

Special Issue: Objective Personality Tests
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Guest Editors

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Aims and Scope

Advances in computerized technologies during the last two decades have led to the development and broad application of new standardized methods of personality assessment that do not rely on self-reports. These methods stand in the tradition of so-called “Objective Personality Tests” (OPTs) or “Performance Tests of Personality” (Cronbach, 1970). Objective and performance-based personality tests have a long history in psychological assessment. They can be traced to Cattell’s proposal to use T-data for personality research (Cattell & Warburton, 1967). Cattell argued that a complete description of personality requires the inclusion of multiple types of data that have to be obtained with diverse methods. Combining several methods for assessing a construct reduces method specificity (i.e., systematic error that is associated with every method known; Eid & Diener, 2006). Objective Personality Tests capture behavior in highly standardized miniature situations. They lack transparency and do not require introspection. Therefore, they cannot be distorted by two well-known weaknesses of self-reports: limited self-knowledge and impression management. The first generation of OPTs designed by Cattell and his students comprised a large variety of tasks, materials, and scoring methods (Cattell & Warburton, 1967). In the 1990s, a second generation of OPTs emerged. Unlike the first generation of OPTs, these more recent methods benefitted from the development of computer technologies that provide highly flexible procedures for item presentation and precise registration of a person’s behavior.

As a general picture, early studies as well as research during the last two decades have revealed a rather low convergence of OPTs with other assessment methods. Whereas some authors have concluded from this pattern that OPTs lack construct validity, others consider such a conclusion to be premature because OPTs may measure personality components that are inaccessible to other methods such as self-reports. Importantly, dual-process theories assume two related but distinct representations of dispositions: implicit and explicit dispositions, and two types of information processing and behavioral control: automatic (impulsive, intuitive) processes and controlled (reflective, deliberate) processes. Because implicit and explicit dispositions serve different functions, they need to be at least partially distinct. Consequently, direct and indirect measures of these constructs cannot be expected to converge to the degree that is required for equivalent measures of the same construct. In the same vein, behavior in miniature situations might reflect personality components that cannot be captured by other assessment methods. Moreover, the degree of convergence between explicit, implicit, and objective personality measures varies across boundary conditions (Friese, Hofmann, & Schmitt, 2009; Hofmann, Geschwendner, Nosek, & Schmitt, 2006). For instance, Dislich, Zinkernagel, Ortner, and Schmitt (2011) showed that the convergence between implicit, explicit, and objective risk propensity indicators depended on self-control and type of risk behavior. An OPT that measured reflective risk behavior converged more strongly with self-reported risk propensity, whereas an OPT that measured impulsive risk propensity converged more strongly with an implicit risk propensity measure. Potential moderators of convergence are personality traits, situational characteristics, attributes of the construct, and attributes of the measurement procedure (Schmitt, 2009).

Given these and other encouraging findings, as well as the steadily increasing availability of highly precise computerized OPTs, we believe it is time to collect studies that can help us to better understand what these OPTs measure and how they can contribute to the advancement of personality research and assessment. It is for this reason that the editor of the *European Journal of Psychological Assessment* invited us to guest edit a special issue on Objective Personality Tests.

We encourage the submission of manuscripts that describe new OPTs or that contribute to a better understanding of available OPTs. Ideally, the presented studies should include several methods and at least one method in addition to the OPT at issue. We welcome research that addresses an OPT's discriminant, convergent, and criterion validity as well as the impact of procedural features on the test result. We encourage the submission of studies that are carefully grounded in theory. Moreover, we would like authors to discuss the implications of the presented results for personality theory, research, and assessment. No priority is given to certain kinds of OPTs or certain kinds of behaviors. Rather, any OPT that fulfills the core definition of OPTs (behavior in a highly standardized miniature situation) and that can be used as a standardized assessment procedure is welcome. We are aware of the fact that a number of procedures introduced for the assessment of implicit dispositions (often called indirect measures) such as the IAT have been considered to be OPTs. We would like to distinguish indirect measures that capture representations of the self from OPTs. OPTs as we understand them employ more realistic behavioral expressions of personality traits in simulated miniature situations. For examples, see Dislich et al. (2011), Proyer and Häusler (2007), and Rubio, Hernández, Zaldívar, Márquez, and Santacreu (2010). In addition to the OPTs described in these papers, behavioral choices, viewing time, and procedures that have been used in experimental games may qualify as OPTs if they are assumed to reflect a personality state or trait.

Timeline

If you would like to contribute a manuscript to this special issue, please email an outline to Tuulia Ortner (tuulia.ortner@sbg.ac.at) by September 15th, 2012. Outlines should consist of a title, a list of authors, and a 1,000 word summary with a brief description of the OPT that was used, the theoretical framework, the design of the study, the assessment methods that were included, the most important results, and the most important conclusion. Regular manuscripts containing data presented in a single study should not be longer than 20 pages (including references, figures, and tables). Manuscripts based on two or more studies may exceed this length; in this case, authors should estimate length in their outline. After the guest editors have reviewed all proposals, invitations to contribute to the special issue will be sent by October 15th, 2012. Submitted manuscripts will be expected by February, 30th, 2013. They will then be sent out for review by the *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*.

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