



Personality and Computer-Mediated Communication

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An extrovert is someone who prefers to interact with people and the outside world. They tend to enjoy high-energy, outgoing professions like marketing, sales, journalism, or child care. Conversely, introverts prefer an inner world of concepts and ideas. Their energy comes from quiet thought and introspection. Typical professions preferred by introverts include health technicians, writers, lawyers, or researchers.

Previous research about individual differences in **computer-mediated communication (CMO)** focused on variables as gender. There is little information about differences in CMO related to personality, most are speculations based on the assumption that introverted traits are specially appropriate for CMO. There is no empirical information yet published about differences in CMO related to other personality dimensions such as neuroticism and psychoticism.

Results of our study are consistent with this predictions, because introverted participants sent as messages to the Internet forums analysed as extroverted, and their messages contained more information.

Why is CMO appropriate for introverts?

- They are usually frustrated in face to face communication, when more outspoken individuals dominate a conversation
- CMO is frequently asynchronous and based on writing, so introverts have enough time to think about what they want to say. CMO allows an introvert to go through multiple drafts before sending a response. CMO provides this introvert with a chance to voice her opinions without interruption by a more extroverted personality.
- The Internet gives introverts a way to remain a little isolated from the hustle and din of society, yet still communicate with other Internet users on topics of mutual interest

Why is CMO not so appropriate for extroverts?

- Extroverts often seem too impatient for computers; they get frustrated. They would rather be out talking to someone or performing some action.

Our sample

32 students (Psychology, University of Barcelona)
Ages between 21-49

They participated in some discussion activities related to their studies (WebCT forum)

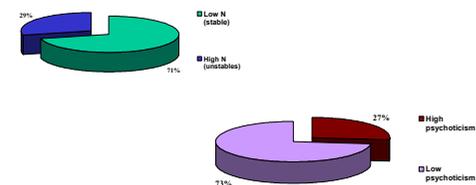
Messages analyzed

A random sample of 100 (selected from more than 500 that were sent to forum)

Principal results

Neuroticism and Psychoticism

Stable students (low N) sent more messages than students high in neuroticism.
Students low in P sent more messages than students high in P
There were no other differences in CMO related to neuroticism or psychoticism

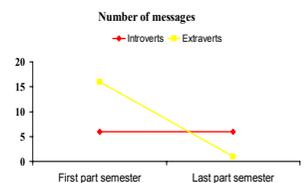


Personality assessment

EPQ (Eysenck Personality Questionary, 1982). Three dimensions: extraversion (E), neuroticism (N) and psychoticism (P)

Extraversion

Introverts sent as messages as extraverts (total number of messages sent by introverts and extraverts was similar). But introverts were more constant than extraverts. Extraverts sent more messages than introverts at the beginning of the semester, but their participation decreased quickly while introverts maintained a regular pace along the semester ($F=2.82$; $p=0.05$).



Messages sent by introverts contained as words as those sent by extraverts, but the quantity of information contained was higher in messages sent by introverts (they expressed more ideas with the same number of words, so their communication was more efficient) ($r=-0.27$; $p=0.06$)