

# Personal approach: An empirical construct and some findings<sup>1</sup>

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In perceiving or attempting to understand another person, our efforts are complicated by the fact that the object of our perceptions is not a simple "object" at all, but is rather himself a perceiver with a perspectival orientation of his own within which he, most likely, is attempting to construct understandings—also his own. An understanding of another person may give more or less salience to this feature of the other's existence. It may accord more or less importance to the other's unique frame of reference in his personal world; in terms used in this report, the construction may vary along a dimension from personal to impersonal approach.

The processes by which interpersonal constructions or perceptions are formed have received the attention of a considerable number of researchers (see Tagiuri, 1969 for a recent summary). The studies reported here differ from recent dominant trends in that work in two main ways: a free description mode of response is sampled, and the writer's perspective (personal or impersonal) is the dimension of focus.

Most recent research in person perception has focussed on various determinants (stimulus cues, interpersonal contexts, etc.) of perceptions, with the latter being measured by having subjects check a scale ranking the other on some provided trait or attributional dimension. This strategy has the advantage of ready quantifiability, but it also has the disadvantages, as pointed out by Peevers and Secord (1973), of artificially restrictive sampling of concepts and a loss of the concept's personal usage and degree

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of importance to the subject. Some studies using free descriptions have been done, however, and have provided some advance in our understanding of the sorts of concepts people tend to employ in natural interpersonal construing. Beach and Wertheimer (1961) showed that college students' interpersonal accounts varied in informational richness, evaluation and types of concepts employed, and demonstrated that such accounts are reliably ratable. Dornbusch et al. (1965) analyzed the free descriptions of 9- to 11-year-old children and found that concept choice was determined more by the perceiver than by the perceived, suggesting the importance of the individual's personal cognitive system. Secord and Bachman (1964) reported that free descriptions vary along a dimension of superficiality versus psychological depth, and Peevers and Secord (1973) found that depth and three other rated dimensions (descriptiveness, personal involvement, and evaluative consistency) changed in relative importance with maturation. Little (1968a, 1968b) found that women used more psychological language in describing others, and men stressed role accomplishments and physical descriptions. Psychological concepts were used increasingly by older age groups. Crockett (1965) summarized several studies which examined the number of concepts individuals used in free descriptions, and concluded that people used a wider range of concepts for others with whom they interact more frequently, and that a bigger repertoire of concepts made a person better able to integrate complex interpersonal information. The number of functionally orthogonal concepts in a person's repertoire has been studied in free or semi-free descriptions, mostly using variations of Kelly's (1955) rep grid technique. See, for example, Bieri (1961), Bannister and Mair (1968), and Crockett and Meisel (1974).

The dimension of personal-impersonal in interpersonal understanding has been accorded considerable importance by some existentially oriented writers, for example, McCurdy (1965, 1968) and Buber (1958, 1965), but no empirical study could be found published on it. It seems likely that the dimension is somehow related to the "depth" category of Secord and his coworkers, and the "psychological versus physical" dimension of Little, but it is not explicitly defined by them, so its part, if any, in their findings, cannot be ascertained. McCurdy (1965) has developed a model of personality which adopts the "humanistic" assumption (Child,

1973) that a person is an active, experiencing, existentially unique center in a personal world. He also notes that situations and individuals differ in the extent to which they elicit such personalized perceptions and that perceivers differ in their tendency to attribute this "personal dimension." These studies attempt to address some questions pertinent to this issue of personal focus.

A set of rating criteria was developed for these studies by which any statement about another could be scored as personal (P), impersonal (I) or unscorable (?). A sentence was scored P if it contained some important reference to the other's own personal frame of reference, and I if it did not. Examples of P sentences are: "He remembers better times and wishes they were here again"; "She would like to admit her resentment but she's afraid to"; "Friends are important to him." Examples of I sentences are: "He is a coward"; "He is strongly motivated"; "She is always there when I need her." An unscorable sentence is one with personal appearing but very trite content (e.g., "He's only out for a good time") or negative attributions of personal content (e.g., "He doesn't know what he wants.") Full rating instructions have been deposited with the American Documentation Institute.

It seems clear that this dimension represents something of a shift in the paradigm which has typically been used in studies of person perception, attributions, impression formation, etc. Most studies have examined the effects of perceiver traits (e.g., cognitive complexity, locus of control) or situational factors on some dimension of description independent of the one treated here. In a hypothetical study, two differently focussed perceivers might both rate another as "highly affiliative" if one gave the personal perception "he is very troubled by loneliness and avoids it by constantly seeking out people" and another the impersonal "he has a lot of friends." It would seem that this perspectival difference could represent an interesting dimension in its own right.

The studies reported here begin to explore this issue of personal approach in interpersonal transactions of varying durations. In each, the effects of different factors are examined: in a single interaction, with a previously unknown other, the attentional set of the perceiver and the level of self-disclosure of the perceived; in acquaintanceships the effect of heterosexual interest; in relatively more enduring relationships the effects of intimacy of knowledge and of emotional valence; and finally an attempt is

made to sample the perspectival focus of some subjects' most central relationships as an index of an enduring personality style, and to relate that style to other personality dimensions. In each of these studies, subjects were asked to write an essay about some other person(s) with these instructions: "Please write a ten sentence essay about the 'topic person' assigned above, saying what he or she is *really like* as a person. That is, write a few most important things you can think of regarding what he or she is really like." In one study the 10-sentence provision was omitted. This will be noted below.

The score for each essay was the ratio of personal sentences to all scorable sentences ( $P/P + I$ ), henceforth called PI scores. For statistical purposes all ratios were converted to arc sin coefficients to provide a more nearly normal distribution of scores.

Although the PI measure was designed by the experimenter for use in the research reported here, some other work with the measure has been done subsequently, and a few findings with the measure have been reported by McLaughlin (1965), Suchman (1966) and Otten (1967). McLaughlin studied the interaction of high- and low-revealing interviewees. Accounts were written about the interviewers by the interviewees after a 30-minute session. Level of personal approach in these essays was found to vary as a function of the disclosure level of the topic person, but not of that of the writer. Suchman interviewed his subjects in what he termed "personal" and "impersonal" ways (aiming at trust and rapport versus aiming at "rational understanding"). Accounts written by the subjects about the interviewer received higher PI scores after the personal than after the impersonal condition. The PI scores were also found to relate positively to the amount of self-disclosure which the subjects had produced during the interview. The discrepancy between Suchman's and McLaughlin's findings regarding the effect of the writer's level of self-disclosure may be due to the fact that different instruments were used to measure self-disclosure in the two studies: McLaughlin used a sentence-completion blank and Suchman a rating of verbal interview transactions. Otten compared freshman and graduate students of different fields in a developmental study of self-determination and personal approach. Self-determination was measured by Rotter's Internal-External Locus

of Control test and by Ezekial's Personal Future test. Personal approach was assessed by a PI measure of accounts of the most important male and female in the subject's life and by Greene's (1964) Self-Disclosure Sentence Blank. PI scores were higher for the graduate students than for the freshmen, which was taken by Otten to indicate a developmental difference in interpersonal adjustment. Some evidence was produced for convergent and discriminant validity of the scale when considering the graduate student data. The PI correlated significantly with the self-disclosure test, but not with any of the other scales. This effect was not found in the freshman data. In each of these three studies, PI scores were found to have satisfactorily high interrater reliability.

All raters used in these studies demonstrated adequate reliability (Pearson  $r \geq .80$  with a criterion sample of essays) and were ignorant as to the hypotheses involved in the data they were judging. All essays were coded and presented to raters devoid of any clues as to what experiment, treatment-combination, or subject they represented. No subject was tested in more than one study.

STUDY I: PERSONAL APPROACH IN A BRIEF INTERACTION  
AS A FUNCTION OF SUBJECT'S ATTENTION SET  
AND TOPIC PERSON'S LEVEL OF SELF-DISCLOSURE

McCurdy (1965) has suggested that our aims and intentions regarding another person influence how open we are to understanding him personalistically. If we are intent on using someone for some purpose of our own we will be less inclined to look "inward" to his personal dimension than if we approach him with friendly or esthetic interest. To test this, subjects were given two "attention sets": one termed "instrumental" and the other "friendly."

Another factor which should limit the personalness of one's construction of another, is how self-disclosing the other has been during the interaction. Jourard (1964) has argued that we can know another as he knows himself only if he has been willing to make himself—his feelings, opinions, hopes, etc.—known to us. The level of self-disclosure of the topic person was also manipulated.

*Method*

*Subjects.* Subjects were 141 male and female students in four classes in introductory psychology at Ohio State University. Testing was carried out during regular class hours.

*Procedure.* All four groups listened to a tape-recorded 5-minute interaction between an interviewer and someone who, they were told, was a student being interviewed about his reactions upon coming to college. Two groups listened with an "instrumental" set. They were told:

I would like to ask you to imagine a certain situation while you are listening to this tape. I would like you to pretend that you are homecoming chairman here at Ohio State and that you need a young man to be your assistant. This job as assistant, while it does not have much in the way of glory, does demand a lot of hard work. It will be up to this assistant to do almost all of the actual work of getting the weekend's activities into shape so your time as chairman will be free to plan, design, and act as public spokesman for the event. The person you will hear on the tape is one of several applicants for this job. I would like you to make a decision as to whether or not you would pick him for it. Your success or failure as homecoming chairman really depends upon making the right choice for this position. A man with the qualities of punctuality, ability to work hard for little glory, and efficiency, should make the project a success and bring you as chairman a lot of appreciation from the campus. A bad choice, who lacked these qualities would probably mean disaster—a disaster which would look like your fault. So, I would like you to evaluate carefully the person you hear on the tape as a possible assistant. Afterwards, I will ask each of you to indicate whether or not you would choose this person as your assistant.

The other two groups listened with a "friendly set." They were told:

In listening to this tape I would like you to pretend that your best friend has told you that the person on the tape is someone you might like to know. I would like you to listen to the tape with the aim in mind of getting to know the person on it. Afterwards, I will ask you if you think you know him as well, better, or not as well as you would know most people after a similar amount of contact.

Suchman (1964, 1966) has developed a "Revealingness Scale" by which the self-disclosure level of a verbal exchange can be rated.

Judgments on this scale are made in terms of the personal intimacy of the material presented as well as the degree of current emotional involvement which the subject seems to be exhibiting. A 5-minute segment of a commercial psychotherapy teaching tape<sup>3</sup> was selected as representing a high (level 6) level of revealingness (high rev.). An unusual amount of intimate, personal material was given on the segment, and a sustained, self-exploring emotional involvement was obvious in the speaker. Another tape was produced by role-playing to represent a low level (level 1) of revealingness (low rev.). The speaker here was emotionally flat and willing to talk about only external things while giving almost nothing of his own relation (opinions, etc.) to them. Both taped topic persons were male.

Of the two "instrumental set" groups, one listened to the high-disclosing tape and one to the low; and the two "personal set" groups did likewise.

All subjects after hearing the tape were asked to make a judgment as to choosing or not choosing, or knowing well or not knowing well, and a tally was made. Then all groups were told:

Now I would like you to do something else. This task is meant to be entirely independent of the decision you were to make about the person on the tape, and I would like you to treat it that way. I would like you to take the sheets that you have been given and write as requested on them about the person you have just listened to.

The experimenter then read the instructions (standard PI question) aloud and reiterated that this task was considered totally separate from the previous one.

*Analysis.* Normalized PI scores were to be treated by a  $2 \times 2$  analysis of variance to test the hypotheses that both the type of attention set and the level of self-disclosure of the topic person would affect how personalizing the subject's understanding of the topic person would be.

### Results

Subjects were dropped from three cells (8 from the personal-high rev., 7 from the instrumental-high rev., and 2 from the instrumental-low rev.) by a random procedure prior to analysis in order to have equal  $N$ 's (31). The high-disclosing tape evoked significantly more personal accounts than the low-disclosing tape,  $F(1, 20) = 46.89, p < .001$ . A

3. Taken from tape No. 4 ("Client Centered Therapy") of the set "Six Modern Therapies," produced by Steward B. Shapiro, Copyright 1946 by Scott, Foresman and Company.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of non-normalized PI ratios in Study I.

	High disclosing topic person		Low disclosing topic person	
	Friendly set	Instrumental set	Friendly set	Instrumental set
M	.351	.371	.192	.082
SD	.211	.278	.147	.119
N	31	31	31	31

significant interaction between set and disclosure level was observed,  $F(1, 20) = 4.95$ ,  $p < .05$ , and examination of cell means (non-normalized for greater interpretability) in Table 1 indicates that the set factor was effective only on the low-disclosing tape. A Duncan range test of ordered cell means showed that both the high-disclosing means were significantly larger than the two low-disclosing means ( $p < .01$ ) but not different from each other; while the personal low-disclosing mean was larger than the instrumental low-disclosing mean ( $p < .01$ ). Perhaps the high-disclosing tape was so unusual (as suggested by the emotional reactions, embarrassed laughter, etc., which it elicited from both groups) that it evoked a relatively high personal impression irrespective of set.

In fact, both tapes probably represent unusual extremes in disclosure. Examination of a pool of rev. scores (Carpenter, 1970) taken from 280 self-disclosing interactions young women had with their mothers, other daughters' mothers and a quasi-therapeutic interviewer, showed that scores as low and as high as those used here occurred naturally only 3 percent and less than 1 percent of the time, respectively. Future research could profit from studying more usual disclosure levels. More understanding of normal exchanges could be gained, and the effect of attention set might be more discernable.

#### STUDY II: PERSONAL APPROACH IN A RELATIONSHIP AS A FUNCTION OF INTIMACY OF ACQUAINTANCE AND VALENCE

Just as the personal dimension of another is more available to us if deliberately disclosed by him, so also it would seem that the duration of a relationship would likely be an important factor in such availability. The longer we have known a person the more opportunity we have had to know him personally. In this study, this factor was tested by asking subjects to write both about persons well-known to them and about others only recently met.

McCurdy (1965) has argued that the positive or negative qual-



ity of sentiment (or valence) one has toward the other person should influence his openness to understand. Love, he reasons (with Maslow, 1962), permits more openness than other relational states. This factor of emotional valence was explored.

### *Method*

*Subjects.* Subjects were 85 undergraduate students, 34 males and 51 females, from introductory psychology courses at Ohio State University. All participated in order to partially fulfill course requirements for experimental participation.

*Procedures and hypotheses.* All subjects were asked to write PI essays about three persons in their own lives who fitted the following descriptions: (A) a person whom you know well and toward whom you feel closer than anyone else; (B) a person whom you know very well but whom you do not like and who does not like you; (C) someone whom you have recently met and do not know very well but whom you like. Person A is taken to represent high levels of both knowledge and valence; B a high level of knowledge and negative valence; and C positive valence and a low level of knowledge.

Subjects were tested in three groups. Order was varied for the three groups so that any effect of order might be controlled. The three orders were: ACB ( $N = 30$ ), CBA ( $N = 35$ ) and BAC ( $N = 25$ ), each role-title occupying first, second, and third positions.

This was the first study carried out, and subjects were asked simply to write an "essay," not "10 sentences." Since ratios with very small denominators are extremely variable, the imperfect interjudge reliability can become a problem on scoring essays with few sentences where a single erroneous judgment would make a large difference in score. When this was appreciated, it was decided to omit all essays with fewer than 7 sentences. Subjects were omitted prior to analysis if any one of their essays was smaller than this. Forty-two subjects, 18 males and 24 females, remained after this deletion. The  $N$ 's remaining in each group were: ACB = 19 (8 males, 11 females), CBA = 14 (6 males, 8 females), BAC = 9 (4 males, 5 females). It was hypothesized that role title A would elicit more personal essays than either B or C.

*Analysis.* A multi-variate approach was taken to the solution of this repeated-measures design (Bock, 1963). New variables are formed with three linear combinations of original group scores ( $A + B + C$ ,  $B - C$ ,  $A - (B + C)/2$ ). A multivariate test across the means of the variables is first done to evaluate for effect of sequence. If none is found, then groups are combined and univariate tests are made of the 2nd and 3rd new variables.

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Table 2. Means and standard deviations of non-normalized PI ratios of role title groups in Study II.

	Role title A (high-knowledge— positive valence)	Role title B (high-knowledge— negative valence)	Role title C (low-knowledge— positive valence)
M	.322	.171	.214
SD	.228	.185	.228
N	42	42	42

### Results

Sequence was shown to have no effect,  $F(6, 74) = .59$ . In the combined groups, role-title A was significantly different from both B and C,  $F(1, 39) = 21.31$ ,  $p < .001$ , while B and C were not different from each other,  $F(1, 39) = 1.07$ , thus confirming the hypothesis. The mean PI scores (untransformed) for each role-title are given in Table 2.

### STUDY III: PERSONAL APPROACH IN A RELATIONSHIP AS A FUNCTION OF SEX OF SUBJECT AND SEX OF TOPIC-PERSON

Both the studies just reported involved both male and female subjects, and the second, both male and female topic persons. In both, PI scores from male and female subjects were averaged and compared prior to further analysis in order to see if different means were observed, making separate analyses for the sexes desirable. In both cases the mean scores for males and females were almost identical (see Table 3). Therefore, it wasn't expected that males and females should be found to perform differently on the PI dimension. It was of interest, however, to determine if the sex of the topic person might make a difference in personal approach. In particular, it was hypothesized that undergraduate students, concerned as they generally are with forming emotional relationships with members of the opposite sex, would show this concern by a heightened sensitivity to the personal dimension of opposite-sex relative to same-sex acquaintances.

### Method

*Subjects.* Subjects were 60 (20 male and 40 female) Ohio State University students in introductory psychology classes tested during regular class time.

Table 3. Mean non-normalized PI ratios for essays of males and females in Studies I and II.

	Study I		Study II	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
M	.259	.240	.241	.231
SD	.247	.230	.234	.213
N	56	65	54	72

*Procedure and analysis.* All subjects were asked to write 10-sentence essays about persons in their own lives fitting the following two role-titles: (1) some acquaintance of the same sex as yourself whom you know fairly well and whom you like; (2) some acquaintance of the opposite sex from yourself whom you know fairly well and whom you like. In order to control for possible order effects, half of each sex-group was asked to write on one role-title first, and the other half on the other role-title first.

Half of the female subjects were omitted from analysis by a random procedure before rating to give equal *N*'s (20). Transformed scores were analyzed in a  $2 \times 2$  repeated-measures analysis of variance (Winer, 1962).

### Results

The sex of topic person produced a significant effect as hypothesized,  $F(1, 38) = 6.47, p < .05$ . Examination of cell means in Table 4 indicates that both male and female subjects wrote more personal accounts of opposite-sex liked acquaintances than of same-sex liked acquaintances.

#### STUDY IV: PERSONAL APPROACH IN CENTRALLY IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS AS A CHARACTERISTIC OF PERSONALITY

The above studies have examined personal approach as a function of certain aspects of an interaction, or as an expression of different sorts of relationships. McCurdy (1965), Buber (1958), Adler (1927), Maslow (1962) and others have argued that the quality of one's relationships with persons of central importance in his life is an important determiner in the nature of his personality. From McCurdy's point of view, one's personality is the set of relationships by which his self is tied to his personal world, and the quality of his centrally important relationships should be

*Table 4.* Means and standard deviations of non-normalized PI ratios male and female subjects writing about male and female liked-acquaintances.

	Male subject— male topic person	Male subject— female topic person	Female subject— female topic person	Female subject— male topic person
<i>M</i>	.116	.187	.152	.239
<i>SD</i>	.128	.207	.140	.210
<i>N</i>	20	20	20	20

heavily determinative of the nature of his personality. In this study subjects were asked to write PI essays about such centrally important persons, and the PI scores were treated as measures of personality and related to other conceptually relevant measures. Authoritarianism, self-disclosure, Jungian type and breadth of vocabulary were the other dimensions of personality involved. They were chosen because each has been held to relate to the openness with which one approaches his own and other's experience.

### *Method*

*Subjects.* Subjects were 45 Ohio State University students, 23 males and 22 females, in two introductory psychology classes. They were tested during regular class hours.

*Instruments and hypotheses.* The California F-scale, developed by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, and Sanford (1950) has been extensively studied. Persons who score high on this scale are described by its authors as having such traits as "conventionalism," "authoritarian submission," "authoritarian aggression," and "anti-intracception." These traits and others are said to be frequently combined into a syndrome characteristic of a potentially antidemocratic person. It would seem likely that such persons would tend to be relatively impersonal in their understanding of other persons and of themselves. The traits of "authoritarian aggression" and "anti-intracception," in particular, lead one to believe that high-F people would be expected to be so preoccupied with evaluating other people and themselves in terms of external criteria, rejecting everything considered potentially alien or dangerous, that their own internal life would be kept carefully out of sight lest it contain the wrong thoughts or feelings; while other persons are "looked upon as if they were physical objects to be coldly manipulated" (*ibid.*, p. 235). The centrally important relationships of such persons might then be expected to be relatively depersonalized. Some support

for this conjecture may be found in the paper by Scodel and Mussen (1953) where authoritarian subjects were shown to be less accurate person-perceivers than non-authoritarians. This study, however, was done before the articles by Cronbach (1955, 1958) pointing out the various pitfalls of such global and dyadic person-perception measures, so its results are not clearly interpretable.

One's general propensity to disclose his own actual thoughts and feelings might be expected to relate to how personal an understanding he has of persons who are important to him. The relationship here hypothesized is based upon assuming a general trait of "openness to the personal dimension" both of oneself and of others. Rogers (1961) has reported that persons who engage in full self-disclosure and self-exploration in psychotherapy tend to develop richer and more perceptive relationships with others. If such a general trait of "openness" does exist, self-disclosure and personal approach would seem complementary aspects of it. Authentic self-disclosure requires that one see himself as he really is, with all his actual feelings, opinions, and relationships, and be willing to communicate that sort of picture to someone else. To so communicate is, in effect, to will a personal understanding of himself on the part of the other person; whereas to present himself as a stereotype, a role, or a member of a group (i.e., to be low-disclosing) is to will an impersonal understanding of himself for the other (and perhaps for himself as well). Greene (1964) has developed a sentence completion blank procedure for measuring self-disclosure. It is similar in rating criteria to that for the Suchman scale described above. This Self-Disclosure Sentence Blank (SDSB) has been found by Greene to have adequate interrater reliability, and he (1964, 1972) and Otten (1967), Graham (1970) and Lawless and Nowicki (1972) have reported both concurrent and construct validity. It was chosen for use here over the more widely used self-report questionnaire of Jourard (1964), since it permits a direct assessment of self-expressive behavior. Smaller scores on the SDSB indicate a higher level of disclosure, so a negative relationship with PI was expected.

The Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was developed (Meyers-Briggs, 1959) to measure four basic typological dimensions of personality proposed by Jung (1923): introversion-extraversion (I-E), sensation-intuition (S-I), thinking-feeling (T-F), and judging-perceiving (J-P). The first has to do with whether the self typically directs its attention and energy inward upon itself or outward at the objective world. The second has to do with how the self perceives—whether in terms of concrete events (sensation) or the meanings behind events (intuition). The third involves the style of judging—whether perceptual data are incorporated in terms of personal values (feeling)

or objective frames of reference (thinking). The latter two bipolar dimensions Jung called "functions," and his fourth dimension had to do with the predominance in the personality of either the perceiving or the judging function. The introversion-extraversion and sensation-intuition dimensions were hypothesized to be related to personal approach. Introverts, with their proneness to focus inward upon the "inner world" of feelings and ideas, would be expected to be more personal (i.e., internal) in their constructions of other persons as well; and intuitives, with their inclination to see behind the surface of events to the possibilities and meanings they represent, would be expected to be more personal than sensation-types who, in this respect, might be described as natural behaviorists. In particular, a configural relation was hypothesized, such that persons who are introverted-intuitive types should report more personal constructions than any other type-configuration. No relations were hypothesized for the other two type-dimensions.

No pertinent publications could be found at the time these studies were done. Carlson and Levy (1973) have since published findings that suggest that intuitive-perceiving types were better than other subjects at accurately recognizing emotional expression in pictures of faces, an ability which might be suspected to relate to personal approach.

McCurdy (1965) proposed that persons whose lives are colored by important and personal relationships will, in general, be more open to perceiving and understanding the multitudinous happenings in their worlds than will others whose central relationships are less personal. He offers an interpretation of size of vocabulary in particular, and mental age more generally, as indicating the breadth and richness of a personal world. A test, admittedly imperfect, of his hypothesis was carried out here by examining the relationship between personal approach and a measure of vocabulary, the Wide Range Vocabulary Test (WRVT).

*Procedure.* All subjects were asked to write PI essays about persons who fitted the following two descriptions: that person of your sex whom you know best and with whom you are closest, and that person of the opposite sex whom you know best and with whom you are closest. The two essays were pooled for purposes of analysis and a PI score was obtained from them. Each subject was also asked to fill out the Self-Disclosure Sentence Blank, the Wide Range Vocabulary Test, the F-scale and the Meyers-Briggs Type Inventory, in that order. The subjects were tested in five small groups. Two subjects failed to fill out the SDSB, but their other data are included in analyses not involving that measure.

*Analyses.* Top- and bottom-quartile groups on the PI were compared

Table 5. Relationships between PI as a personality measure and other measures of personality.

Variable	Men and women pooled (N = 45)	Men (N = 23)	Women (N = 22)
	t (top vs. bottom q/file)	r	r
Self-Disclosure Sentence Blank <sup>a</sup>	2.74***	-.38*	-.34*
Wide Range Vocabulary Test	1.79*	.45**	.10
California F-Scale <sup>a</sup>	2.84****	-.43**	-.26
Meyers-Briggs Type Inventory:			
Introversion-Extraversion	2.70***	.35*	.10
Sensation-Intuition	1.97*	.23	.37*
Thinking-Feeling	.46	.13	-.14
Judging-Perceiving	.57	-.06	.28

<sup>a</sup> Negative correlation predicted due to direction of scoring.

\*  $p < .05$ , 1-tailed test.

\*\*  $p < .025$ , 1-tailed test.

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ , 1-tailed test.

\*\*\*\*  $p < .005$ , 1-tailed test.

by *t*-tests in their performance on each of the other variables. In addition, Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were computed between the PI personality measure for males and females separately. The entire PI range of subjects was used. In both analyses, MBTI scores were treated as continuous variables. One last analysis testing the configural hypothesis on the MBTI was also included: a 2 × 2 analysis of variance (males and females pooled) in order to test the expectation that introverted-intuitive (I-N) subjects would show more personal approach than the other type-configurations—introverted-sensation (I-S), extraverted-intuitive (E-N), and extraverted-sensation (E-S). MBTI scores here were treated as yielding dichotomous (type-determining) measures.

## Results

*Extreme Quartile and Correlational Analyses.* Table 5 gives the results of *t*-tests on extreme quartile groups. All of the predicted relationships were observed, although two of them (WRVT and S-N) were quite small. TF and JP, which were analyzed on an exploratory basis, showed no relation to PI. In order to judge the extent to which these relations might be sex-specific, the whole range of PI scores was correlated with scores on other measures for each sex separately. Data were too scant to permit the more sensitive analysis of extreme quartile groups for the different sexes. Results are also given in Table 5. For the males, SDSB, WRVT, F, and IE were significantly related to PI;

Table 6. Means and standard deviation of non-normalized PI ratios for Jungian types.

	Introverted-intuitive	Introverted-sensation	Extraverted-intuitive	Extraverted-sensation
M	.561	.263	.292	.301
SD	.118	.118	.149	.207
N	7	6	13	15

and for the females SDSB and SN were related. Other coefficients were in the expected directions but did not reach significance.

*Jungian type.* As noted above, MBTI scores were also treated as yielding dichotomous type measures in order to test the expectation that introverted-intuitive subjects, in particular, would be the most personalizing type-combination. Unfortunately, because of the small number of subjects, analysis for this had to be carried out on the data of men and women pooled, obscuring any effect of sex. The interaction effect,  $F(1, 37) = 7.01$ ,  $p < .05$ , is evidence for the proposition that specific type combinations are important—see Table 6. The Duncan Studentized Range Test for comparing ordered means shows that the mean for I-N is larger than those for the other three cells (all  $p$ 's  $< .01$ ), while the latter do not differ significantly from each other. This interaction makes it clear that the main effects for introversion-extraversion and sensation-intuition, represented by  $t$ 's in Table 3, have little meaning since these effects were caused entirely by the predominance of one (I-N) type combination.

*Additional analyses: Intra-Subject Consistency.* Another question that can be asked of these data is the extent to which intra-subject consistency was observed in PI scores. Depending upon one's viewpoint, such consistency can speak for either instrument reliability (the PI scale) or subject consistency of approach as seen across the different stimulus situations.

In studies II, III, and IV, subjects wrote PI accounts of more than one topic person. Pearson correlation coefficients of transformed scores are as given in Table 7. It appears that subjects were somewhat self-consistent in the personal approach of their reports, particularly across intimate and positive-valence topic persons.

*Test-retest subject consistency.* In Study IV the PI was construed as measuring a dimension of personality. In such a case it is helpful to know the extent to which subjects' performances are stable across time. Because of this, an additional group of undergraduate subjects at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill ( $N = 38$ : 20 males, 18 females) was asked to write PI essays about that person of the



Table 7. Correlation coefficients showing intra-subject consistency of PI scores.

Study	Topic persons	N	r
II	Liked intimate and liked acquaintance	42	.61
	Liked intimate and disliked intimate	42	.29
	Liked acquaintance and disliked intimate	42	.38
III	Male and female liked acquaintances	40	.47
IV	Male and female closest persons	44	.59
Additional subjects	Closest person of opposite sex: Test-retest over 4 months	38	.57

opposite sex whom they knew best and with whom they were closest, both at the beginning of a semester and again four months later. Moderate test-retest reliability (see Table 7) was observed.

### DISCUSSION

The results of these studies cumulatively suggest that the PI measure is a usable, reliably ratable, and potentially interesting device for the study of person perception. In lieu of any criterion validator of personal approach, the above findings can be taken as suggesting a certain amount of construct validity for the measure by their demonstration of meaningful relationships with the variables of perceived other's self-disclosure, attention set, relationship-type, heterosexual interest, and personality style. It appears that people do adopt different degrees of personal perspectival focus when construing others, and that certain self-presentations, relationship contexts, and perceiver interest and orientations affect the focus adopted. In addition, individuals seem to adopt a degree of personal approach which they tend somewhat to maintain across perceived others and, for very intimate others at least, across time.

It is not without interest that little of the published research on person perception touches on the issue of personal approach, and that little does so only obliquely. This may be because that research has been hampered somewhat by mechanistic and behavioral biases in framing its inquiry. The problem of personal versus impersonal focus has appeared in our psychological literature at a metatheoretical level of abstraction, in terms of guiding assumptions and strategies for psychological science (e.g., Watson, 1913; Skinner, 1953; Wann, 1964; Maslow, 1966). A behavioral ap-

proach to a psychological subject is, in the terms used here, an impersonal one. An impersonal language and observation base would naturally be systematically "blind" to the question of its subjects' personal versus impersonal foci; just as a photographer equipped only to take monochromatic pictures might disregard the dimension of color in his composition. More personal or "anthropomorphic" conceptions of psychology have received attention recently (McCurdy, 1965; Harre & Secord, 1972; Child, 1973), and their development into systematic theoretical viewpoints seems quite desirable. For now, little guiding theory exists in the field of person perception (Tagiuri, 1969). Further empirical work on personal approach might be of help in constructing pertinent theory. A number of questions are raised: Do people relate differently to others when construing them personally or impersonally? Are relationship choices made in terms of stylistic compatibility on this dimension, and are different levels of intimacy then sought and realized by more or less personal dyads? Do some situations or conceptual atmospheres elicit impersonal constructions of other people? What differences might personal or impersonal approach make in moral reasoning processes (Kohlberg, 1969), such as decisions to aggress (Milgram, 1963)? Some encouraging findings (Carpenter, 1970) have shown interesting relations between personal approach and patterns of verbal communication between mothers and adolescent daughters. Current study is underway investigating relationships between personal approach and interactional style in encounter groups, and in various categories of emotional disturbance. A more differentiated scoring procedure has also been developed and shows promise of greater sensitivity.

#### SUMMARY

The construct of personal approach is defined as having to do with the extent to which a person attempts to construe another person in terms of the latter's own personal, experiential frame of reference. A rating scale (PI Scale) was devised, and found satisfactorily reliable, for assessing this variable from a subject's written description of another person. Four experiments were conducted with the aim of establishing construct validity. In the first study, subjects reported more personalized views of someone to whose tape-recorded discussion they listened when the tape

represented a high rather than a low level of self-disclosure. An interaction effect was observed such that for low-disclosure presentations, a "friendly" set produced more personal views than an "instrumental" set. In the second experiment, subjects wrote about persons in their own lives. Persons who were seen as well-known and positively emotionally related to the subjects were viewed more personally than persons who were seen as either well-known but in negative emotional relationship to the subject, or not well-known but in a positive relationship to the subject. A third study, in which male and female subjects wrote about both male and female acquaintances, showed that more personal accounts were given of opposite-sex topic persons. A fourth group of subjects was asked to write about the male and female persons whom they knew best and felt closest to. This measure of "personal style" was found to have fairly high test-retest stability over a 4-month period. PI scores of both essays pooled were related to various personality measures and, for both sexes of subject combined, predicted relationships were found with self-disclosure authoritarianism, vocabulary size, and the Jungian dimensions introversion-extraversion and sensation-intuition. When data of males and females were analyzed separately, using a less sensitive procedure, males' PI scores related as predicted to all of the above except sensation-intuition; for females only the relationships with self-disclosure and sensation-intuition were significant. Subjects typed as introverted-intuitive were significantly higher in PI scores than other type configurations. These various results are taken as supporting the construct validity of the PI measure.

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