic and Communal Management—appear to be most useful in tapping response sets rather than response styles. They perform very well in capturing the degree of situational press to appear agentic or communal (Carey & Paulhus, 2008). Because scores are influenced strongly by context subtleties, these scales are not especially useful as individual difference measures. In private administrations, much of the individual-difference variance represents actual content differences in positive qualities.

Summary

The traditional concern in the social desirability literature is with self-presentation on questionnaires. Such concern led to the development of numerous SDR scales measuring the degree to which respondents exaggerate their assets or minimize their social deviance. The assumption is that high scores indicate dissimulation not only on the SDR scale, but on all other questionnaires in the same package.

A 50-year history of structural analyses of SDR scales repeatedly confirmed that multiple underlying concepts were being tapped. We have argued here that a clearer understanding of this extensive literature emerges from our two-level framework: audience (public vs. private) and personality image (agency vs. communal).

The SDR approach has been of special interest to personality psychologists because of their continuing reliance on self-report questionnaires (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007; Tracy & Robins, this volume). Nonetheless, there remains some difficulty with confirming the degree to which SDR scales tap exaggeration, that is, departure from reality.

SELF-ENHANCEMENT

Although the concept of self-enhancement overlaps conceptually with SDR, its historical origins are quite distinct. It began with an early study suggesting that positive self-biases are maladaptive (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1939). Forty years later, two methodologically superior papers provided evidence that positive self-biases may be more adaptive than accurate self-evaluations (Alloy & Abramson, 1979; Lewinsohn, Mischel, Chaplin, & Barton, 1980). Those studies contributed to Taylor and Brown's (1988) assertion that positive illusions are both common and adaptive.

Rather than SDR scales, this literature employs measures such as social comparison (e.g., better than average) or self-criterion discrepancies. Because a normative comparison is involved, such measures promised to do a better job than do SDR scales in distinguishing distortion from truth.

Most writers follow Taylor and Brown (1988) in defining self-enhancement as an overly positive self-evaluation. The qualification—*overly positive*—is of central importance, given our requirement of inaccuracy in defining self-presentation. There is little dispute about the fact that some people harbor overly positive self-evaluations, whereas others are more accurate. To date, minimal attention has been paid to underestimated evaluations (but see Zuckerman & Knee, 1996).[3]

Self-enhancement can be demonstrated even on anonymous self-descriptions (Baumeister, 1982; Brown, 1998). As such, the phenomenon corresponds to the private-audience version of SDR. Because of its association with illusions rather than purposeful dissimulation, little attention has been directed at the public-audience version of self-enhancement (see Figure 19.3). Because self-reports vary with degree and nature of the audience, scores on self-enhancement measures should vary to the same degree as do SDR measures (Carey & Paulhus, 2008). Nonetheless, that issue has attracted less interest, and the following focus is on distortion in private self-beliefs.

Three issues have dominated the self-enhancement literature: One is how to measure self-enhancement; a second addresses
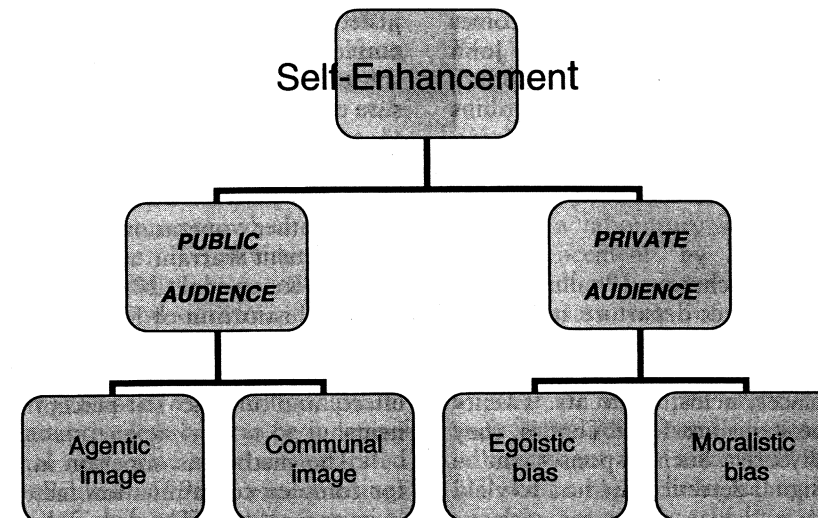
FIGURE 19.3. Hierarchy of self-enhancement.

the adaptiveness of self-enhancement; the third concerns the breadth and structure of self-enhancement.

Operationalizing Self-Enhancement

Although the concept might seem straightforward, much controversy has arisen over the choice of operationalization. Here we consider five types of operationalization that warrant special attention.

Social Comparison

The most popular choice has been to index self-enhancement as the tendency to view oneself more positively than one views others. Following Kwan, John, Kenny, Bond, and Robins (2004), we refer to this operationalization as *social comparison*. A well-replicated body of research indicates that a majority of people tend to rate themselves as above average on lists of evaluative traits (e.g., Alicke, 1985). If pervasive, this tendency certainly implies an illusion: After all, it is not possible for a large majority of people to actually be better than average.[4]

To index a general tendency, self-enhancement scores are typically aggregated across a wide set of evaluative traits. Respondents may be asked for separate ratings of self and others or, alternatively, a direct comparison of themselves relative to the average other. A number of studies have confirmed that individuals scoring high on such indexes of self-enhancement tend to be well adjusted (Brown, 1986; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Kurt & Paulhus, 2008; Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, & McDowell, 2003).

Note, however, that this operationalization makes it difficult to distinguish self-enhancement from true differences in positive traits (Klar & Giladi, 1999; Robins & John, 1997b). After all, many people are actually above average, even across a large set of traits (Block & Colvin, 1994). In short, the social comparison operationalization lacks a reality criterion against which the validity of the self-descriptions can be evaluated.

Criterion Discrepancy

This limitation led a number of other researchers to operationalize self-enhancement as a *criterion discrepancy*, that is, the overestimation of one's positivity relative to a credible criterion. This category of measures includes both difference scores and residual scores. Rather than absolute values, higher numbers indicate the degree to which respondents' self-ratings exceed their criterion scores. Almost invariably, discrepancy measures of self-enhancement have shown negative asso-

ciations with long-term adjustment outcomes (e.g., Colvin, Block, & Funder, 1995; John & Robins, 1994; Kwan, John, Kenny, Bond, & Robins, 2004; Paulhus, 1998a; Robins & Beer, 2001; Shedler, Mayman, & Manis, 1993: but see Bonanno et al., 2002).

Overclaiming Technique

The overclaiming technique (Paulhus et al., 2003) also emphasizes departure from reality, but in a different fashion. Respondents are asked to rate their familiarity with a set of persons, places, items, or events. Twenty percent of the items are foils: That is, they do not actually exist. Such responses can be scored via a signal detection method to yield both accuracy and bias scores for each respondent.

Of great practical advantage is the fact that the departure-from-reality aspect is included in the questionnaire along with the self-ratings. It is represented here by the answer key distinguishing real ones from foils: That is, a familiarity rating is accurate to the extent that real items are claimed and foils are disclaimed.

The original overclaiming questionnaire comprised academic items such as philosophy, history, literature, and science. On these items, the accuracy index correlated substantially with IQ scores, whereas the bias index correlated moderately with trait self-enhancement measures such as narcissism (Paulhus et al., 2003). When the items concerned lay topics such as sports, music, films, etc., the bias link was subtler. Correlations with narcissism were significant only for topics that the respondent valued.

Krueger's Method

This method might be called the idiosyncratic weighting method (Krueger, 1998; Sinha & Krueger, 1998). Each participant's self-ratings are correlated with his or her desirability ratings of the same items. Effectively, the method weights each rating by the desirability as judged by the rater. Other methods assume implicitly that the social consensus regarding the social desirability of each item within a test is shared by all respondents.

The method also has the advantage of adaptability because the weights can be ad-justed to address context differences. For example, judgments of social desirability differ substantially across home, school, and leisure contexts.

Kwan's Method

Three other operationalizations of self-enhancement warrant mention here. Kwan's method (Kwan et al., 2004) utilizes the statistical sophistication of Kenny's (1994) social relations model. The technique decomposes self-perception into perceiver effect, target effect, and unique self-perception components.

The method is superior in controlling for complex contamination factors inherent in its competitors. The downside of this technique is that it can be applied only to round-robin ratings: That is, all participants have to rate each other.

Adaptiveness of Self-Enhancement

Taylor and Brown's (1988) claim for the adaptiveness of self-enhancement ("positive illusions") was supported by research such as the Brown (1986) study: He showed that individuals who claimed to be above average across a wide variety of traits also scored high on a standard self-esteem scale. A number of subsequent studies have shown the same pattern of adaptive outcomes (e.g., Campbell et al., 2002; Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004).

The Taylor–Brown proposition conflicted directly with traditional conceptions of mental health that emphasize the importance of perceiving oneself accurately (e.g., Allport, 1960; Jahoda, 1958). Critics of Taylor and Brown have tended to side with the more traditional view. In their comprehensive rebuttal, for example, Colvin and Block (1994) disputed both the logic and evidence presented for the adaptive value of self-enhancement. They acknowledged that positive illusions might be helpful in mood regulation and, therefore, might provide temporary relief from negative affect. Unacceptable to these critics was the notion that self-enhancement had sustained benefits.

To dispute the putative evidence, critics cited several specific faults with many of the studies cited by Taylor and Brown (1988). First was their use of the social comparison operationalization, which lacks a reality criterion against which the validity of the self-descriptions can be evaluated (Robins & John, 1997b).

Critics also pointed to the problem of using self-report outcomes when studying self-report predictors. If individual differences in self-favorability bias contaminate both the predictor and outcome, this common method variance would induce an artifactual positive correlation (Colvin & Block, 1994). For that reason, many critics have insisted that adaptiveness criteria be independent external measures, such as peer-rated adjustment (Paulhus, 1998a), expert ratings of adjustment (Colvin et al., 1995; Robins & John, 1997b), or school grades (Gramzow, Elliot, Asher, & McGregor, 2003; Robins & Beer, 2001).

Finally, a combination of the above two problems introduces an artifactual association even when hard outcome measures are used. If self-enhancement is operationalized by self-report (e.g., the social comparison index), then high scores represent a composite of true positive traits. But positive traits are known to yield objectively better life outcomes, including good adjustment (Block, 2002; Colvin & Block, 1994).

Such criticism led many researchers to turn to the criterion-discrepancy operationalization of self-enhancement.[5] When external criteria were used to evaluate outcomes, discrepancy measures of self-enhancement showed long-term maladaptive outcomes (e.g., Colvin et al., 1995; John & Robins, 1994; Paulhus, 1998a; Robins & Beer, 2001; Shedler et al., 1993). It is worth reviewing the key studies reported by critics.

Key Studies

The first empirical response to Taylor and Brown (1988) was the John and Robins (1994) study of performance in a group task. Each participant's self-rated performance was compared against two criterion measures: (1) others' ratings of the target's performance and (2) a concrete measure of success (money earned in the group exercise). The discrepancy between self-ratings and the two criterion measures provided concrete indicators of self-enhancement. Results showed that higher scores on both indicators were negatively associated with ratings of adjustment by 11 trained psychologists.

Colvin and colleagues (1995) went further to conduct two longitudinal studies and a laboratory study. They assessed self-enhancement by comparing participants' self-evaluations with trained examiners' assessments of their personalities. Self-enhancement scores were then correlated with evaluations of adjustment from another set of trained observers. Results of their longitudinal studies showed that self-enhancement was associated with poor social skills and psychological maladjustment 5 years before and 5 years after the assessment of self-enhancement. The laboratory study showed that, in a confrontational situation, self-enhancers were rated negatively by both expert raters and peers.

Even with the discrepancy operationalization, however, the outcomes of self-enhancement are not uniformly negative. For example, Paulhus (1998a) investigated reactions to self-enhancers in two longitudinal studies where small groups met weekly for a total of 7 weeks. Results showed that, although high self-enhancers were initially perceived favorably, those perceptions became more and more negative over time. Paulhus concluded that self-enhancing tendencies were a "mixed blessing" (p. 1207).

This mixed blessing was also evident in later research reported by Robins and Beer (2001). In two studies, they showed that self-enhancing tendencies had short-term affective benefits. However, long-term damage was wrought to self-esteem and academic engagement as disconfirmation of overly positive self-assessments became evident. On objective indicators of academic performance, self-enhancement failed to predict higher academic performance or higher graduation rates. Gramzow and colleagues (2002) also used college grades as the outcome criterion. In two studies, higher discrepancies between reported and actual grade-point average (GPA) predicted poorer grades in the current course. Even with concrete behavioral criteria, then, the research seems to dispute claims that self-enhancement has any long-term adaptive outcomes.

Further Developments

Taylor and Brown (1994) responded to the critiques while holding fast to the original claim that self-enhancement is adaptive. Taylor and Armor (1996), however, clarified that position in two important ways. First, they explained that self-enhancement should be viewed not as a trait but as an adaptive strategy to be applied when needed. They also disputed the critique of using self-report self-esteem scales as criteria for adjustment: They argued that self-esteem is an inherent component of good psychological adjustment. Moreover, feeling good about oneself can only be measured via self-report.

In their most recent response, Taylor and her colleagues presented data indicating that (even) trait self-enhancement is adaptive (Taylor et al., 2003). That study was impressive in its breadth of operationalizations of self-enhancement—including the method favored by many critics, that is, self-criterion discrepancy. The criteria for adaptiveness included peer- and clinician-rated mental health. In support of the Taylor–Brown proposition, even the discrepancy operationalization seemed to show adaptive external correlates.

However, details of their method and results suggest that their conclusion should be regarded with some caution. Their discrepancy measure, for example, showed no significant associations with independently measured outcomes (e.g., clinician ratings and peer-judged mental health): All significant correlates were contaminated with self-report method variance. Moreover, the self-peer discrepancy measure employed a single peer rating, which is unlikely to be reliable. Other studies have used three or more raters (e.g., Colvin & Block, 1995; John & Robins, 1994; Paulhus, 1998a). In short, the measure that Taylor and colleagues treated as a discrepancy measure was ultimately another self-report of positive traits. Predictably, it showed adaptive external correlates—even when the latter were measured by valid external criteria.

However, support for the Taylor–Brown proposition can be found in research from other sources. In a field study of Bosnian war refugees, Bonanno and colleagues (2002) were able to measure discrepancy self-enhancement as well as clinician ratings

of adjustment. Self-enhancers were rated as better adjusted. The extreme adversity of the situation makes this study unique among those using a discrepancy measure of self-enhancement.

Direct Competition

Only two studies have provided a head-to-head comparison of the adaptive value of self-enhancement operationalizations. Kwan and her colleagues compared three operationalizations (Kwan et al., 2004). In addition to the social comparison and discrepancy methods, they used their new technique described earlier. Results indicated that both the discrepancy measure and their novel measure were negatively related to task performance—the only objective outcome included in the study. The social comparison measure failed to predict the outcome.

Another head-to-head comparison of the social comparison and criterion-discrepancy methods expanded the outcomes to include four different measures of psychological adjustment (Kurt & Paulhus, 2008). Results showed that, in the same sample, social comparison had positive associations, and discrepancy measures had negative associations with externally evaluated adjustment—except self-rated self-esteem.

In sum, the literature indicates that the criterion-discrepancy measure is more valid than the social comparison method for tapping chronic self-enhancement. Based on research with the more valid measure, we conclude that chronic self-enhancement is linked to maladaptive attributes. The jury is still out on the direction of causation.

Three exceptions are noteworthy. One is that chronic self-enhancement may promote intrapsychic forms of adjustment, for example, self-esteem and happiness. Second is that self-enhancement may promote short-term interpersonal adjustment in the sense of engagement with strangers. Third, self-enhancement may pay off in traumatized samples (e.g., refugee victims), where formidable self-confidence is required for psychological survival.

In sum, no simple conclusion can be drawn regarding the Taylor–Brown claim for the adaptiveness of self-enhancement. In retrospect, this complexity is not surprising: It simply reaffirms the inherent difficulty of de-

fining psychological adjustment (Asendorpf & Ostendorf, 1998; Paulhus, Fridhandler, & Hayes, 1997; Scott, 1968).

The Structure of Self-Enhancement

Although typically unspoken, the assumption in most research on self-enhancement is that the tendency generalizes across domains. It is assumed that respondents who self-enhance in one domain (e.g., their competence) also self-enhance in other domains. Paulhus and John (1998) challenged that assumption by asking "How many types of self-enhancement are there?"

Based on the evidence favoring the criterion-discrepancy method, Paulhus and John (1998) chose it as the unit of bias measurement. For each personality variable, a comparison was made between self-ratings and a more objective criterion, namely, ratings by knowledgeable peers (i.e., friends, family). In the case of intelligence, IQ scores were used as a criterion. Each self-rating was regressed on its corresponding peer rating to create a residual score representing the departure of the self-rating from reality. Factor analysis of a comprehensive set of personality variables was used to uncover the structure of self-enhancement.

Using the Big Five dimensions of personality plus intelligence to represent personality space, our factor analyses of residuals revealed a dimensionality smaller than the 5-D of either self- or peer ratings. The first two factors appeared as in Figure 19.4. Factor 1 was marked by the Extraversion and Openness residuals whereas Factor 2 was marked

by the Agreeableness and Dutifulness residuals.[6] Clearly, the structure of bias bears little resemblance to the standard Big Five structure. Instead, self-enhancement is organized in terms of agency and communion.

Several replication studies have helped to clarify the meaning of the bias factors through the addition of a wide variety of marker measures. These included traditional measures of SDR (BIDR, Marlowe–Crowne scale) as well as related measures of self-enhancement (e.g., Narcissistic Personality Inventory). The additions allowed us to project a variety of bias and personality measures onto the two bias factors.

Results showed a striking match with the SDR factors detailed in the third section of this chapter. SDE and narcissism projected onto the Agentic factor. Projections onto the Communal factor were strong for the Impression Management and Denial scales but weaker for Eysenck's Lie scale, the MMPI Lie scale, and the Marlowe–Crowne scale (Paulhus, 2002).

Another correspondence is informative: Positive Valence and Negative Valence (Benet-Martínez & Waller, 1997). Specifically, Positive Valence projected most clearly onto the Agentic factor, whereas Negative Valence projected onto the Communal factor. This correspondence adds to the construct validity of these two self-enhancement factors. Agentic self-enhancement concerns positive assets: People individuate by promoting their achievements. Communal self-enhancement concerns negative attributes: People submerge themselves in their groups by minimizing their social deviance.

Summary

Once again, our two-level framework has proved fruitful. The same Agentic and Communal self-presentation factors found in SDR have been recapitulated via the novel residual factoring method. This finding is noteworthy because the latter technique requires only personality content measures. In fact, there is no overlap whatsoever in the two methodologies. The convergence of results across the two techniques adds substantial credibility to both methods of factoring self-presentation. The interpretation of the self-enhancement factors becomes clearer,[7] and SDR factors gain more credibility as in-
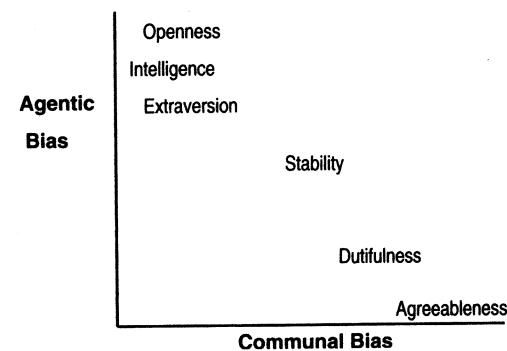

FIGURE 19.4. Structure of personality residuals.

dicators of departure from reality. That is, high scores on both factors involve overly positive self-descriptions.

Since publication of the Paulhus and John (1998) paper, attention to agentic and communal aspects of self-presentation has burgeoned. For example, Campbell and colleaguest (2002) utilized the distinction to clarify the difference between self-esteem and narcissism. Others have applied it to examining cultural differences in the structure of self-enhancement (Church et al., 2006; Kurman, 2001; Yik, Bond, & Paulhus, 1998). In search of a mechanism, Dijikic, Peterson, and Zelano (2005) found that memory distortion is greater for agentic than for communal self-enhancers. A variety of other self-enhancement behaviors have been shown to depend on the agency–communion distinction (Lonnqvist et al., 2007; Pauls & Stemmler, 2003).

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The vast research on self-presentation is scattered across the literatures on social, clinical, and industrial-organizational psychology as well as personality, per se. Even within the latter, the literature is enormous and disconnected. In this chapter, we have tried to integrate the disconnected units within a two-level model. The first facet turns on the nature of the audience: public versus private. The second facet concerns the content of the image presented: People tend to offer images consistent with some combination of agentic qualities (strong, competent, clever) and communal qualities (cooperative, warm, dutiful).

That two-level model allowed us to organize three domains of research on self-presentation: socially desirable responding, self-enhancement, and, to a lesser extent, underlying cognitive processes. Resonating throughout the chapter is the historical failure of researchers to recognize the complex nature of positivity. Individuals motivated to self-present do not all behave the same way because the definition of positivity has (at least) two interpretations, and different audiences may differentially value those two forms of positivity.

NOTES

1. Abbreviating the term further to "social desirability" leads to misleading characterizations such as "high in social desirability." That terminology should be reserved for labeling individuals who possess desirable attributes.
2. Unfortunately confusion has ensured from the fact that Digman (1997) referred to similar factors as Alpha and Beta.
3. Part of the problem is where to draw the line. The same self-evaluation can be viewed as overestimated, underestimated, or accurate, depending on the choice of observer (Campbell & Fehr, 1990).
4. Although impossible if everyone were referring to the same dimension, individuals tend to define evaluative traits (e.g., intelligence) in idiosyncratic fashion to ensure that they score high (Dunning, 2005). In that sense, everyone can legitimately report being above average.
5. We use the term "discrepancy" to subsume difference scores and residual scores. Rather than an absolute values, we refer to directional values, with higher numbers indicating a self-rating greater than the criterion rating.
6. This result emerged when Conscientiousness was measured as Dutifulness rather than Ambition (Jackson, Paunonen, Fraboni, & Goffin, 1996). Dutifulness is most faithful, conceptually and empirically, to the Communal factor (Wiggins & Trapnell, 1990).
7. This convergence also helps to address allegations that discrepancy methods may be entirely misguided (Griffin, Murray, & Gonzalez, 1999; Zuckerman & Knee, 1996).

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