

## **Toward an action-theoretical model of personality**

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### *Abstract*

*An action-theoretical model of personality is presented, in which missing links between action-theory and personality constructs are established. Background is the facts, (a) that current psychological theories of action are limited to situation- and action-specific person variables, and (b) that in personality theory systematic relations between such variables and personality constructs are missing. The action-theoretical model of personality is based on a differentiated expectancy-value theory, whose situation-specific constructs (various aspects of valences and expectancies) are logically connected with personality constructs of generalized self-referential cognitions. The following action-theoretical personality variables are proposed to be central for the study of person–situation interactions: (a) self-concept of own competence, (b) control orientations, (c) trust, (d) conceptualization level, and (e) value orientations. The model implies rules for the operationalization of its constructs and for prediction of behaviour. The structure of the action-theoretical personality variables and their relations to other theories of personality are described.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In current reviews of the state of personality psychology cognitive approaches are evaluated most positively. It is hoped that these models will be able to integrate the current fragmentary and mostly atheoretical research in the field of personality (Herrmann and Lantermann, 1985; Pervin, 1985). Such cognitive models of personality are not new; they go back to the work of prominent theorists like Ach (1910), Kelly (1955), Rotter (1955) and Heider (1958).

In 1973 Mischel proposed a cognitive social learning reconceptualization of personality that incorporates ideas from several of these authors. The construction

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of this model was stimulated by fundamental criticisms of the so-called trait approach. However, Mischel, as well as his forerunners and followers, focus on situation- and action-specific (person) variables. The result is a cognitive psychology of inter- and intraindividual differences, but not a psychology of personality in a comprehensive manner. The latter should include the stasis (consistency) of behaviour as well as its flow (variability). Mischel argues that 'we need to focus more specifically on what the person constructs in particular conditions instead of attempting to infer the global traits that he or she generally has' (Mischel, 1982, p. 484). Cantor and Kihlstrom's (1982) cognitive-social personology centres around the thesis 'that people respond flexibly to situations, as they construct them cognitively, and that they act behaviorally to transform situations so that they correspond more closely to their expectations' (Cantor and Kihlstrom, 1982, p. 143). Very similar statements, which accentuate the influence of situations on behaviour and experience as well as situation- and action-specific person variables can be found in the work of Seligman (1975) and Bandura (1982). Such models neglect or even deny the relevance of personality variables. This becomes especially evident in works centring on the assessment of person variables (e.g. Bandura and Cervone, 1983; Mischel, 1982), which are measured in a highly situation- and action-specific manner. Peterson and Seligman (1984), however, extended the model of learned helplessness for attribution style variables. But it is worth noting that those variables are conceived to be retrospective, rather than prospective generalized self-related cognitions. Thus, cognitive approaches to personality have not succeeded yet in describing the relations between situation- and action-specific person variables, on the one hand, and generalized personality variables, on the other hand. Situation- and action-specific person variables are bound to particular action situations, contexts, and points of time, whereas personality variables are conceived to be more or less generalized over situations and time. There is not yet a theory which integrates both types of constructs within an interactionistic approach, dealing adequately with consistency (stasis, stability) and variability (flow, change) in behaviour, experience, and personality (see e.g. Roberts and Nesselroade, 1986). The only attempts to integrate personality variables in cognitive approaches can be found in the work of Rotter (1955, 1982) and Atkinson (1983) as well as in some works on action styles (e.g. action control being similar to the well-known construct of behavioural rigidity; Kuhl, 1984; Schaie, 1960; planfulness and goal orientation; Frese, Stewart and Hannover, 1987). It is worth noting that the personality variables in such models are *external* correlates of action-theoretical prognoses or action styles. There is no systematic conceptual integration of personality variables in an action-theoretical model or a comprehensive interactionistic model of personality.

In this article some basic considerations of an action-theoretical model of personality are presented, which aim at a systematic, theoretical integration of approaches from general psychology (action theory) and personality psychology. The model demonstrates how a special type of action theory can be extended to personality variables, which have been neglected widely in classical personality theories. Locus of control orientations, value orientations, goals, and self-concept are examples of personality variables for which Pervin's statement that current personality research centres 'around a few hot topics in the field' (Pervin, 1985, p. 84) is especially true. Fragmentations in research concerning these and some other

personality variables and their slack theoretical anchorage, which is surely responsible for this state of research, should be abolished. Stated otherwise, the aim of the model is to extend psychological action theory, whose constructs up to now have been highly situation- and action-specific, via the inclusion of personality variables with relatively high temporal and situational stability.

### FRAME OF REFERENCE OF THE ACTION-THEORETICAL MODEL OF PERSONALITY

Historically, psychological theories of action and theories of personality are two rather separate domains. Action theories centre around the tasks of description, reconstruction, and prognosis of action intentions and actions. The various approaches in personality theory focus on (a) the description of personality and interindividual differences (viz. personality organization), (b) the prediction of individual functioning over extended periods of time, (c) the explanation of inter- and intraindividual differences, and (d) the modification of personality (see, e.g. Pervin, 1985). In the history of psychology personality research is characterized by the fact that an invariant, empirical problem (structure and dynamics of personality) is confronted with a series of theoretical approaches. The study of personality has been salient for a long time. This changed after the excessive concentration of factor-analytically founded work on the purely descriptive task of personality research, which was followed by situational and—later—interactional research concentrating on the dynamic interaction of person and situation in the genesis and prediction of behaviour and experience. Interactionism, 'a personality model, but not yet a theory' (Endler, 1983, p. 155), is accepted as a leading research paradigm in general (see Herrmann and Lantermann, 1985; Pervin, 1985). But up to now empirical research is restricted either to the above mentioned situation- and action-specific person variables (Cantor and Kihlstrom, 1982; Mischel, 1982) or to a purely 'traitist' measurement of generalized personality variables such as locus of control, action control, or planfulness (see e.g. Frese *et al.*, 1987; Kuhl, 1984; Lachman, 1986; Lefcourt, 1981). All these researchers make extensive statements about the interactional quality of their approach on the theoretical level. Unfortunately, there is a wide gap between theorizing about the empirical realization of an interactionistic approach to personality. Therefore, we are in need of models which integrate an interactionistic approach and person variables defined (and operationalized) at different levels of cross-situational generalization, making possible descriptions, explanations, and prognoses which stem from the interaction of situation and person variables. With reference to current cognitive approaches to person variables (Cantor and Kihlstrom, 1982; Mischel, 1973, 1982) this statement can be specified for the domain of personality models in which the person is conceptualized as an intentionally acting, reflexive, 'telosponding' (Rychlak, 1982) subject. Only Rotter's (1955, 1982) social learning theory of personality gives some hints for such a model.

Psychological theories of action are one of the essential foundations of cognitive psychology. They have received increasing attention in literature (e.g. Chapman, 1984; Feather, 1982; Frese and Sabini, 1985). Historically, action theory is a heterogeneous interdisciplinary research programme. It contains quasi-paradig-

matic theory conceptions, which are applied to various empirical problems and research questions. This type of programme is characterized by the variable application of a more or less fixed paradigm to various research topics. Following Brandtstädter (1984a), at least four clusters of action theories can be differentiated:

- (a) *motivational* action theories including expectancy-value models, instrumentality theories, and attributional formulations (cf. Feather, 1982);
- (b) *system-analytic* action theories (in the tradition of Miller, Galanter and Pribram, 1960);
- (c) *structuralist* action theories (in the tradition of Piaget or Brunner; see e.g. Schank and Abelson, 1977);
- (d) approaches within the *analytic philosophy* of action (e.g. Von Wright, 1971).

In spite of this theoretical heterogeneity some common features of these approaches can be identified. Action is conceptualized as planful behaviour, which is goal-oriented, guided by expectations, intentional, voluntarily chosen by the subject, and reflexive: '... actions are not behavioral events, but interpretative constructs' (Brandtstädter, 1984a, p. 116). The leading motivational action theory is the expectancy-value theory, which describes, reconstructs, and predicts action with reference to subjective valences and subjective expectancies. In reviews of this theory not only broad empirical evidence for its hypotheses but also a high convergence of theoretical approaches in psychology to its central statements emerge (see Atkinson, 1964; Feather, 1982; Krampen, 1987).

Figure 1 presents a differentiated expectancy-value model, which includes the relevant differentiations of the basic expectancy-value constructs. The differentiation of competence and contingency expectancies can be found in the models of Bandura (1977, 1982), Weisz (1983), and Skinner (1985). Outcome-consequence expectancies (instrumentalities) are extensively described in instrumentality-theoretical approaches (e.g. Mitchell and Biglan, 1971; Vroom, 1964). Situational expectancies, which refer to the expectancy of certain outcomes-events without own action, were established in cognitive models of achievement motivation (e.g. Heckhausen, 1977). Together with the valence of outcomes/events and their consequences these various expectancy constructs constitute an elaborated predic-

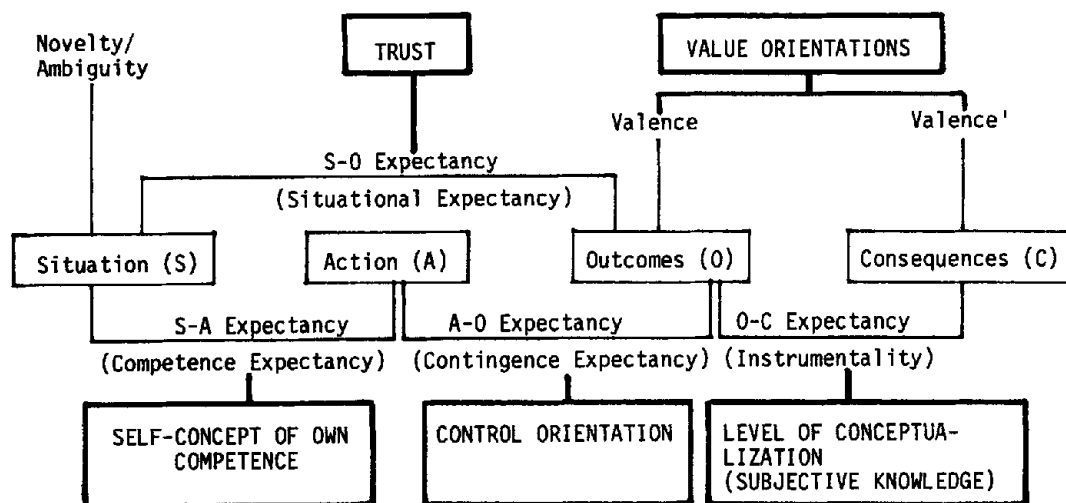


Figure 1. Differentiated expectancy-value model associated with the action-theoretical personality variables

tive model for action intentions and actions. But it is worth noting that all constructs are defined in a situation- and action-specific manner (see e.g. Heckhausen, 1977; Mischel, 1973, 1982; Vroom, 1964). Thus, the differentiated expectancy-value model is a general approach to human motivation and action which considers inter- and intraindividual differences in these situation- and action-specific person variables, but not the influence of personality variables with relatively high temporal and situational stability.

There is only one expectancy-value approach which includes personality variables: Rotter's (1955, 1982) social learning theory of personality. Rotter describes a list of generalized expectancies (e.g. internal vs external locus of control of reinforcement, interpersonal trust, problem-solving strategies). He formulated a hypothesis which is central for interactionistic personality theory: 'an expectancy (. . .) is a function of the expectancy for a given reinforcement to occur as a result of previous experience in the same situation (. . .) and expectancies generalized from other situations (. . .) divided by some function of the number of experiences in the specific situation' (Rotter, 1982, p. 92). Put less formally this means that in 'relatively novel situation(s) a person's expectancies would be largely a function of such generalizations' (Rotter, 1982, p. 92). Thus, the subjective perception of the action or life situation of the agent is crucial. In relatively novel or ambiguous (ill-defined) situations behaviour relies primarily upon personality variables (generalized expectancies), whereas behaviour in known, well-defined situations relies upon situation- and action-specific person variables (expectancies and reinforcement values or valences). Rotter restricts himself—even in newer publications—to a pure listing of various constructs of generalized expectancies without giving specifications of their relations to the situation- and action-specific constructs of social learning theory or, more generally, those of expectancy-value theory. This may also be the reason for neglecting such personality variables in cognitive approaches to personality, which—like Mischel's (1973) theory—refer only to Rotter's situation- and action-specific person variables. In his retrospect on the development of social learning theory, Rotter (1982) states that the inclusion of generalized expectancies '( . . .) undoubtedly complicates the problem of accurate prediction' (p. 326). He continues: 'at the same time, however, it provides a new and promising approach to a vast number of problems'. This hope will be supported in the following by the elaboration of an action-theoretical model of personality.

### THE ACTION-THEORETICAL MODEL OF PERSONALITY

The action-theoretical model of personality (AMP) is a further development and differentiation of Rotter's (1955, 1982) social learning theory of personality starting from the differentiated expectancy-value model presented in Figure 1. Its basic axioms conform to those of Rotter's social learning theory (Rotter, 1972) and—in part—to those of Rychlak's (1982) logical learning theory. Both theories focus on a teleological, action-theoretical approach. Of central importance are the notions of (a) the dynamic interaction of person and environment/situation, (b) the rejection of reductionism and dualism, (c) the concentration on phylogenetic and ontogenic higher levels of behaviour—viz. actions—, (d) the goal-directedness or telosponsiveness of human behaviour (viz. 'individuals are presumed to be agents of their

behaviour rather than mere conduits or mediators of influences funnelling into their cognitive processes from current and previous external sources.'; Rychlak, 1982, p. xv), and (e) development of generalization and differentiation of expectancies, respectively development through actions.

These propositions are in accordance with those of psychological action theories in general and the differentiated expectancy-value model in particular. It is worth noting that the proposed action-theoretical model of personality does not claim to be a comprehensive personality model (like factor-analytically derived ones). Instead it is conceived of as a partial model, which supplements and differentiates other personality models in those cases where human actions and action-related cognitions, motivations, and emotions are involved.

### Action-theoretical personality variables

In the action-theoretical model of personality it is assumed that each situation- and action-specific person variable of the differentiated expectancy-value model is generalized over time and across situations. Generalization stems from experiences in (similar) situations and results in person variables which are relatively stable across situations and time. They can be used for the description of individuals and of interindividual differences.

The proposed labels of the action-theoretical personality variables partly cover those found in the literature. Moreover, they are specified in their meaning because they stem from the generalization of the situation-specific constructs. Constitutive for the AMP are the following deductions (see Figure 1).

First, situational expectancies which refer to the expectation of outcomes or events happening without action of the person are generalized to an orientation across situations and time that positively valued events will occur (or that negatively valued events will be prevented) without own action. The person has a high level of *trust* (vs *mistrust*) in situational dynamics and forces which include social as well as physical factors. Trust has been discussed in psychoanalytic personality and developmental theory (Erikson, 1968), in social psychology (Lerner, 1980; Marsh, 1977; Wrightsman, 1974), and in social learning theory (Rotter, 1967, 1982). Although there is some overlap between these conceptions of trust and the AMP concept, the proposed definition of trust is more specific because it is deduced merely from situational expectancies—the other definitions of trust are broader (e.g. control orientations; Lerner, 1980; Wrightsman, 1974).

Second, situation-action/competence expectancies which refer to the situation-specific expectation that one can choose voluntarily between two or more action alternatives or that there is at least one action possibility at one's disposal are generalized to *self-concepts of competence*. A high self-concept of competence is defined by the statement that a person subjectively perceives him/herself as capable in various situations; low self-concepts refer to the generalized belief that in many situations there is no or only one (weak) action possibility. This definition is in accordance with the concepts of political efficacy (Balch, 1974) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1982).

Third, action-outcome/contingence expectancies which refer to the controllability of outcomes are generalized to *control orientations*. Rotter's (1966, 1982) concept of internal vs external locus of control of reinforcement is in accordance

with this personality variable. However, construct differentiations and specifications proposed by Bandura (1977), Weisz (1983), and Skinner (1985) are considered in the AMP definition. Control orientations refer to contingency expectancies, not to competence expectancies of self-efficacy.

Fourth, outcome-consequence expectancies/instrumentalities are generalized to a person's subjective knowledge about the dynamics of situations and his/her subjective competence to predict (multiple) consequences of action outcomes or events. Whereas this personality variable is partly in accordance with general conceptions of problem-solving competence and intelligence, within AMP it is named *level of conceptualization* because it refers mainly to the subjective level of beliefs (not to performance). Perhaps it is best described in terms of mental models or subjective environmental theories, which constitute, together with the subjective theories of the self, the subjective theory of the reality of individuals (see Epstein, 1973).

Finally, valences of outcomes and their consequences which are related to situations or situation-specific actions are generalized to be general *value orientations*. Rotter's (1955, 1982) need values and the terminal values described and listed by Rokeach (1973) are in accordance with this AMP definition as the general notions of the theoretical approach toward a theory of goals developed by Pervin (1983). It is worth noting, however, that the AMP conception of value orientations includes not only terminal values and generalized action goals, but also emotionally, socially, and culturally mediated valuations. In this way cognitive, motivational, actional, social, and emotional aspects of human life are integrated in a conception of personality which follows Pervin, who defines it as an 'integrative, holistical concept involving an overall structure which changes according to internal and external demands while retaining its inherent qualities' (Pervin, 1983, p. 45).

These are (up to now) the basic personality constructs of the action-theoretical model of personality which may be differentiated, specified, and completed in the future. It is worth noting that AMP has a constructivistic background, being open for elaborations and changes. The present approach focuses on the theoretically consolidated deduction of personality variables from situation- and action-specific person variables. AMP neither relies solely on these specific person variables (Mischel, 1973, 1982), nor does it use personality variables as correlates or moderators of action styles (Atkinson, 1983; Kuhl, 1984). In AMP the relative descriptive and predictive value of situation-specific person variables and personality variables which are integrated in one model is determined by the subjective perception of the action or life situation.

### **Structure of action-theoretical personality variables**

Situation- and action-specific person variables as well as the action-theoretical personality variables must be seen as continua rather than as dichotomies. Weisz (1983) illustrates this for the special case of controllability and generalized perceptions of control. At one extreme there are questions as to whether life is working out the way one wants (generalized perception of control); at the other extreme there are questions regarding specific task or activity judgements (controllability). In between there are moderately general or domain-specific self-perceptions summing up several situation-/action-specific questions out of one's life

sphere or life domain. Thus, the distinctions between person variables and action-theoretical personality variables in Figure 1 are best seen as a continuum rather than a dichotomy. Until now cognitive approaches to personality have been restricted mainly to extreme situation-specificity, whereas empirical research on locus of control, self-concept, and value orientations has been restricted mainly to high generalization. An approximation to domain-specific measurement is only recently observable (e.g. Bandura and Cervone, 1983; Lachman, 1986).

With reference to the structural organization of personality we can integrate this into a *hierarchical* model (see Figure 2), which distinguishes four levels of generalization. Level 1 refers to the situation- and action-specific expectancies and goals, Level II to domain-specific person variables, Level III to the generalized (personality) variables, and Level IV to the total system of action-theoretical variables. At Level IV the hierarchical model of the structure of personality is open for completion of this partial model by other global personality models and personality variables (such as neuroticism, extraversion, etc.).

With reference to the multifactor-system theory of personality and individual differences developed by Royce and Powell (1983) it can be stated that these levels of the action-theoretical model of personality refer to the middle level of transformational systems (cognitive and affective systems: Level I and—partly—Level II), the integrative level of style and value systems (Level III and—partly—Level II), and the level of personal meaning (suprasystem: Level IV). It is worth noting that the AMP hierarchical model of personality is not factor-analytically derived. In contrast to Royce and Powell (1983) and Eysenck (1953), the person/personality variables are neither classified with reference to causal relationships nor with reference to statistical classifications or to external criteria. In AMP the differentiation of levels in personality organization stems solely from the distinction of situation-/action-specific, domain-specific, and generalized person variables, which results in a conceptual subordination: for instance, generalized control orientations (Level III) include various domain-specific control orientations (Level II) which include various situation- and action-specific contingency expectancies (Level I). Thus, higher levels are conceptually and with reference to their content broader than lower levels.

The proposed hierarchical model of the structure of action-theoretical variables is in accordance with empirical evidence for essential interdependences of its variables at and between the different levels. Locus of control orientations are

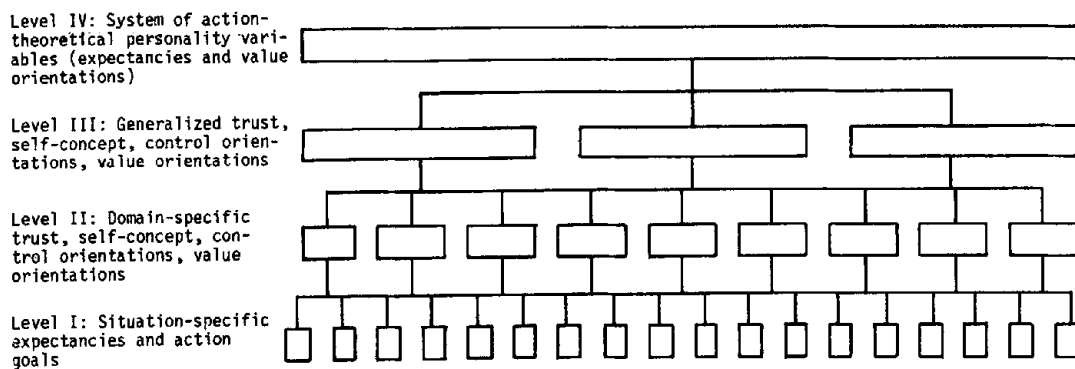


Figure 2. Hypothetical conception of the hierarchical structure of action-theoretical person and personality variables



positively correlated with self-concept (e.g. Epstein and Komorita, 1971; Lombardo and Berzonsky, 1975), trust (Levenson and Mahler, 1975), and value orientations (Rim, 1970). Self-concept is related to situation-specific causal attributions (Nicholls, 1979). Domain-specific self-concept, control orientation, and trust are correlated (Krampen, 1987). Similar empirical evidence is obtainable for significant interdependences between different levels of generalization for one variable. Filipp and Brandtstädter (1975) confirmed this for domain-specific and generalized self-concept variables. Lefcourt (1981) and Krampen (1986a) presented results with reference to control orientations.

Crucial for such work on the structure of personality are the reliabilities of differences of the scales used. Up to now this aspect has been given little attention. Situation-specific, domain-specific, and generalized measurements of theoretically differentiated variables are only useful then, when the intercorrelations and the reliabilities of the scales allow sufficient levels of scale difference (or profile) reliability. Only then can empirical evidence for level- and construct-specific operationalizations be established. Future research must consider this aspect of reliability of differences much more.

As in social learning theory, in AMP it is assumed that domain-specific variables (Level II) are the product of generalization across situation- and action-specific experiences (Level I). Furthermore it is assumed that generalized variables (Level III) are the product of generalization across experiences in various life domains (Level II). This assumption is stated for all action-theoretical variables—not only the expectancies—including action goals and value orientations. Thus, the hierarchical model of AMP involves assumptions concerning the tasks of explanation and modification of intra- and interindividual differences. The development of the action-theoretical personality variables is attributed to learning processes which stem from specific person-situation interactions. This is in accordance with an action-theoretical perspective in the study of life-span development (see Brandtstädter, 1984b; Brandtstädter, Krampen and Heil, 1986; Chapman, 1984). With reference to Piaget's (1954) analyses of the construction of reality by the child and adolescent, it must be assumed that this generalization of experiences in person-situation interactions will not be a continuous (linear) learning process but a process which is accompanied by discontinuities, over-generalizations, and recessions. Weiz (1983) elaborated this for the development of competence and contingency judgements (and their generalization) in childhood. Fiedler (1985) did this for adulthood.

In sum, the hierarchical conception of action-theoretical person variables with different levels of generalization integrates views about the consistency (higher levels) and variability (lower levels) of person and personality variables (see Pervin, 1983, 1985; Roberts and Nesselroade, 1986). It is worth noting that with reference to personality development this statement must be changed. Experiences with subjectively novel or ambiguous situations may be the cause for the development of new situation- and action-specific expectancies and goals which may be generalized to higher levels of personality—thus indicating change, variability, or flow. Experiences with subjectively known or well-defined situations confirm, in the case of assimilation, existing expectancies, goals and their generalizations—thus indicating consistency, stability, or stasis. In the case of accommodation (i.e. the existing cognitive structures do not succeed), however,

situation- and action-specific expectancies and goals must be modified which may result by generalization in personality development. This is in accordance with Mischel's (1973) notion that traits are no longer viewed 'as the intrapsychic causes of behavior consistency', but 'as the summary terms (. . .) applied to observed behavior' (Mischel, 1973, p. 264). The dynamical aspects of the action-theoretical model of personality are discussed further in the following section.

### **The prediction of behaviour and experience**

A central task of action theory as well as of personality theory is the prediction of behaviour and experience. AMP integrates person-situation interactions and person variables defined at different levels of generalization. It is assumed that the predictive value of situation-specific person variables and generalized person variables is a function of the quality of the cognitive structuring and the representation of the action or life situation under question. These cognitive structurings and representations—which may be labelled in the tradition of Tolman as 'cognitive maps'—stem from the dynamic interaction of person variables (prior experiences with the same or similar situations; the state of organism, etc.) and situational features.

Rotter (1955, 1982) focuses on the subjective novelty of a situation. The effect of generalized expectancies (in AMP: generalized person variables in general) 'will weigh more heavily in situations that might be described as novel than in those in which the subject has had a series of experiences' (Rotter, 1982, p. 92). In theories of decision-making, well-defined situations are differentiated from ill-defined ones (cf. Gore, 1962; Kirsch, 1977). Well-defined situations can be anticipated cognitively; they are known or one has had (subjectively) experiences with similar situations. They involve sufficient information for action. In short, the person has cognitive structures at his/her disposal. It is assumed that the predictive value of situation- and action-specific person variables will be high in such *strong* situations. In addition, the predictive value of domain-specific and—especially—of (generalized) personality variables will be low. For *weak* situations it is assumed that the predictive value of personality variables (and domain-specific variables) will be high and that the predictive value of situation-specific person variables, which are not established sufficiently, will be low. Weak situations are subjectively ill-defined, they are novel, or ambiguous. The individual does not have adequate cognitive structures or cognitive maps at his disposal. It is worth noting that the distinction of well-defined vs ill-defined situations must be seen as a continuum rather than as a dichotomy. This is in accordance with the hierarchical model of personality organization presented in the preceding section, because this includes the hypothesis of continua as well. Therefore AMP includes prescriptions for measurement in research and psychodiagnosis. According to the quality of situation perception, situation-/action-specific, domain-specific, or generalized operationalizations of the action-theoretical person variables are indicated.

The hypothetical sequence of 'situation → cognition → motivation → action' (described, for example in the current work of Atkinson (1983, p. 359ff.)) must be differentiated with reference to this AMP hypothesis. Dependent on situation perception (first part of the sequence), the second part (cognition) must be specified at least by three alternative pathways referring to (a) situation-/action-

specific person variables (novel or ambiguous situations), (b) domain-specific self-referential cognitions (medium level of situational novelty or ambiguousness), and (c) generalized self-referential cognitions (well-defined or known situations). This can be illustrated, for example, by the research on locus of control in the field of stress, coping, and depression. Neither a simple model, describing direct relations between control perceptions and stress as well as coping (e.g. Lefcourt, 1976), nor a moderator model which uses locus of control as a moderator variable between stress/life changes and effective coping vs anxiety/depression (e.g. Johnson and Sarason, 1978; Lefcourt, 1985) are in accordance with AMP. AMP proposes an interactionistic model, in which the interaction of person and situations (leading to situation perception) is crucial for the prediction of either effective coping and challenge or stress, anxiety, and depression. Dependent on the subjective novelty or ambiguousness of the action or life situation one must realize situation-specific, domain-specific, or generalized measurements for predictive purposes.

Empirical evidence for this general hypothesis concerning the relative predictive value of situation-/action-specific, domain-specific, and generalized person variables is scarce. The early results of Rotter and his colleagues (Rotter, 1955, 1972) and the findings from Kuhl (1977) and Lachman (1986) are in accordance with this hypothesis. Lachman (1986) states that domain-specific measures of locus of control are better predictors of behavioural outcomes in certain life spheres than generalized measures. Kuhl's (1977) experimental results confirm clearly the differential predictive value of domain-specific and generalized self-concept of competence for performance in a problem-solving task dependent on situational ambiguity and experience. The same is true for the author's own research (Krampen, 1986b) centering on the prediction of treatment outcome in alcoholics and the political participation of young adults. The results of both studies confirm that domain-specific measures of the action-theoretical personality variables are the best predictors when action or life situations are considerably novel or ambiguous.

### **RELATIONS OF THE MODEL TO OTHER THEORIES OF PERSONALITY**

AMP elaborates Rotter's (1955, 1982) and Mischel's (1973, 1981) models by integrating situation-specific person variables and generalized as well as domain-specific personality variables. AMP is also in accordance with the current work of Atkinson (1983) on personality, motivation, and action, as well as with Rychlak's (1982) proposal of a (teleo-)logical learning theory of personality and personality development. Certainly there are similarities between AMP and Bandura's (1977, 1982) model of self-efficacy, Pervin's (1983) proposal of a theory of goals, Piper and Langer's (1986) theory of mindlessness and mindfulness, other cognitive approaches to personality, and the psychology of control and self-concept. The same is true for action-theoretical conceptions of human development which focus on individuals' efforts to influence and to gain control over the course of development and aging (see Brandtstädter, 1984a,b; Brandtstädter *et al.*, 1986; Chapman, 1984). In sum, AMP is in accordance with cognitive and action-theoretical approaches in psychology. However, what are the relations to other models of personality research?

The action-theoretical model of personality is assumed to be a supplement and differentiation of the so-called comprehensive, factor-analytically derived trait models of personality. It is hypothesized that AMP supplements those models at the level of generalized person variables in cases where actions and action-related cognitions, motivations, and emotions are involved. It follows that interdependences of the action-theoretical personality variables and of the personality variables described in the classical models of personality must be rather low. What is the empirical evidence for this hypothesis?

Few significant and rather low correlations between control orientations and the personality traits of Eysenck's (1953, 1967) theory are reported by Platt, Pommeranz and Eisenmann (1971), Morelli and Morelli (1979), and Raine, Roger and Venables (1982). In a mutlitrait-multimethod analysis Schwartz (1973) failed to validate a locus of control measure by traits stemming either from Eysenck's or Cattell's theory. The same is true for the author's own research on interdependences between Eysenck's and Cattell's variables and control orientations, trust, and self-concept of own competence (Krampen, 1987). Canonical correlation analyses of the action-theoretical personality variables and broad personality inventories (Sixteen Personality Factors Questionnaire, 16 PF; Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, MMPI; Freiburger Persönlichkeitsinventar, FPI) failed to establish more than one significant canonical correlation. Similar bivariate results are presented by Donovan and O'Leary (1983), Duke and Nowicki (1973), Garske (1976), and Powell and Vega (1972). In sum, it can be concluded from current research findings that there are rather weak relations between the action-theoretical personality variables and those of factor-analytically derived personality inventories. Both, number and numerical value of correlations are in ranges which confirm that the action-theoretical variables supplement personality diagnosis and that their overlap with classical personality variables is rather low.

The observed (low) correlations between the action-theoretical personality variables (measured at Level III; see Figure 2) and other personality variables are in accordance with the hierarchical conception of personality structure. On Level IV (see Figure 2) the integration of the different variables to a broad, comprehensive model of personality is possible. The significance of such other personality variables for the development of the action—theoretical personality variables and for their predictive value for behaviour and experience must be analysed in future research. Perhaps an integration of biological factors (see, e.g. Raine *et al.*, 1982) or that of the related probability of actions, for which Skinner (1985) elaborated the contribution to contingency experiences, may be necessary in terms of a cognitive biosocial theory of personality.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

At least the proposed action-theoretical model of personality makes personality theory somewhat more action-theoretical and extends action-theory. It is not only integrative for the mainly separately treated research programmes of personality theory and action theory, but also for research on some of the 'hot topics' (Pervin, 1985, p. 84) in the field of personality. AMP can be used to establish a more theoretically founded empirical research on locus of control, self-concept, value

orientations, and trust, for which up to now research is fragmentary. Few theoretical points of view stand in contrast to a wide variety of rather unrelted results. AMP makes clear statements about the definition of those person variables, about their interdependences, about their variability and consistency, as well as about their significance for the prediction of behaviour and experience as a function of situational novelty and ambiguousness. Because AMP is also capable of reconstructing influential cognitive approaches to personality (i.e. learned helplessness, self-efficacy, hopelessness in the cognitive theory of depression; cf. Bandura, 1977, 1982; Beck, 1972; Seligman, 1975), it may become an integrative frame of reference of cognitive approaches to personality (see Krampen, 1987). Thus, the proposed model is a further step (in the tradition of Ach, Rotter, Atkinson, and Mischel) to a cognitive approach to personality which may be extended in the future to a comprehensive biosocial theory of personality structure and dynamics. It should be stressed that AMP is open for elaborations and changes, and that Mischel's (1981) notion about cognitive approaches to personality—'Something borrowed, something new' (Mischel, 1981, p. 3)—is true for its development.

Empirical evidence for the structural and dynamic hypotheses of the action-theoretical model of personality is scarce. Numerous empirical findings can be integrated into AMP, but there are only few studies in which these hypotheses have been directly tested (see above). Thus, we are in need of studies that fill up this gap to come to research 'that appreciates the complexity of individual personality functioning' (Pervin, 1985, p. 84). A further problem in this direction will be the development of measures that operationalize the action-theoretical person variables with reference to AMP more precisely than the presently used measures of locus of control, trust, and self-concept, which tend to mix the action-theoretically differentiated constructs of competence, contingency, and situational expectancies, and their generalizations.

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## RÉSUMÉ

Un modèle théorique-action de la personnalité est présenté, dans lequel les maillons manquants entre théorie de l'action et construits de la personnalité sont mis en avant. Le background: (a) Les théories psychologiques de l'action actuelles sont limitées aux variables de la personne, spécifiques à la situation et à l'action, et (b) il manque aux théories de la personnalité les relations systématiques entre de telles variables et les construits de la



personnalité. Le modèle théorique-action de la personnalité est basé sur une théorie différenciée des attentes et des valeurs, à l'intérieur de laquelle les construits spécifiques à la situation (différents aspects des appréciations et attentes) sont reliés de façon logique aux construits de la personnalité concernant les cognitions généralisées qui réfèrent au moi. Les variables théoriques-action de la personnalité suivantes sont tenues comme ayant une importance centrale pour l'étude des interactions personne-situation: (a) l'image de soi concernant ses propres compétences, (b) les orientations de contrôle, (c) la confiance, (d) le niveau de conceptualisation, et (e) les orientations-valeur. Le modèle comprend des règles pour l'opérationnalisation de ses construits et la prédiction du comportement. La structure des variables théoriques-action de la personnalité est décrite, ainsi que les relations de celles-ci avec d'autres théories de la personnalité.

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dargestellt wird der Entwurf eines handlungstheoretischen Modells der Persönlichkeit, das handlungs- und persönlichkeits-theoretische Konstrukte systematisch integriert. Hintergrund des Modells ist die Tatsache, (a) daß aktuelle Handlungstheorien in weiten Bereichen auf situations- und handlungsspezifische Konstrukte beschränkt bleiben, und (b) daß es in der Persönlichkeitstheorie versäumt wurde, Beziehungen zwischen diesen Variablen und (generalisierten) Persönlichkeitsmerkmalen herzustellen. Das handlungstheoretische Persönlichkeitsmodell basiert auf einem differenzierten Erwartungs-Wert-Modell, dessen situationsspezifische Konstrukte (verschiedene Valenz- und Erwartungskonstrukte) systematisch mit Persönlichkeitsvariablen, die als generalisierte selbstbezogene Kognitionen bezeichnet werden können, verbunden werden. Zentrale handlungstheoretische Persönlichkeitsvariablen für die Analyse von Person-Situation-Interaktionen sind danach (1) Selbstkonzepte eigener Fähigkeiten, (2) Kontrollüberzeugungen, (3) Vertrauen, (4) Konzeptualisierungsniveau und (5) Wertorientierungen. Das Modell beinhaltet Aussagen zur Operationalisierung seiner Konstrukte und Hypothesen über die Vorhersage von Verhalten und Erleben. Die Struktur der handlungstheoretischen Persönlichkeitsvariablen wird beschrieben; Beziehungen des Modells zu anderen Persönlichkeitstheorien werden ebenso diskutiert wie vorliegende empirische Befunde zum Modell.