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AUTHOR   Siegman, Aron Wolfe; And Others
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ABSTRACT
                The study is an application of Newcomb (1953) and
Heider's (1958) formulations of balance theory to verbal interviewee
behavior. Two hypotheses were tested: (1) imbalanced interview
conditions are associated with a faster rate of speech; and (2)
imbalanced interview conditions are associated with greater
interviewee productivity. Theoretical considerations are included.
Twenty-four subjects who had participated in two previous interviews
with the same interviewer were selected to take part in a third
interview. Half had strongly like the interviewer and half had
strongly disliked him. Content of the third interview was derived
from a pre-interview attitude questionnaire. Interviews were
manipulated to produce imbalanced and balanced conditions. Results
showed: (1) that speech rate was significantly higher in the
imbalanced conditions; and (2) that interviewees who liked their
interviewer were more productive in the imbalanced than in the
balanced condition. It was concluded that support was provided for
balance theory by utilizing previously untapped indices of imbalanced
states and their resolution, and that the mode used by a person to
restore balance depends on the nature of the imbalance producing
condition. (TL)

Verbal Indices of Interpersonal Imbalance in the Interview

Aron Wolfe Siegman, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Thomas Blass[1] and Benjamin Pope

The Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital

The present study is an application of balance theory of verbal behavior

in the interview. In several studies by Heller and his students (1958) it was

noted that interviewees were more productive, i.e., they talked more, when

their interviewers disagreed with them than when they agreed with them. This,

of course, is not what one would expect on the basis of reinforcement theory.

According to the latter, interviewer agreements rather than disagreements

should be associated with interviewee productivity. The findings, however,

can be explained in terms of balance theory as formulated by Newcomb (1953)

and Heider (1958). Disagreement with a positively valued person creates a

condition of imbalance. Such conditions, according to balance theory, are

associated with tension, which the individual tries to reduce by restoring

the original state of balance. The increase in interviewee productivity fol-

lowing interviewer disagreements may be a result of the interviewee's attempts

to restore balance, either by reducing the area of disagreement, or by modifying

his own position, or by trying to convert the interviewer. All these strategies

would have the effect of increasing interviewee productivity.

Implicit in the above explanation is the assumption that the interviewer

is a positively valued person. While this may be true in most cases, there are

interviewees who do not care for, or even positively dislike, their interviewers.

In such situations, according to balance theory, interviewer agreements, rather

than disagreements, should produce a state of imbalance. Balanced states, on

the other hand, are represented by agreeing responses from liked interviewers,

or disagreeing responses from disliked interviewers. The purpose of the present

study was to investigate the effects of such states of balance and imbalance on interviewee's verbal behavior.

A number of studies have shown that stress and mild anxiety arousal are associated with an increase in speech rate and productivity (Siegman & Pope, 1970). However, there is a distinction between these two verbal indices. While the increase in speech rate is a direct manifestation of stress and mild anxiety arousal, the increase in productivity is also an anxiety reducing maneuver. In the context of the present study, an increase in productivity would be a manifestation of imbalance reducing strategies. On the assumption, then, that imbalanced interview conditions give rise to interviewee stress and to balance restoring strategies, the following two hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Imbalanced interview conditions, as opposed to balanced ones, are associated with a faster interviewee speech rate.

Hypothesis 2: Imbalanced interview conditions, as opposed to balanced ones, are associated with greater interviewee productivity.

Procedure

Subjects: The interviewees were selected from a large pool of subjects who had participated in two previous interview studies. After each of these interviews subjects rated their interviewer, who was the same person in both studies, on a six-point liked-disliked scale. Twelve subjects consistently rated their interviewer, as more disliked than liked. These subjects, plus another twelve who rated their interviewer, after each interview, as very much liked (a combined rating of 11 or 12), were selected for the present study.

Interviewer: The interviewer was the same person who conducted the interviews in the aforementioned two previous studies.

Pre-interview testing: All subjects completed a 20-item attitude questionnaire. Each item was in the form of a statement to which the subject was asked to indicate his degree of agreement or disagreement by checking the

appropriate point on a six-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Three items which elicited moderate or strong attitudes (i.e., moderately or strongly agree or disagree responses), and which obtained similar means and variances, were selected for further exploration during the interview. The specific items were: 1. Capital punishment should be abolished; 2. Police should be allowed to shoot looters during riots; 3. Draft-card burning should be considered a criminal offense.

The interview: Prior to entering the interview room subjects were told by one of the experimenters (T.B.) that the purpose of the interview was to further explore their attitudes in regard to some of the items in the previously completed attitude questionnaire. To make their attitude toward the interviewer salient, subjects were shown their ratings of the interviewer (A.W.S.) which they had made after the two earlier interviews.

The interview was preceded by the following interviewer remarks: "Today I would like to talk to you about some of your answers to the attitude question-naire which you completed some time ago." The interviewer then read one of the items and the interviewee's response (i.e., agree or disagree), and indicated either his (the interviewer's) agreement (I agree with you, but I would like you to tell me some more about your feelings on this matter), or his disagreement (I disagree with you, but I would like you....), or a neutral response (I would like you....). The same procedure was followed for the other two items. The neutral interviewer response was included as a buffer condition.

The order of items and of interviewer response (agree, disagree, neutral) were counterbalanced between subjects.

The interviewer did not know how the interviewees had rated him on the liked-disliked scale after the two previous interviews.

After the interview subjects rated their interviewer on a number of bipolar adjectival scales, which included a six-point liked-disliked scale.

Independent and dependent variables: According to the theoretical per-spective of this study, the major independent variable was balance vs. imbalance.

In the balanced condition the interviewer agreed with the interviewees who liked him and disagreed with the interviewees who disliked him. In the imbalanced condition, the interviewer disagreed with the interviewees who liked him and agreed with the interviewees who disliked him. This variable, then, constituted a within subjects source of variance.

The major dependent variables were Speech Rate (number of words per second) and Productivity (number of words per response). The data on these variables were submitted to analyses of variance for repeated measurements.

Results and Discussion

With regard to Speech Rate, the index of interviewee tension, balance was the only significant source of variance (Table 1). As hypothesized, subjects' mean Speech Rate in the imbalanced conditions (2.81) was significantly higher than in the balanced ones (2.56).

Insert Table 1 about here.

With regard to Productivity, the index of imbalance resolution, the results are equivocal. Although balance clearly was not a significant source of variance, the interaction between balance and liking of interviewer approached significance (Table 1). Consequently, the effects of imbalance on interviewee productivity was determined separately for the two groups of subjects, i.e., those who liked and those who disliked their interviewer. The findings show that the interviewees who liked their interviewer were significantly more productive in response to disagreeing than to agreeing interviewer remarks (197.58 vs. 125.67, $t = 2.495$, df 11, $p < .025$). This group, then, was more productive in the imbalanced than in the balanced condition. This, of course, is in accord with balance theory. However, the interviewees who disliked their interviewer were also more productive in response to disagreeing than to agreeing interviewer remarks (196.33 vs. 176.92, $t = < 1$). This group, then, was less productive in the imbalanced than in the balanced condition, although the

difference was not significant. This finding, of course, is not in accord with our hypothesis. In retrospect, however, it should not be surprising that interviewees who receive agreeing messages from disliked interviewers, do not attempt to convince their interviewer to disagree with them, merely in order to restore balance. Nor is it very likely that such interviewees will resort to the other balance restoring strategies mentioned earlier, namely, the modification or reversal of one's own position, merely to be in disagreement with a disliked interviewer. Instead it is much more likely that such subjects will attempt to restore balance by changing their evaluation of the interviewer in a more positive direction.[2] This balance restoring strategy, unlike the others, has no effect on interviewee productivity. There is evidence that this is what happened in the present study. The post-interview ratings of the subjects who disliked their interviewer did in fact show a significant change, in the direction of greater liking of their interviewer (t = 3.98, df 11, p <.01). On the other hand, the subjects who liked their interviewer showed no significant change from pre to post-interview ratings of the interviewer (mean scores were 5.40 and 5.33 respectively, t < 1).

In conclusion, then, the study lends support to balance theory by utilizing heretofore untapped indices (i.e., the verbal measures of speech rate and productivity) of imbalanced states and their resolution. It also points up the fact that the particular mode of restructuring used by a person to restore balance will depend on the nature of the imbalance producing condition.

Footnote

[1] Now at the Downstate Medical Center, State University of New York.

[2] This point was brought to our attention by Dr. Nancy Henley, University of

Maryland, Baltimore County.

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Table 1

Analysis of Variance Results

Source of variance	df	Mean square	
		Rate	Productivity
Liking of interviewer (A)	1	65.80	7500
Ss within groups (error A)	22	49.13	13279.15
Balance (B)	1	72.52**	8268.75
AxB	1	12.03	25025.33[+]
BxSs within groups (error B)	22	13.48	6345.27

[+] $p < .10$; ** $p < .025$.