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### The cross-situational consistency of goals

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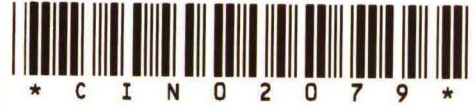
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**WORC Paper 96.10.018/5**

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$R = .46$

$t = \text{psychology}$

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# **The Cross-Situational Consistency of Goals: Evidence on the Funder/Colvin Hypothesis**

**Joop Hettema & Dorien P. Hol**

*Keywords: personality, consistency, goals, situations*

The consistency, coherence and equifinality of goals were examined in an experiment, in which 147 subjects indicated preferences for 6 goals in 2 parallel sets of 7 widely differing social situations. Generalizability coefficients were used to obtain goodness of fit indices for each model. The results clearly favored the consistency model. The outcomes support the Funder/Colvin hypothesis emphasizing the operant nature of behavior as a major condition for consistency across different situations. The significance of the present findings for trait and self-regulation models is discussed.

## **Introduction**

Since Mischel (1968) challenged the generality of personality dispositions in his monograph *Personality and assessment*, many studies have been devoted to the issue of cross-situational consistency of individual behaviour (for earlier reviews cf. Bowers, 1973; Sarason et al., 1975; Furnham & Jaspars, 1983). However, the question whether personality consistency exists does not have a simple answer and requires knowledge of the persons, situations, responses and levels of analysis involved (Diener & Larsen, 1984). Consistency has been studied from the perspective of the person (Baumeister & Tice, 1988; Bem & Allen, 1974; Cheek, 1982; Kenrick & Braver, 1982; Kenrick & Stringfield, 1980; Koestner et al., 1989). In this approach, some persons are assumed to be more consistent than others, either generally or in specific conditions. However, this approach has not provided the final answer to the consistency issue. Not only were earlier findings hard to be replicated (Chaplin & Goldberg, 1985), but this research also lacked a more general theoretical framework (Hettema & Kenrick, 1992).

A second approach has been directed at situations as the core issue. Some types of situations were assumed to foster consistency whereas other situations had negative effects. The distinction between weak and powerful situations (Mischel, 1973) or situation similarity (Mischel & Peake, 1982) were taken to underlie these effects. However, due to ambiguities in assessing situational power (Hettema et al., 1986) as well as situation similarity (Bem & Funder, 1978) this approach has never flourished.

A third approach of consistency has focused on the type of behavior as the major basis. Studies with S-R questionnaires (Endler et al., 1962) allow for comparisons of consistency among different types of behavior to be made. Those studies showed that most social-emotional variables like affectional/status behavior (Rausch et al., 1959), anxiety (Ekehammar et al., 1974; Endler & Hunt, 1966, 1968; Fisher, et al., 1977; Furnham, 1981; Mellstrom, et al., 1978; Van Heck, 1981; Van Heck & Van der Leeuw, 1975), conformity (Furnham, 1980), depression (Williams, 1982), dominance (Dworkin & Kihlstrom, 1978), hostility (Endler & Hunt, 1968; Van Heck & Van der Leeuw, 1975), machiavellianism (Vleeming, 1981), and social appropriateness (Price & Bouffard, 1974), reveal a lack of consistency across different situations. A notable exception to this general picture are studies focusing on performance at different academic tasks, yielding highly consistent results (e.g. Rushton & Endler, 1977). It is now generally agreed that consistency across different situations is to be expected particularly with structural variables like abilities and cognitive competencies (Endler & Edwards, 1986; Mischel, 1968, 1973). However, general intelligence may provide a sufficient explanation for this phenomenon (Furnham & Jaspars, 1983).

### **Goal-directedness versus reactivity**

Hitherto, most consistency studies were focused either on persons, situations or behaviors as major conditions. As a result, conditional trait models may be proposed for each aspect separately. More recently, Hettema & Kenrick (1992) elaborated this approach by focusing on two elements simultaneously: persons and situations. Persons may be consistent or inconsistent, situations may be relatively powerful or weak. If a sample of inconsistent persons meets a set of powerful situations, consistency may not be expected. However, if a sample of consistent persons meets a set of weak situations, consistency will be obtained. Based on this type of reasoning Hettema & Kenrick (1992) proposed a general approach for the study of consistency. They adopted a heuristic framework that jointly considers persons and situations. From earlier work with person-environment studies, six basic types of relationships were derived: static person-environment mesh (I), choice of situations by persons (II), choice of persons by situations (III), transformation of environments by persons (IV), transformation of persons by environments (V) and person-environment transactions (VI). The model assumes that the degree of consistency obtained in any study will depend upon the type of relationship studied. Consistency across situations is especially to be expected in type (IV) relationships, where persons are inherently *active* and goal-directed, rather than *reactive* like in type (V) relationships or *interactive* as in type (VI) relationships.

In a recent paper, Hettema & van Bakel (in press) provided evidence supporting the model with respect to type (IV) relationships. Cross-situational consistency was examined in a mastery condition, i.e. a condition in which competent persons actively and directedly transform environments. The focus was the behavior of experienced architects designing

new buildings. Using an S-R questionnaire of architectural designing as a major tool, the architects were asked to indicate how they would deal with 30 different designing situations. Three types of designing behavior were singled out for analysis: obtaining information on the building site, creating some visual image guiding the designing process, and consulting the design brief or program. Analysis revealed that the behavior of architects was consistent across different designing situations. Using generalizability analysis as a major tool, Hetteema & van Bakel obtained a coefficient of .80, indicating a high degree of consistency of individual designing behavior across different situations. A comparative analysis showed that the Personological model, emphasizing cross-situational consistency, provided a better explanation of the data than either the Situational model or the Interactional model.

This study was deliberately designed to meet the characteristics of type (IV) relationships. The persons acting were competent professionals, whereas the situations offered were problem situations of a familiar type, i.e. designing situations. Note that the outcomes were in close agreement with results in intellectual tasks as discussed earlier. The question is why. The answer to that question may lead the search for the types of behavior exhibiting consistency across situations. Intellectual tasks differ from social situations in many respects. A major difference is that tasks require goal directed behavior actively transforming a given situation into a new one, while social behaviour often assumes a reactive form to deal with environmental contingencies. The active-reactive dichotomy may be used as a heuristic guiding consistency research. A major question yet to be answered concerns the types of behavior corresponding with this dichotomy. Recent research has provided the beginning of an answer to this question.

### **The Funder/Colvin hypothesis: Operants versus respondents**

A study by Funder & Colvin (1991) has generated new evidence on the type of behavior exhibiting cross-situational consistency. Funder & Colvin compared personality ratings of Ss observed in three different laboratory settings and in daily life. As behavioral units they studied psychologically meaningful behaviours, categorized according to broad behavioral categories. Analysis of the data revealed that the behaviors observed showed reliable and considerable differences with respect to cross-situational consistency. Behavior that is relevant to a broad range of situations appeared to be more consistent. However, Funder & Colvin were not yet satisfied with these conclusions. Instead, they went on to look for a more substantive interpretation of their data, emphasizing the types of behavior underlying cross-situational consistency. As a major result they found that consistency could be explained in terms of operant versus respondent behavior (Skinner, 1931). Consistent behaviors tended to have the character of 'operants', while inconsistent behaviors looked like 'respondents'. A major difference between the two types of behavior is that respondents are correlated with specific eliciting stimuli, while operants are emitted behaviors for which no such stimulus can be detected.

The Funder/Colvin study may be a breakthrough regarding cross-situational consistency. However, a word of caution is in order regarding their major conclusion. The question is whether the behaviors they found to be the most consistent really are operants. A closer look at those behaviors reveals a predominance of stylistic and expressive features like, e.g., 'speaking in a loud voice', 'behaving in a timid manner', 'being expressive in face, voice or gestures', and so on. However, operants are directed at the change in some existing state, i.e. they represent goal directed actions. In the words of Skinner (1953): 'We operate on the environment to generate consequences' (p. 56). Operants reflect motivation on the side of the actor. As a matter of fact, operants have been considered to be the prototype of all learned motivation (Teitelbaum, 1977). Thus, further evidence on motivation is needed to test the Funder/Colvin hypothesis. Instead of overt behaviour we decided to concentrate on the goals underlying behavior.

### **Goals and goal consistency**

During the last decades, personality research has put special emphasis on goals as core elements. The interest in motivational aspects of personality is burgeoning, so that currently we may speak of a veritable 'conative revolution in personality' (Emmons, 1989; Little, 1986). To capture motivation, several new middle level units have been proposed, like e.g. current concerns (Klinger, 1977), goal concepts (Pervin, 1983), personal projects (Little, 1983), life tasks (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987), personal strivings (Emmons, 1986), tactics (Hettema, 1979, 1989a; Buss et al., 1987) and strategies (Hettema, 1979, 1989a; Hettema & Hol, 1989; Norem, 1989). All approaches mentioned emphasize intentionality of behavior and an orientation towards the future. Goals are proactive elements rather than reactive elements like e.g. feelings. Goals activate persons' activities in organized ways (Pervin, 1983), direct their movements and provide meaning to their lives (Baumeister, 1989). Goals are conceived as reference values underlying self-regulation of individuals in concrete situations (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Scheier & Carver, 1988). In self-regulation, goals represent central elements governing divergent activities. While actions are carried out, behavior is continuously compared with reference values. Accordingly, from a self-regulation perspective, goals are less likely to be disturbed by environmental reinforcement contingencies like e.g. overt behavior.

The major question to be answered here is: are goals consistent across different situations? Several answers have been proposed (cf. Emmons, 1989). According to some authors the nature of goals is dispositional. McClelland (1985) treats motivation primarily as dispositional classes of affectively tingled goals. Emmons (1989) has defined personal strivings as idiographically coherent patterns of goal strivings representing what an individual is typically trying to do. In both McClelland's and Emmons' view, goals are *consistent across situations* as well as stable. Other units like life tasks, personal projects and current concerns are frequently changing. Life tasks, for instance, reflect developmental trends. Cantor & Kihlstrom (1987) see life tasks as problems persons are currently

working on. Accordingly, during a specific period of life, goals may be consistent across situations but unstable in the long run.

Others emphasize the interactional nature of goals. Little's (1983) personal projects are interrelated sequences of actions intended to achieve a personal goal. In Little's view, the nature of personal projects depends on situational as well as personal parameters. Accordingly, the type of consistency to be expected is *coherence*, i.e. the pattern of stable and changing behaviour across situations (Buss & Cantor, 1989; Endler & Magnusson, 1976; Hettema, 1994). Still others stress the state character of goals. Klinger (1987), for instance, conceives of current concerns as the state of an organism between commitment to a goal and either attainment or disengagement from it. In his conception, neither consistency across situations nor stability appear to be major features of goals.

A completely different perspective on goals is offered by biological approaches to personality. Rather than goal preferences per se, biological approaches tend to stress preferences for environments (Hettema & Deary, 1993; Hettema & Kenrick, 1992). Behavior geneticists, for instance, have forwarded the concept of gene-environment correlation to explain the extent to which children receive or create environments correlated with their genetic propensities (Plomin, et al., 1977). Others have emphasized biologically prepared structures as a major basis for selecting environments. For instance, introverts, who are normally more aroused, prefer environments with a relatively low arousal potential (Eysenck, 1981). Sensation seekers tend to prefer environments with intense stimulation, whereas their counterparts protect themselves from overstimulation by avoiding those environments (Zuckerman, 1979). Goals become important as soon as the actual environment does not coincide with the preferred environment. In that case individuals will tend to actively transform the environment in a more favorable direction, revealing active gene-environment correlation (Plomin et al., 1977).

It is important to note here that biological models stress the products of goal-directed actions rather than the goals themselves. Instead of cross-situational consistency or coherence, these models expect *equifinality*, i.e. the tendency of the person to reach a particular end state, relatively independent of his or her starting position (cf. Hettema, 1979; 1989; Hettema & Kenrick, 1989).

Summarizing then, different theorists have emphasized different conceptions of the type of consistency governing goals. The major types are: cross-situational consistency, person x situation coherence and equifinality. The different consistency types may be conceived as competing models to explain goals. Which of the types gives the best explanation is an empirical question to be solved by experimentation.



## **A crucial experiment**

The purpose of this experiment was to examine the three models: Consistency, coherence and equifinality. To test the different types of consistency we decided to scrutinize goal directed behaviors in a number of different situations. The study was designed according to a person x situation experimental design (Endler & Edwards, 1986; Endler & Magnusson, 1979), with persons, situations and goals as major facets. By varying situations as well as goals, this design has the capacity to demonstrate goal commonalities and differences in the same as well as in different situations.

## **Method**

### *Subjects*

As Ss we invited 147 students (79 females and 68 males) of academies for arts, sports, traffic, teaching, and engineering. Ages ranged from 20-25 years with a mean of 21,7 years. For their cooperation Ss received DFL 15.-.

### *The instrument*

To assess goal-directed behavior in different situations we developed an SRS questionnaire (Hetteema & Hol, 1989). Like S-R questionnaires (Endler & Hunt, 1968), SRS questionnaires contain situations (S) as stimuli and behaviors (R) as responses. However, the SRS questionnaire has an additional property, that is to assess the probability of a new situation (S') to be expected if R would be applied to S.

In SRS questionnaires, a number of situations are represented with short descriptions, followed by a number of response options. The present study featured 14 different situations. Each situation was accompanied by 18 different responses, representing 6 goal types replicated three times. The task of the S was to indicate for each response option the probability of reacting that way in the situation portrayed. So, each S produced a total of  $14 \times 6 \times 3 = 252$  scores. Probabilities could be expressed on a 5 point Likert scale with Yes, Probably, Perhaps, Probably not, and No as anchors.

## **Goals**

The goals in this study were carefully chosen. Major requirements of our goal concepts were: operant nature, broad applicability, and accessibility to numerical analysis. The first two requirements were derived directly from the work of Funder & Colvin (1991), the third requirement was deemed necessary as a prerequisite for detailed analysis. First of all, we wanted goals to have the character of operants. Personal strivings like 'do as many nice things to people as I can' or 'maintain an above average beauty' (Emmons, 1989) do not include the intended consequences of goal directed behaviour. Goals should specify the

nature of the changes to be brought about on the basis of intentions. A goal system answering this requirement has been developed by Schank & Abelson (1977). Those authors analyzed conceptual dependencies existing in natural language. This analysis has represented the information, underlying the goal concepts people use, in a few categories: *delta goals*. Those categories reflect intended state changes like increasing knowledge, power, or proximity.

The goal concepts selected should be applicable to a broad range of situations. Inconsistency can be caused by the simple fact that not all goals can be materialized in each situation. Goals like 'trying to get along with Barry' or 'overcoming my shyness' as in Little's (1983) personal projects are simply too concrete. Delta goals are abstract categories organizing the information available in daily speech in a limited set of metacategories. Earlier research has revealed that delta goals are applicable as well as relevant in most social situations (Hetteema & Hol, 1989; Hol, 1994).

To compute indices of consistency we treated goals as nomothetic units, rather than idiographic motivational constructs like personal strivings (Emmons, 1989). In the SRS questionnaire the different delta goals were represented with short sentences containing prototypical acts derived from a taxonomy developed earlier (Hetteema, 1989b). The verbs representing delta goals exhibit appreciable internal consistency (Hetteema & Hol, 1989; Hol, 1994). The delta goal categories are precise enough to unequivocally classify the concrete acts used to study e.g. personal strivings, life tasks, personal projects, and current concerns.

From the work of Schank & Abelson (1977) we derived 6 delta goals:

D-SOCIAL CONTROL: the intention to gain power and authority.

Verbs representing this goal include: criticizing, threatening, punishing and condemning.

D-CONTROL: the intention to gain control over physical objects. Represented with the verbs: negotiating, pleading, demanding and claiming.

D-PROXIMITY: the intention to move, e.g. to another person. Represented with: approaching, complimenting, greeting and luring.

D-KNOWLEDGE: the intention to increase knowledge. Represented with: studying, asking for information, observing and reading.

D-AGENCY: the intention to get someone else to pursue a goal on one's own behalf. Examples are: summoning, alerting, warning and inviting.

I-PREPARATION: The intention to prepare the attainment of other goals. Examples are: preparing, discussing, considering, and making phone calls.

## **The situations**

While the purpose of this study was to specify the model governing goal-directed behavior, the situations had to be carefully selected as well. Like in previous studies with

the SRS questionnaire (e.g. Hetteema & Hol, 1989; Hol, 1994; Van Heck, et al., 1993) situations were derived from a taxonomy developed by Van Heck (1989). Situations vary with respect to their invitational nature concerning goals. Earlier research has indicated that situations show considerable variation with respect to the goals emphasized and the goals de-emphasized (Van Heck, 1989). To control for this source we represented a broad array of situations. We selected situations with a view to represent different types, emphasizing different delta goals. For purposes of analysis, each situation type was represented twice. The experimental situations selected were arranged according to two sets of 7 situations, to be studied as parallel sets. Set 1 included the situations: Visit, Job application, Exam, Declaration of love, Expropriation, Physical violence, and Thrashing. Set 2 included the situations: Cooperation, Negotiation, Instruction, Meal, Deceit, Judgment, and Quarrel.

### *Analysis*

The primary aim of the analysis was to obtain information on the goodness of fit for the three models: consistency, coherence and equifinality.

A major difference among the models are different options concerning generalization. For instance, the consistency model seeks generalization across situations, whereas the interaction model does not have that option. Accordingly, as a general analytic framework we used generalizability theory (Cronbach et al., 1972; Ozer, 1986; Hetteema, 1989; 1994). In the present study for each model separately we computed generalizability coefficients as indices of fit. Generalizability coefficients are intraclass correlations, representing estimates of the amount of generalization to different universes of generalization for different objects of measurement. The universes of generalization as well as the objects of measurement for the different models are specified below.

### **Results**

A preliminary analysis was done to control for the psychological similarity of parallel situations. Similarity may be demonstrated with the average behavior of subjects in those situations (cf. Funder & Colvin, 1991). Accordingly, for each situation we computed average delta goal scores represented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Average preferences for goals in the two situation sets**

Set 1

SITUATION	GOAL					
	D-Socc	D-Cont	D-Prox	D-Know	D-Agen	I-Prep
Visit	2.36	2.83	3.27	2.54	3.15	3.02
Job application	3.74	3.32	4.26	4.22	2.56	2.95
Exam	3.31	2.83	3.13	4.43	3.37	3.85
Decl. of love	3.52	3.64	3.98	3.56	3.50	3.23
Expropriation	3.05	2.46	3.27	3.05	2.88	2.00
Phys. violence	3.59	2.51	2.77	3.62	3.02	3.19
Thrashing	3.30	3.74	3.80	3.10	3.25	3.13

Set 2

SITUATION	GOAL					
	D-Socc	D-Cont	D-Prox	D-Know	D-Agen	I-Prep
Cooperation	2.53	2.33	3.63	2.60	2.28	2.34
Negotiation	2.29	2.14	3.00	3.15	2.33	2.12
Instruction	2.89	2.75	3.39	3.59	3.52	3.18
Meal	3.61	3.98	3.52	3.57	3.95	3.54
Deceit	4.06	3.76	3.99	3.95	3.25	3.19
Judgment	3.85	2.65	3.63	4.24	3.22	3.06
Quarrel	2.89	3.23	2.96	3.07	2.78	2.59

Correlations between average profiles in set 1 situations and set 2 situations had a median value of .35. The correlations between parallel situations were .36, .79, .62, -.04, .71, .79, and .55, with  $r = .62$  as a median. All correlations between parallel situations exceeded the overall median, with one exception. The correlation between the situations Declaration of love (set 1) and Meal (set 2) was slightly negative. Closer inspection revealed that the situation Meal was rather atypical, exhibiting a negative median correlation with set 1 situations ( $r = -.18$ ). As a whole, the evidence obtained from the preliminary analysis was

considered sufficient to treat sets 1 and set 2 as parallel sets.

In the main analysis each model was treated separately. For the cross-situational *consistency* model the data were analyzed to estimate the generalizability of individual response profiles (Cronbach et al., 1972; Ozer, 1986) across situation types and sets. This analysis was done according to a four way factorial ANOVA design with Persons (P), Situations (S), Sets (T) and Goals (R) as facets. Components of variance for main effects as well as interactions were obtained to estimate generalizability according to Equation 1.

$$\rho_{(PR)ST}^2 = \frac{\sigma_P^2 + \sigma_{PR}^2}{\sigma_P^2 + \sigma_{PR}^2 + 1/n_S (\sigma_{PS}^2 + \sigma_{PRS}^2) + 1/n_T (\sigma_{PT}^2 + \sigma_{PRT}^2) + 1/n_S n_T \sigma_{PRST}^2; \text{ error}}$$

As a result we obtained a coefficient of .80, indicating appreciable fit for the consistency model. This result implies that average scores for delta goals across situation types and sets provide a meaningful index of individual preferences for specific delta goals. Analysis revealed that 50% of our sample preferred D-knowledge as a delta goal, 41% preferred D-proximity, 6% preferred D-social control, 2% preferred D-agency, 1% preferred D-control, while I-preparation was not preferred at all. Averaging over Ss we obtained the following values for the different delta goals :

D-social control	3.21
D-control	3.01
D-proximity	3.47
D-knowledge	3.48
D-agency	3.08
I-preparation	2.95

For the analysis of person-situation *coherence* we estimated the generalizability of person-situation specific response profiles across sets (Hetteema, 1994). The results of the ANOVA mentioned before also provided the basis for this analysis. The components of variance obtained were inserted in Equation 2 to estimate generalizability.

$$\rho_{(PSR)T}^2 = \frac{\sigma_P^2 + \sigma_{PS}^2 + \sigma_{PR}^2 + \sigma_{PSR}^2}{\sigma_P^2 + \sigma_{PS}^2 + \sigma_{PR}^2 + \sigma_{PSR}^2 + 1/n_T (\sigma_{PT}^2 + \sigma_{PST}^2 + \sigma_{PRT}^2 + \sigma_{PRST}^2; \text{ error})}$$

The coefficient obtained was .29, indicating a lack of fit for the coherence model.

*Equifinality* was conceived here as the generalizability of situation preferences across different sets. A separate analysis was done to obtain situation preference indices. Earlier we conceptualized situation preference as the preference for responses transforming a given situation into a preferred situation (Hetteema & Hol, 1989; Van Heck, et al., 1993).

We derived a set of rules to determine the situation to be obtained with a specific type of behavior applied to a situation of a specific type (Hetteema, 1989b). Rule (1) states that applying the most prototypical behavior leaves a situation unaffected. Rule (2) states that applying the second most prototypical behavior transforms the situation moderately. Rule (3) states that applying non-prototypical behavior tends to transform the situation radically. For each set separately the rules were applied to all situations, yielding preference estimates for 26 situations to be obtained. The values were subjected to ANOVA according to a three way factorial design with Persons (P), Situations (S), and Sets (T) as facets. Components of variance were estimated and inserted in Equation 3, yielding a coefficient of .34.

$$\rho_{(PS)T}^2 = \frac{\sigma_P^2 + \sigma_{PS}^2}{\sigma_P^2 + \sigma_{PS}^2 + 1/n_T (\sigma_{PT}^2 + \sigma_{PST}^2; \text{error})}$$

Clearly, like coherence, the equifinality model was not fit to explain the results obtained.

## Discussion

Our analyses have shown that individual goal profiles are consistent across different situations. In the personality literature the upper limit for correlation coefficients reflecting cross-situational consistency (the so-called personality coefficients) is generally believed to be about .30. The coefficient obtained here (nearly .80) is considerably higher. It also exceeds all the coefficients reported by Funder & Colvin (1991) ranging to a maximum of .70. Therefore we feel confident that goals are major categories reflecting cross-situational consistency. If situations allow for different goals to be attained, Ss show consistent preferences to emphasize specific goals while de-emphasizing others. This outcome lends support to the statement 'Personality might best be understood if we paid less attention to what people are actually doing and more attention to what they are trying to do' (Cantor & Zirkel, 1990). It also sustains the claims of authors like McClelland (1985) who proposed to treat goals as dispositions. A word of caution is due to the goal concepts used in the present analysis. Instead of need concepts like McClelland we studied delta goals (Schank & Abelson, 1977) as units. The arguments to study delta goals instead of other units have been given above. Delta goals are to some extent related to Murray's needs. However, rather than basic needs like n-Achievement or n-Affiliation, delta goals appear to be connected with the broad need domains proposed by Murray (1938). For instance, delta social control may be connected with the domain of power and status, delta control with the domain of inanimate objects, delta proximity with the domain of affection and delta know with the domain of information.

From a wider perspective, the results suggest a close connection between goals and personality traits. A recent study by Read et al. (1990) has provided evidence that traits derive their meaning from the goals that underlie them. This work suggests that trait inferences are to a great extent based on the goals individuals strive for. The findings reported by Read et al (1990) are in line with a suggestion by Buss & Craik (1983), that dispositional categories develop to capture regularities based on generative mechanisms of actions such as goals and motives. The traits studied by Read et al (1990) were interpersonal traits (gregariousness, aloofness, dominance, submissiveness, quarrelsomeness, agreeableness) derived from the work of Wiggins & Broughton (1985) on the interpersonal circle. Earlier work in our laboratory has revealed connections between delta goal preferences and temperament traits like emotionality, extraversion, impulsivity, disinhibition, and thrill and adventure seeking (Van Heck et al., 1993). It would be worthwhile to systematically study the goal preferences underlying e.g. the Big Five dimensions.

Our results have supported the hypothesis raised by Funder & Colvin (1991) that consistency across situations is to be expected especially when 'operants' are studied rather than 'respondents'. Likewise, they have corroborated Hettema & Kenrick's (1992) proposal to look for consistency in settings, emphasizing active and intentional behavior rather than reactions to challenging and stressful events. The fact that the latter behaviors fail to exhibit consistency across different situations needs further study. A possible explanation might be found in recent work on self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Scheier & Carver, 1988). In self-regulation models, goals occupy a key position, while serving as reference values against which actual outcomes are tested. Obstacles may interrupt self-regulation, leading to a re-evaluation of the goals pursued. Emotions may be aroused to establish a reprioritization of goals. Clearly, in those conditions, behavior may exhibit considerable changes. Those changes may be the basis for the inconsistencies found in challenging and stressful conditions. We must keep in mind however, that those inconsistencies are reactive rather than intentional.

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