

Factor Structure of Self-Presentation Styles

Jasmine M. Carey and Delroy L. Paulhus
University of British Columbia

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Correspondence may be address to the first author at jcarey@psych.ubc.ca

Abstract

How many kinds of self-presentation are there? Jones and Pittman (1982) outlined five different styles of self-presentation; self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, supplication, and intimidation. In apparent contradiction, other research has found that self-presentation styles fall on two factors labeled agency and communion (Paulhus and Trapnell, 2008). The present study used factor analysis to examine whether the Jones and Pittman (1982) subscales are consistent with an agentic vs. communal framework. Results indicated that Exemplification is communal and Intimidation is agentic across both working and student samples, with some variation in the pattern of loadings for the other styles. The results provide further support for the broad application of the meta-framework of agency and communion.

Introduction

Jones and Pittman (1982) outlined 5 different styles of self-presentation; self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, supplication, and intimidation. Previous research has found that types of self-presentation can be organized with respect to an agentic factor (focused on individual achievement) and a communal factor (focused on maintaining the group) (Paulhus and Trapnell, 2008). Based on this previous research we hypothesize that factor analysis will reveal agentic and communal factors in Jones and Pittman's (1982) 5 self-presentation styles.

Study 1

We re-analyzed the correlation matrix reported by Bolino and Turnley (1999), who concluded that they had 5 distinct factors. Principal factor extraction was followed with varimax rotation. The resulting pattern was consistent with an Agency-Communion model. The agentic factor was best represented by Intimidation and the communal factor was represented by Ingratiation. We did not use Supplication in this analysis because we found (as did Bolino and Turnley) that it correlated so highly with Intimidation ($r = .51$) that they formed their own factor. We concluded that this unexpected finding was due to the negativity of the behavior employed in those tactics.

Study 2

Method

83 undergraduate students from UBC (23 male, 60 female), recruited through undergraduate psychology courses participated for class credit. Participants completed a self-presentation style measure through a web based survey.

The inventory created by Bolino and Turnley (1999) was designed for use in a work setting, which would not necessarily be appropriate for undergraduate students. Instead, we collected

data using Lee et. al.'s self-presentation inventory (1999), which is not situation specific. It includes sub-scales for the five Jones and Pittman styles as well as styles from other theories.

Results

We ran a factor analysis using principal components extraction and varimax rotation. The unrotated solution indicated a general self-presentation factor. Two of the rotated factors fit the theoretical model of agency and communion. As in study 1, we found Exemplification loading on the communion factor and Intimidation anchoring the agency factor. In contrast to study 1, Ingratiation loaded higher on the agency factor and Supplication loaded on the communal factor. We believe these differences can be attributed to the samples. Supplication may be viewed as a less negative strategy in a school setting than a work setting. The fact that Ingratiation has both agentic and communal aspects may lead to different interpretations by the two samples. The results for Self-Promotion were questionable in this sample due to the very low reliability of the subscale ($\alpha = .38$). We believe this may have been caused by the awkward wording of some of the items and will address this issue in future studies.

Conclusions

As suggested by Paulhus and Trapnell (2008), self-presentation styles can be framed within an Agency-Communion model. This conclusion appears to generalize to scales developed for use within organizations as well as those designed for general use. However, the pattern is not entirely consistent between samples of workers and college students. Future research requires larger samples from both groups and a comparison using a consistent set of items.

References

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