Interpersonal Attraction as a Communication Accomplishment: Development of a Measure of Affinity-Seeking Competence

ROBERT A. BELL, SHERYL W. TREMBLAY, and NANCY L. BUERKEL-ROTHFUSS*

The five studies described here lay the foundation for investigations of an important constraint under which individuals operate when attempting to engender liking, their affinity-seeking competence. Several studies were undertaken to develop and validate a self-report instrument for assessing skills of affinity-seeking. Results indicate that the Affinity-Seeking Instrument (ASI), which is comprised of two scales, has internal consistency, a stable factor structure, and concurrent and discriminant validity. These studies also indicate that the instrument measures social tendencies that are observable to others and predictive of positive social outcomes.

SOCIAL SCIENTISTS HAVE GIVEN considerable attention to the question of when and why individuals are attracted and attractive to other people (Duck, 1977; Huston, 1974). This interest is justified, for few factors influence people's social success and satisfaction in life more than their ability to develop bonds with others. A primary research goal has been the explication of personal and dyadic antecedents of interpersonal attraction. Investigators have given much attention to the relationship of attraction to such variables as proximity, physical attractiveness, and similarity. The evidence indicates that interpersonal attraction may be facilitated by propinquity (Nahemow & Lawton, 1975), physical attractiveness (Berscheid & Walster, 1974), and similarity in backgrounds, attitudes, and values (Byrne, 1971).

Dissatisfaction with this traditional focus on static characteristics of persons has recently been voiced (e.g., Gergen, 1982). In particular, the failure of many theorists to recognize that persons develop (or fail to develop) attraction to others within a social context characterized by

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communicative exchanges is most problematic (Bochner, 1984). Consider as just one example the vast literature on attitude similarity as a precursor to attraction. This research has usually utilized Byrne's (1961, 1971) attraction paradigm in which individuals indicate their degree of liking for a bogus stranger on the basis of written descriptions of the non-existent person's attitudes toward some issue. The generalizability of these studies to actual social encounters is questionable. As Bochner (1984) has noted, a person's attribution of similarity or dissimilarity typically follows rather than precedes interaction, is seldom based on written information, and is rarely unilateral. Recent work supports Bochner's criticisms by demonstrating that the attitude-similarity/interpersonal-attraction relationship is greatly attenuated when individuals are given the opportunity to engage in normal interaction (Sunnafrank, 1983, 1985; Sunnafrank & Miller, 1981).

Not all attraction research has been guided by such a static view. A second tack examines attraction as an interactional concept. This perspective focuses on cultural rules to which social actors must conform when trying to be liked by others and on social skills facilitative of attraction. Jones (1964), for instance, has explored strategies and motives of ingratiation. Davis (1973) has identified six tasks that an individual must perform successfully to get another person to desire future interactions. Harré (1977) has argued for an ethogenic perspective on interpersonal attraction in which the development of friendships and "enemyships" are considered social accomplishments. Cook (1977) has presented a social skills model of attraction, stressing its strategic and interactional nature. Argyle and Henderson (1984) have carried out a cross-cultural program of research on the rules of friendship.

Bell and Daly (1984) have attempted to synthesize and extend the thinking of these scholars by advancing a dynamic, communication-based perspective on interpersonal attraction, labeled affinity-seeking. They offer a model of the affinity-seeking process that identifies four sets of issues: antecedent factors, constraints, strategic activities, and target responses. "Antecedent factors" are characteristics of the interaction in which affinity-seeking occurs. "Constraints" reference individual and situational influences on affinity-seeking choices. "Strategic activities" refer to the selection, integration, sequencing, and enactment of strategies. "Target responses" encompass the effects of affinity-seeking, including changes in another's attraction to the affinity-seeker, reciprocity, and attributions of a motive for seeking affinity. In their initial investigations, Bell and Daly (1984) identified twenty-five strategies, clustered into seven higher-order categories, and found perceptions of individuals' affinity-seeking behavior to be strongly related to interpersonal attraction. Their studies also suggest that strategy selection is shaped by personality and situational parameters.
The purpose of the present series of investigations is to elaborate on the constraints of affinity-seeking. Specifically, this article details the development and validation of a self-report measure of affinity-seeking competence. Following Cook (1977), we assume that affinity-seeking encompasses a set of communication skills on which persons may differ. Some people have sophisticated repertoires of affinity-seeking strategies, a good understanding of the appropriateness of each in varying situations and relationships, and an ability to sequence and integrate these strategies with considerable finesse. These people should be quite successful in their social endeavors. Conversely, some people may be deficient in their affinity-seeking behaviors. They may, for instance, have limited knowledge of available strategies and a poor sense of how their strategic behavior should be adapted to meet situational requirements. To the extent that affinity-seeking competence fosters positive reactions from others, people probably become quite aware of their abilities to facilitate liking and should thus be able to make reports of these skills. Though numerous measures exist for assessing related constructs such as sociability, social competence, affiliative tendencies, self-monitoring, and social anxiety, we know of no instrument for measuring people's abilities to manage their communication to gain favor.

Of course, the development of a reliable and valid measure of affinity-seeking competence is unimportant in and of itself. Such an assessment tool does, however, make possible the investigation of a number of critically important questions. For instance, what strategies and behaviors discriminate skilled affinity-seekers from incompetent ones? What are the consequences of poor affinity-seeking? What is the importance of competence relative to traditional variables such as attitude similarity and physical attractiveness? Answers to questions such as these await the development of a measure of affinity-seeking competence. Such a measure is advanced in this article. The first study reports the development of a multidimensional self-report measure of skill, dubbed the Affinity-Seeking Instrument (ASI). The second investigation provides a replication of the factor structure of the instrument. The concurrent and discriminant validity of the ASI is evaluated in study three. Study four examines the validity of this measure by comparing people's scores on the ASI to others' perceptions of their affinity-seeking skills. The fifth investigation employs a multiple-act criterion to examine the relationship of ASI scores to social outcomes.

STUDY 1: INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

To assess affinity-seeking competence, the authors initially generated a pool of over one hundred items, each referencing the manipulation, implicitly or explicitly, of social behaviors for the purpose of garnering the attraction of others. Our intention was to develop a unifactorial
measure of affinity-seeking competence. Twenty-five items most consistent with the affinity-seeking construct were selected from the item pool for inclusion in the initial collection of data. These items were administered to 466 people (208 males and 258 females) enrolled in basic communication courses. Of these students, 284 were from a public university in a northern state (134 males and 150 females), and 182 were from a large eastern university (74 males and 108 females).

Contrary to expectations, a two-factor solution was obtained for the responses of these items. The first factor was labeled affinity-seeking competence (ASC). Examples of items loading on this factor include: "I seldom know what to say or do to get others to like me," "I have trouble building rapport with others," and "I just can't seem to get others to like and appreciate me." These items reference self-perceptions of a general ability to say and do what is necessary to be interpersonally attractive. The second factor was labeled strategic performance (SP), and included items such as: "I can put on excellent social performances to get others to approve of me" and "I can present myself as more likeable than I really am." These items describe a very specific kind of affinity-seeking competence, namely the ability to play roles, even to the point of misrepresenting one's self, to gain the liking and approval of others. Strategic performance in affinity-seeking is conceptually related to, but not equivalent with, Snyder's (1974) self-monitoring construct. Snyder has examined individual differences in the tendency to adjust one's presentation of self to fit the requirements of social situations. High self-monitors ask, "Who does this situation want me to be and how can I be that person?" while low self-monitors ask "Who am I and how can I be me in this situation?" (Snyder, 1979, p. 110). Self-monitoring is a broader construct than the strategic performance dimension of affinity-seeking competence because the currying of favor is just one of a number of reasons for enacting social performances. These two categories of affinity-seeking skill parallel Argyle's (1972) model of social skills. Argyle suggests that social skills operate at the levels of routine, socialized responses and conscious plans.

Although the results of this investigation were promising, a revision of the scale was deemed necessary for two reasons. First, several items had high loadings on both factors. Some of these items were revised to be consistent with just one factor while others were deleted. Second, only three items had primary loadings on the second factor. New items were thus written to represent the strategic performance construct. The revised ASI, composed of twenty-six items, was administered to a group of 168 undergraduates (96 females and 72 males) at a large eastern university. As before, participants indicated their level of agreement with each item on 7-point Likert scales ranging from "very strongly disagree" to "very strongly agree."
A series of factor analyses (principal components with Varimax rotation) was carried out to test the hypothesized two-factor structure. To be retained, an item had to have a primary loading of at least .50 with no secondary loading exceeding .30. As expected, a two-factor solution was obtained. The final instrument is reported in Table 1, along with factor loadings, item means and standard deviations, and corrected item-total correlations. The first factor was composed of eight items written to represent the ASC scale while the second factor was composed of five items for the SP measure. Composite scores were computed for the two factors by summing across the items loading on each (Ms: 41.31 for ASC and 21.39 for SP; SDs: 6.83 for ASC and 5.49 for SP; alpha reliabilities: .86 for ASC and .80 for SP). The correlation between these two scales was .31. There was no sex difference for affinity-seeking competence or strategic performance.

To assess the concurrent validity of the ASI, participants also responded to six single-item measures of personal and social functioning: "I am a shy person," "I am a lonely person," "I feel I am a good communicator in one-to-one situations," "All in all, I am a very happy person," "I feel I am in control of my life," and "I often wish I had more friends." Participants' scores on the ASC correlated negatively and significantly (p < .05) with shyness (r = -.48) and loneliness (r = -.63), and positively with reports of communicator image (r = .52), happiness (r = .44), feelings of control (r = .38), and satisfaction with number of friends (r = .39). Strategic performance had a significant, negative correlation with shyness (r = -.25); all other correlations were nonsignificant. Thus, individuals' self-perceived competence in seeking affinity was strongly related to various aspects of personal and social well-being. The failure of the SP scale to correlate highly with these items may reflect a lack of congruity. The strategic performance measure may tap a set of skills more relevant to situations of an instrumental than a relational nature (e.g., the job interview). This possibility awaits further testing.

STUDY 2: REPLICATION OF FACTOR STRUCTURE

Participants and Procedures

A second study was conducted to assess the stability of the factor structure of the Affinity-Seeking Instrument in a more diverse sample of individuals. Participants were 295 elementary and secondary school teachers (38 males and 257 females) enrolled in summer extension courses offered through a state university in the eastern part of the U.S. Participants indicated their level of agreement with each item of the ASI on 7-point Likert scales ranging from "very strongly disagree" to "very strongly agree."
Table 1
The Affinity-Seeking Instrument
(Study 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affinity-Seeking Competence</th>
<th>Factor Loadings&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>r&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I seldom know what to say or do to get others to like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If I put my mind to it, I could get anyone to like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have trouble building rapport with others.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have difficulty getting others to want to spend time with me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If I want someone to like me, I can usually create positive feelings between us.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I just can't seem to get others to like and appreciate me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I am good at getting others to want to hang around with me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I do not seem to know what to say and do to make myself popular with others.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. When necessary, I can put on an act to get important people to approve of me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am not very good at putting on a show to impress others.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I am very good at playing roles to draw people to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I can present myself as more likeable than I really am.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eigenvalue: 4.76 2.36
Percent of Variance Accounted For: 36.60 18.10
Alpha reliability of Composite Score: .86 .80

Note: Items 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 10 have been subjected to reverse scoring.

<sup>a</sup>Factor loadings are based on varimax rotation.

<sup>b</sup>Corrected item-total correlations.
Results and Discussion

The ASC had a mean, standard deviation, and alpha reliability of 46.16, 7.27, and .90, respectively. The SP scale had a mean, standard deviation, and reliability of 27.52, 4.88, and .81, respectively. The teachers' responses were factor analyzed using principal components analysis with Varimax rotation. A two-factor solution, accounting for sixty percent of the variance in the data, was indicated by both the Kaiser (1960) criterion, which advocates retaining only those factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, and by Cattell's (1966) scree test. Items from the ASC scale loaded on the first factor, while items from the SP measure loaded on the second factor. Every item on the ASC scale had a loading of at least .54 on Factor I (average loading: .72); the highest loading for the second factor was .29 (average ASC loading on Factor II: .12). Every item on the SP scale had a loading of at least .51 on the second factor (average loading: .68); the highest loading for the first factor was .22 (average SP loading on Factor I: .16). These results provide strong evidence that the factor structure identified in the preceding study is stable.

STUDY 3: CONCURRENT AND DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

A third study was carried out to assess more thoroughly the concurrent and discriminant validity of the ASI. Affinity-seeking skill was expected to correlate with other constructs indicative of social activity, social awareness, and interpersonal competence. The constructs assessed were sociability, shyness, assertiveness, self-monitoring, self-esteem, interaction involvement, loneliness, and communication apprehension. Discriminant validity analyses were conducted to determine if the affinity-seeking competence and strategic performance constructs, as operationalized by the ASI, are distinct from these related variables.

Procedures

Participants were 64 females and 50 males (N=114) enrolled in basic communication courses at a large eastern university. The students completed the ASI and other measures of social-communicative individual differences in randomized order. Shyness and sociability were assessed with measures developed by Cheek and Buss (1981). Shyness was expected to correlate negatively with both ASI scales, while positive correlations were expected for sociability.

Assertiveness was assessed with Lorr and More's (1980) multidimensional measure, which includes scales for assessing social assertiveness, directiveness, defense of rights and interests, and independence. "Social assertiveness" refers to the ability to project oneself into social situations. As such, it is defined by a set of skills necessary, though not sufficient, for effective affinity-seeking (e.g., introducing oneself and
carrying on conversations). We thus expected positive relationships between social assertiveness and the two ASI scales. "Directiveness" describes the ability to take control of problematic interpersonal situations via the demonstration of leadership. One would expect a positive correlation between directiveness and affinity-seeking competence, as leadership quality should be enhanced by such skills. "Defense of Rights and Interests" measures the willingness to defend one's rights and to reject the unjust demands of others. "Independence" is the ability to resist social pressures to conform to expectations that are personally objectionable. These last two dimensions of assertiveness were considered conceptually unrelated to affinity-seeking competence and were included to assess discriminant validity.

Interaction involvement was measured with Cegala's (1981) Interaction Involvement Scale (IIS), an 18-item measure purportedly composed of responsiveness, perceptiveness, and attentiveness dimensions. Since the IIS proved to be unifactorial in this study, a single interaction involvement score was assigned to each participant by summing across all items. Interactionally-involved people are highly participative communicators. Interaction involvement is presumably a critical prerequisite of effective affinity-seeking and should thus correlate positively with both dimensions of the ASI.

Self-monitoring was assessed with Snyder's (1974) Self-Monitoring Scale. As noted earlier, high self-monitors adapt their behaviors to meet the requirements of social situations and others' expectations. Briggs, Cheek, and Buss (1980) have found that Snyder's instrument is threedimensional, including acting, extraversion, and other-directedness factors. Though all three scales should correlate positively with both measures of affinity-seeking, an especially strong relationship between strategic performance and the acting dimension of the self-monitoring scale was anticipated.

Self-esteem was measured with Rosenberg's (1965) ten-item scale. Since affinity-seeking skills should enhance the probability that one will be accepted by others, affinity-seeking competence and strategic performance skills were expected to correlate positively with self-esteem. Communication apprehension was measured with McCroskey's (1981) PRCA-24. This questionnaire assesses the tendency to feel apprehensive about communicating within dyadic encounters, groups, meetings, and public speaking situations. Both scales of the ASI were expected to correlate inversely with communication apprehension within each situation. From the standpoint of discriminant validity, the correlations were expected to be strongest for dyadic communication apprehension and weakest for public speaking apprehension, given the interpersonal orientation of the ASI.

Loneliness was measured with the twenty-item Revised UCLA Loneliness scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980). Individuals with
finely-tuned affinity-seeking skills should be more successful in meeting their relational needs than people with a skills deficiency. For this reason, inverse relationships were predicted for loneliness and the two ASI scales. Finally, subjects completed Crowne and Marlowe's (1964) social desirability scale to assess the vulnerability of the ASI to respondents' needs for social approval.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 reports the alpha reliabilities, inter-correlations, means, and standard deviations for all measures. The ASC and SP scales had acceptable reliabilities (.85 and .87, respectively); their inter-correlation was .48. As Table 2 documents, scores on the ASC and SP scales were not significantly related to social desirability. A factor analysis of the ASI replicated the two-factor structure found in the first study with the one exception that item 5 had a loading of .32 on the affinity-seeking competence factor.

**Concurrent Validity.** The pattern of correlations in Table 2 suggests that individuals reporting high affinity-seeking competence also believe they are assertive, communicatively nonapprehensive, interaction involved, nonlonely, high in self-esteem, good social actors, extraverted, nonshy, and somewhat sociable. As expected, social assertiveness proved a better predictor of the ASC measure than the other forms of assertiveness. Using a test of the significance of differences between dependent correlations (Cohen & Cohen, 1975), it was determined that the correlation between ASC and social assertiveness was significantly greater ($p < .05$) than the correlations between the ASC scale and the other three assertiveness measures. Likewise, dyadic communication apprehension was more strongly related to ASC than was apprehension in group, meeting, or public situations ($p < .05$). Contrary to prediction, the other-directedness scale of the self-monitoring questionnaire did not correlate significantly with affinity-seeking competence.

The strategic performance measure did not correlate as highly with the criterion measures as did the ASC measure. Nevertheless, individuals reporting competence in strategic performance of affinity-seeking had a tendency to perceive themselves as assertive, nonapprehensive in dyadic and meeting situations, interaction involved, good social actors, extraverted, other-directed, and nonshy. The moderate relationships between the strategic performance measure and the acting factor ($r = .40$) of the self-monitoring scale is especially worth noting, given the performative nature of each.

**Discriminant Validity.** The bivariate correlations reported in Table 2 indicate that the affinity-seeking competence and strategic performance constructs may be discriminated from measures of other conceptually-related constructs. Even after correcting for attenuation, no variable accounted for more than 36 percent of the variance in
|       | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  | 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | M   | SD  |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. ASC| 85  | 48  | 18  | 33  | 22  | 47  | -51 | -35 | -35 | -19 | 39  | -42 | 34  | 30  | 38  | 02  | -40 | 29  | 14  | 42.87| 6.44 |
| 3. Assertiveness (Defense of Rights) | 73  | 58  | 73  | 55  | -23 | -26 | -30 | -23 | 36  | -04 | 24  | 41  | 29  | -22 | -26 | -03 | 04  | 31.10| 6.32 |
| 5. Assertiveness (Independence) | 69  | 57  | -28 | -33 | -29 | -13 | 40  | 04  | 15  | 40  | 28  | -28 | -33 | -06 | 13  | 30.18| 6.07 |
| 7. Communication Apprehension (Dyadic) | 85  | 63  | 65  | 37  | -54 | 29  | -38 | -34 | -56 | 12  | 66  | -31 | -32 | 14.15| 4.15 |
| 10. Communication Apprehension (Public) | 88  | -28 | 20  | -28 | -42 | -32 | 03  | 35  | -03 | 06  | 17.91| 5.21 |
| 11. Interaction Involvement | 87  | -24 | 41  | 23  | 41  | 22  | -45 | 16  | 37  | 63.53| 9.22 |
| 12. Loneliness | 89  | -37 | -05 | -32 | 02  | 39  | -37 | 02  | 35.92| 9.55 |
| 13. Self-Esteem | 83  | 17  | 41  | -21 | -31 | 23  | 20  | 40.90| 5.55 |
| 15. Self-Monitoring (Extraversion) | 80  | 02  | -60 | 32  | 06  | 17.97| 3.67 |
| 16. Self-Monitoring (Other-Directedness) | 68  | 09  | 12  | -29 | 31.12| 5.20 |
| 17. Shyness | 76  | -44 | -23 | 22.79| 5.78 |
| 18. Sociability | 68  | 09  | 19.84| 3.37 |
| 19. Social Desirability | 80  | 10.46| 5.88 |

Notes: Decimal points have been deleted. Alpha reliabilities are reported in the main diagonal. If r > .16, p < .05; if r > .22, p < .01, if r > .28, p < .001.
either ASI scale. A more rigorous test of discriminant validity was carried out via regression analyses by assessing the amount of variance in the ASC and SP measures left unaccounted for by optimal linear combinations of the set of criterion measures. These variables were entered into two independent stepwise regression analyses with the ASC and SP scales serving as dependent measures. At each step in the analyses, the independent variable with the smallest $F$-to-enter probability was introduced into the equation, provided that its associated probability value did not exceed the .05 level. The results of these analyses are reported in Table 3.

### Table 3

**Stepwise Regression Analysis Predicting ASI Scores From Conceptually-Related Measures (Study 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$R^2$ Change</th>
<th>Std. Beta</th>
<th>Overall F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affinity-Seeking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dyadic Comm. Apprehension</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>-.320</td>
<td>38.77*</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>.579</td>
<td>.335</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>-.253</td>
<td>27.95*</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Social Assertiveness</td>
<td>.603</td>
<td>.364</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.207</td>
<td>20.95*</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Performance (SP)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Acting</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>20.88*</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other-Directedness</td>
<td>.471</td>
<td>.222</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>15.86*</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dyadic Comm. Apprehension</td>
<td>.535</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>-.255</td>
<td>14.73*</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>12.35*</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .001$

For affinity-seeking competence, the significant predictors were dyadic communication apprehension, loneliness, and social assertiveness. These three variables accounted for 36 percent of the variance in the ASC scale. Thus, 64 percent of the variance in this variable could not be accounted for by the set of construct-related measures. For the strategic performance measure, the significant predictors were acting, other-directedness, dyadic communication apprehension, and independence. These measures accounted for 31 percent of the variance in the SP scale. Thus, 69 percent of the variance in this measure could not be accounted for by this set of variables. The results of this study indicate that the ASI has concurrent and discriminant validity.

The next section reports an investigation of an equally important question: Do people have sufficient awareness of their affinity-seeking skills to report accurately on these skills? Earlier we speculated that
the social rewards people receive are directly related to their ability to facilitate positive regard. As such, we posited that individuals probably develop a sense of their affinity-seeking competence and could thus offer valid reports of these skills. This proposition was put to an empirical test in a fourth investigation. The issue here is whether people's perceptions of their competence, as assessed by the ASI, are consistent with others' perceptions of their abilities. This question was addressed by comparing people's self-reports of their proficiency at affinity-seeking to their friends' perceptions of their competence.

STUDY 4: FRIEND EVALUATIONS

Participants and Procedures

Students enrolled in communication courses at a large eastern university were asked to participate in a study of liking. Each brought a close friend to the investigation, someone who knew him or her well. Participants were 43 pairs of friends (20 male-male pairs, 15 female-female pairs, and 8 mixed-sex pairs). After each pair arrived to a designated room at a specified time, they were separated and then given a questionnaire consisting of two copies of the ASI. Initially, participants were asked to complete the ASI with their own communication tendencies in mind (hereafter referred to as their self-rating). Next, each participant was told to pretend that he or she was the friend and to complete the ASI as the friend should if the friend was being completely honest in his/her self-assessment (hereafter referred to as the friend-rating).

Results and Discussion

Each participant's self-rating of affinity-seeking skill was matched with the friend-rating of his/her comrade (N = 86). The alpha reliabilities of the scales for the self-ratings were .89 for ASC and .84 for SP; the inter-correlation for these two self-ratings was .29. The means (and standard deviations) were 43.20 (7.61) for the ASC scale and 21.98 (5.79) for the SP measure. The reliabilities for the friend-ratings on the ASC and SP measures were .84 for both. If self-reported affinity-seeking skill reflects actual abilities, we should expect substantial correlations between the self- and friend-ratings on the ASC and SP scales. The correlation between self-ratings and friend-ratings of ASC was .44 (p < .001); after correcting for attenuation, the correlation was .51. The correlation between self-ratings and friend ratings on the SP measure was .37 (p < .001); the unattenuated correlation was .44. Thus, there was a correspondence between people's reports of their affinity-seeking skills and their friends' perceptions of these abilities.
Although these correlations are only moderate, their magnitude is probably attenuated by a number of factors. First, even our closest friend does not have the opportunity to observe our tendencies in every type of social situation. Thus the self-ratings reference a wider range of experiences and situations than friends' evaluations. Second, the ASI may measure social abilities most relevant to interactions among strangers and acquaintances. There may be only an occasional need to utilize these skills when with friends. Bell and Daly (1984), for instance, speculate that the skills of affinity-seeking and affinity-maintenance may be qualitatively different.

STUDY 5: AFFINITY-SEEKING COMPETENCE AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES

A fifth study was undertaken to assess the relationship of affinity-seeking skill to social outcomes. When attempting to demonstrate a link between behavior and a self-report measure of individual differences, investigators have at least three research alternatives from which to select. They may attempt to demonstrate an association by relating people's scores on the measure to an observation of a single behavior on a single occasion, a single behavior on repeated occasions, or multiple behavioral acts over time. This study adopts the third approach. As Daly (1978) has noted, a multiple act criterion is preferable since it is unreasonable to expect all individuals to reflect some disposition in exactly the same way. We hypothesized that both scales of the ASI would have considerable correlations with a sum of social outcomes intuitively associated with affinity-seeking.

Selection of Outcomes

Students enrolled in communication courses generated the outcomes used in this study. These students were given descriptions of prototypical competent and incompetent affinity-seekers and asked to generate a list of outcomes more likely to be obtained by high-skilled than low-skilled affinity-seekers. A final list of fourteen outcomes was selected on the basis of nonredundancy and consensus (examples: making a new friend, getting someone to go with you on a date, being asked by another person to go out on a date, and receiving a gift). While one might object to the use of self-reports of behavior in lieu of direct observations, previous investigations have found such reports to be accurate when the meaning of the behaviors in question are relatively clear (Dean, 1958; Fishbein & Ajzen 1974, 1975; Pomazal & Jaccard, 1976). More practically, reliance on self-reports of behaviors is necessitated by the impossible task of observing 14 naturally-occurring events for a group of research participants over an extended time period.
Participants and Procedures

Seventy-four students (32 males and 42 females) were given, in randomized order, the two ASI scales (alpha reliabilities: .88 for ASC and .86 for SP) and a checklist of the outcome variables. Participants were instructed to indicate those outcomes they had obtained in the past seven days. Each participant was given one point for each outcome he or she checked off. The multiple act measure was constructed by summing across the fourteen outcomes (alpha reliability: .56).

Results and Discussion

The means (and standard deviations) for the ASC, SP, and outcome variables were, respectively, 39.52 (9.86), 22.12 (6.07), and 7.10 (3.21). The correlation between the ASC and SP scales was .51 (p < .001). The ASC had a correlation of .43 (p < .001) with the sum of the outcomes, and an unattenuated correlation of .61. The correlation between the strategic performance scale and the outcome measure was .36 (p < .001); the unattenuated correlation was .52. Although these results are only correlational, they suggest that affinity-seeking skills facilitate the obtaining of positive social outcomes.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The theoretical explication of affinity-seeking requires an understanding of factors that shape persons' attempts to generate liking (Bell & Daly, 1984). We have sought to lay the groundwork for investigations of what is perhaps the most fundamental constraint on affinity-seeking, personal competence. The notion that individuals differ in their abilities to garner positive regard jibes with experience. Most of us are acquainted with people who seem to know precisely what must be done to make themselves attractive to others. For these people, fostering good impressions and making friends appears to come naturally. On the other hand, most of us are familiar with individuals who find it terribly difficult to get others to like them. For these folks, it seems that the more they persevere, the less they are successful.

Research on the etiology, correlates, and consequences of affinity-seeking abilities will not progress until assessment procedures are developed and validated. As Bell and Daly (1984) note, it is necessary to devise measures of competence at two levels, knowledge and performance. The former pertains to individuals' awareness of strategic options, while the latter relates to the utilization of this knowledge in ongoing interaction. Knowledge is necessary but not sufficient for competent performance. Some people might be quite knowledgeable of affinity-seeking but lack the motivation to put this knowledge into effect. Even individuals with knowledge and motivation may be unable to perform
adequately for other reasons, such as communication anxiety or a lack of experience with the situations in which they find themselves.

Bell and Daly (1984) have reported a methodology for measuring the knowledge component of competence. They asked research participants to describe everything that could be said or done to get a target person in a hypothetical interpersonal situation to like them. These responses were initially unitized to create for each participant a list of nonredundant affinity-seeking behaviors, and then counted to derive a measure of knowledge depth. Next, these behaviors were coded into a typology of affinity-seeking strategies to construct a measure of knowledge breadth, representing the number of strategies in each participant’s responses. Although this procedure has not been used extensively, preliminary results demonstrate its potential. The present research complements and extends this work by providing a brief and easily administered method for assessing people’s abilities to perform competitently when seeking affinity. Although these studies can only provide tentative evidence of reliability and validity, the results are promising. First, both ASI scales were consistently reliable. Second, the factor structure of the instrument seems to be stable. Third, the ASI appears to be a valid measure of competence. The instrument has face validity in that each item references individuals’ abilities to manage their social behavior to enhance attraction. The pattern of correlations between the two ASI measures and other social dispositions such as shyness, social assertiveness, and dyadic communication apprehension, as well as their relationships to self-evaluations, including loneliness and self-esteem, suggests concurrent validity. Yet, on the basis of the discriminant validity analyses, it cannot be concluded that the ASI is simply another measure of extant constructs.

A basic requirement of any self-report of individual differences in overt communication behavior is that it reflect actual variations in behavior across people. Two studies were undertaken to determine whether self-perceptions of affinity-seeking competence are rooted in behavioral tendencies. The first study related participants’ ASI scores to friends’ perceptions of their competence. We assumed that friends’ evaluations were based, for the most part, on past observations of participants’ social accomplishments in varied settings, involving a wide range of people, over an extended period of time. The second investigation related ASI scores to a multiple-act criterion measure consisting of a wide variety of social outcomes determined to be indicative of affinity-seeking competence. Both studies were designed to be consistent with the assumption that the fairest test of a measure of social predispositions is its ability to predict the enactment of a set of behaviors over time. The results of each indicate that respondents’ reports reflect social abilities.

A final determination of the usefulness of the ASI must await additional studies of its psychometric properties. The refinement of this
instrument will necessitate at least five kinds of investigations. First, additional studies of the relationship of the ASI to conversational behavior are needed. Second, people presumably differ in their awareness of their own affinity-seeking skills and their motivation to seek affinity. These individual differences should be explored. Third, the relationship of affinity-seeking competence to interpersonal evaluations should be assessed. Fourth, it may prove valuable to compare this measure of performance skills to Bell and Dalay's (1984) procedure for assessing affinity-seeking knowledge to determine if the two approaches converge and diverge in expected ways. Finally, it will be necessary to examine the relative importance of the affinity-seeking competence and strategic performance dimensions in varying situations. An attempt should be made to identify the characteristics of those situations and interpersonal relationships in which each takes on significance.

Although the probability that one individual will be attracted to another may be enhanced by relatively static factors such as attitude similarity and physical attractiveness, the case for conceiving of interpersonal attraction as a communication accomplishment is compelling. This perspective requires close examination of affinity-seeking competence. We have sought to facilitate such examination by providing a workable methodology for assessing skills in this important realm of social life.

ENDNOTE

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REFERENCES


