

Effects of Personality on the Use of Affinity-Testing Strategies: Extroversion versus Introversion

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It is more than a decade since Berger and Calabrese (1975) advanced an axiomatic theory designed to explain certain communication phenomena during initial interactions. They proposed that a number of events occurring in such encounters can be explained in terms of uncertainty and uncertainty reduction. Central to the present theory is the assumption that when we encounter a stranger, we have a strong desire to reduce uncertainty about that person because, to have a successful interaction, we "must be able both to predict how [our] interaction partner is likely to behave, and, based on these predictions, to select from [our] own repertoire those responses that will optimize outcomes in the encounter" (Berger, 1987, p. 41).

When the theory was originally developed, Berger and Calabrese were not concerned with strategies for reducing uncertainty. Subsequently, attention was directed toward these knowledge acquisition strategies (Berger, 1979; Berger & Bradac, 1982). These presentations advanced three basic types of strategies by which people acquire information about a target: passive, active, and interactive.

Passive strategies are those in which the uncertainty reducer gathers information about a target through unobtrusive observation. Active strategies involve the observation of targets' responses to manipulations of the interaction environment but no direct interaction between observers and targets. . . . Finally, interactive strategies involve direct, face-to-face contact between the information seeker and the target (Berger, 1987, p. 46).

Although the Berger research program is insightful, it is limited to the acquisition of information about others (i. e., reduction of target

uncertainty). Little attention is paid to the process by which persons access information about other's affective evaluations (i. e., reduction of relational uncertainty). These processes are presumed to be dissimilar. Extant work suggests that relationship parties are hesitant to rely on direct talk about the state of their relationship (Cline, 1979; Wilmot, 1980); thus they are supposed to rely on more indirect information acquisition strategies.

In a more recent study, Douglas (1984) investigated the strategies persons use to find out how their relational partners view the relationship. Douglas (1984) focused upon opposite-sex relationships, although such strategies are also used in same-sex relationships. For opposite-sex relationships, Douglas (1984) identified eight distinct types of strategies: Hazing, Confronting, Approaching, Sustaining, Withdrawing, Offering, Diminishing Self, and Networking (see Table 1). These eight strategies can be classified in terms of the active and interactive strategy types of information acquisition strategies discussed earlier.

The objective of the present paper is to examine more closely the problems addressed by Douglas. To be more specific, I would like to see if the type of affinity-testing strategies identified by Douglas varies as a function of actors' personality. The personality variable considered in this analysis is extroversion-introversion.

One might expect that introverted persons might be more likely to employ indirect strategies such as Withdrawing and Diminishing Self. Conversely, extroverted persons might be expected to use direct strategies such as Hazing and Confronting more commonly. There remains the possibility, however, that the opposite-sex feature of the relationship influences the use of affinity-testing strategies by actors. As Douglas (1984) noted, "actors are more likely to be concerned with the affective evaluations of opposite-sex others than same-sex others" (p.10). The prospect for romantic involvement might encourage an introverted actor to engage in more aggressive strategies, or, conversely, make an extroverted actor adopt more conservative strategies. Because of the difficulty in predicting differences in strategy type as a function of

Table 1. Strategies of affinity-testing

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|------------------|---|
| Hazing | Actions that required the target to provide a commodity or service to the actor at some cost to themselves. |
| Confronting | Actions that require the target to provide immediate and generally public evidence of their liking. |
| Approaching | Actions implying increased intimacy to which the only disconfirming target response is compensatory activity. |
| Sustaining | Actions designed to maintain self/target interaction without affecting the apparent intimacy of the interaction. |
| Withdrawing | Actions suggesting leave-taking, seeking the target to intervene or sustain the interaction. |
| Offering | Actions that generate conditions favorable for approach by the target. |
| Diminishing self | Actions that lower the value of self; either directly by self-deprecation or indirectly by identifying alternate reward sources for the target. |
| Networking | Actions that include third parties, either to acquire or transmit information. |

actor's personality, and because of the desire to explore other possible strategy use differences as well, the following research question was advanced:

RQ: Do extroverted and introverted persons differ in the types of strategies they use to measure opposite-sex others' self-evaluations?

Methods

In order to collect information on the selection of strategies for measuring others' self-liking, a list of eight strategies of affinity-testing developed by Douglas was presented to eighty-six students enrolled in freshman English courses at Gifu College of Economics. Each student

received a translated version of the list made by the author of this study (see Table 2). Only male students were chosen in order to eliminate the confounding influences of gender. The respondents were asked to indicate the likelihood that they would use each of the eight strategies during an initial encounter with a person of the opposite sex by choosing one out of five possible responses: very likely, likely, neither likely nor unlikely, unlikely, and very unlikely. The weights for the responses are as follows: very likely = 5, likely = 4, neither likely nor unlikely = 3, unlikely = 2, and very unlikely = 1. Throughout the procedure, subjects were reminded of the context of inquiry and encouraged to request clarification on issues they did not fully understand. No subject indicated being confused by the instructions.

Table 2. Strategies of affinity-testing (translated version)

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|-----|------------------------------|
| (1) | 相手に対して何らかの迷惑がかかるような頼み事をする。 |
| (2) | 他人の面前で自分に対する好意の表現を相手に要求する。 |
| (3) | 相手に対し意図的に親密な態度をとる。 |
| (4) | 相手との会話の継続を積極的に図る。 |
| (5) | 相手から何らかの形で離れることにより、相手の関心を誘う。 |
| (6) | 相手に自分に対する好意を表現するきっかけを与える。 |
| (7) | 直接的または間接的に自分の価値を低めるような発言をする。 |
| (8) | 第三者に情報の提供及び伝達を依頼する。 |
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Two weeks later, personality of the subjects was assessed in terms of extroversion-introversion. Each subject received a questionnaire adopted from Bendig's Pittsburgh Social Extraversion-Introversion Scale (1962). They were asked to answer each of thirty questions (see Table 3) by choosing one out of five possible responses: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The weights for the responses are as follows: strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neither agree nor disagree = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1. Then all the scores of the thirty items for each subject were added up to create a total extroversion-introversion score (before adding up the items, the score of the item with an asterisk was reversed).

Of the eighty-six subjects, twenty-three scored 100 or above on the

Table 3. Item content of Extroversion-Introversion Scale

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- (1) 素早い行動を必要とする企画に参加している時、大変幸福である。
 - (2) 友達を作る時は自分から積極的に行動する。
 - (3) 自分が活発な人間であると思う。
 - (4) 人々との交際を制限された場合、大変悲しく感じる。
 - (5) 社交の場においては目立たないように振る舞う。*
 - (6) 社会において人々と広く交わるのが好きである。
 - (7) 知人は少数に制限しておきたい。*
 - (8) 人々と集まる機会を多く持ちたい。
 - (9) 集団活動においてはたいていリーダーシップをとる。
 - (10) 自分に向けられた発言に対してはたいてい即座に返答できる。
 - (11) 自分がのんきな人間であると思う。
 - (12) 外の集まりに出かける時はたいてい静かにしている。*
 - (13) 陽気なパーティーでは我を忘れて大いに楽しむ。
 - (14) 他人は私を活発な人間であると思っている。
 - (15) 自分がおしゃべりであると思う。
 - (16) 人との付き合いが上手である。
 - (17) 大騒ぎのできるパーティーなどに出かけるのが好きである。
 - (18) 異性と遊ぶのが好きである。
 - (19) クラブには3-4個は属していたい。
 - (20) パーティーでは、大勢と一緒にいるよりは1人か2人だけですわっている時間が多い。*
 - (21) ダンスに行くのが好きである。
 - (22) 人と一緒にいられるというだけで社交の場は楽しい。
 - (23) 人が大勢いるとわくわくする。
 - (24) 大勢の陽気な友達と一緒にいると、悩みはどこかへ行ってしまう。
 - (25) パーティーや社交の場が好きである。
 - (26) 自分は気苦労のない人間である。
 - (27) 物事は時はずみで決める。
 - (28) 野球やラグビーなどでのスタンドの熱狂的な興奮が好きである。
 - (29) 世の中に悩みごとは全くないとたいいてい感じている。
 - (30) 言いたいことは普通そのまま口に出す。
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extroversion-introversion scale, who form a group of extroverts (Group 1) in this study. There were sixteen subjects with a score of 80 or below, who form a group of introverts (Group 2). The difference in personality scores between the two groups was significant ($p < .001$). Those who scored between 81 and 99 were excluded from consideration (notice that the score of 90 indicates the respondent is neither extroverted nor introverted). The eight affinity-testing strategies discussed

earlier were then assessed for possible differences by respondent personality using the appropriate statistical procedures.

Results

A two-tailed t-test was performed to assess possible personality differences in the likelihood that the respondents would use each of the eight affinity-testing strategies. Table 4 provides mean likelihood scores of the two groups in each of the eight strategy categories.

Table 4. Mean likelihood scores of two groups in eight strategy categories

| Strategy Category | Group 1 | Group 2 | t Value |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Hazing | 1.91 | 2.38 | 1.38 |
| Confronting | 2.00 | 1.63 | 1.23 |
| Approaching | 3.22 | 2.81 | 1.17 |
| Sustaining | 4.22 | 3.13 | 3.33*** |
| Withdrawing | 2.48 | 3.19 | 1.78* |
| Offering | 3.30 | 3.13 | 0.49 |
| Diminishing Self | 2.26 | 3.25 | 2.07** |
| Networking | 2.52 | 2.19 | 0.83 |
| Total | 21.91 | 21.75 | 0.12 |

* $p < .10$

** $p < .05$

*** $p < .01$

Overall, respondents in Group 1 were most likely to employ Sustaining (mean = 4.22); in Group 2, Diminishing Self (mean = 3.25) was most widely reported, followed closely by Withdrawing (mean = 3.19), Sustaining (mean = 3.13), and Offering (mean = 3.13). Group 1 was significantly more likely to use Sustaining than Group 2 ($t = 3.33$; 37df; $p < .01$), and Group 2 reported significantly more Diminishing Self than Group 1 ($t = 2.07$; 37df; $p < .05$). Difference in the use of Withdrawing was also significant beyond the .10 level ($t = 1.78$; 37df). The two groups, however, did not differ in the total likelihood score of the eight strategies ($t = .12$; 37df; $p > .90$).

Discussion

In response to the research question, personality differences were noted on the types of affinity-testing strategies. Extroverted respondents reported more likelihood of using Sustaining than introverted ones. Similarly, introverted respondents were more likely to employ Diminishing Self and Withdrawing than their extroverted counterparts.

The more widespread use of Sustaining in Group 1 is understandable given that its enactment requires familiarity with talk. Extroverts are generally considered to be a better talker than introverts; thus the use of Sustaining may safely be associated with the former rather than the latter. The difference in the use of Diminishing Self and Withdrawing may be a function of common stereotypic attributes of introverts (e. g., submissive, passive). It may also be a concrete example of the lingering belief that introverted persons are low in relational competence. Actors engaged in such passive strategies are perceived not to be motivated to bring about a positive relational outcome, and thus are more likely to be judged as relationally incompetent. In the use of Hazing and Confronting, however, no significant difference emerged. During an initial encounter with a person of the opposite sex, interactants, regardless of their personality, appear to be unwilling to engage in such direct, or risky, strategies.

Before concluding, some limitations of the present study are indicated. First, this study relied on a list of strategies that was generated from data obtained from American respondents. Hence, simple projections from findings based on this list to Japanese interactants at large pose a problem of cross-cultural generalizability.

Secondly, information-processing demands were less formidable for the respondents than for actual interactions. The respondents were presented with static situations rather than dynamic, fluid ones. There was also little demand for an immediate response, which might be found within an actual interaction.

Finally, when evaluating a list of strategies, the respondents may have reported a preference for some they would not ordinarily enact. Providing persons with any list of strategies may force them to consider alternatives they might not have otherwise contemplated. Thus the list of affinity-testing strategies may have provided the respondents with more, and perhaps better options than they normally would consider.

Despite these limitations, however, this study suggests quite clearly the way in which personality factors influence the use of affinity-testing strategies. Examining other individual and situational variables that influence strategy selection should provide further insight regarding relational development.

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