

Personality in the context of conversation: Person-talk scenarios replicated

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Abstract

In this study 90 pairs of subjects (N=180) were requested to describe a recent situation in which they had said something about a person. The pairs of subjects were randomly assigned to three conditions differing on the main question, namely whether the subjects had said something about themselves, about their partner, or about a third person. Each person-talk situation was described from two perspectives, namely from that of the speaker and from that of the addressee. The descriptions of the talk situations were judged separately for the content of the utterances about the persons, and for the intentional activities of the two interlocutors with respect to each other. Redundancy analysis followed by a rotation to the canonical correlation solution was applied on two sets of variables, namely the one describing the speaker's role in the talk situation and the one describing the addressee's role. For each of the two perspectives this analysis produced seven canonical components. Each of the components identified a person-talk scenario such as an entertainment scenario, a flirtation scenario, and a gossip scenario. A comparison of the two canonical structures indicated that the person-talk scenarios obtained under the perspective of the speaker were well replicated in the data obtained under the perspective of the addressee, and vice versa.

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this article is to exploit everyday conversation as a database for the study of personality. The concern is with that type of conversation in which the interlocutors make implicit or explicit reference to a person as their topic of talk. This kind of conversation has been called 'person-talk' (De Raad, 1984). The anatomy of person-talk comprises linguistic and paralinguistic parts. The linguistic part consists of words and phrases reflecting aspects of the persons talked about, and reflecting opinions of the interlocutors with respect to those persons. The paralinguistic part

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comprises timing, inflection, gesture, setting, occasion, and so on. The latter features contribute to the conveyance of the interlocutors' opinions. The meaning of a given word or phrase usually cannot be assessed without reference to its context of use.

The general perspective that is followed to study person-talk may be conceived of as a narrative in which a person acquires meaning as a personage. Narrative events normally condense around the characters who carry out the actions to complete a story or a plot. These characters are put upon the scene through a name, a location, a certain physical appearance, a personality, and so on. The viewpoint of a narrative stresses the contextual embeddedness of the meaning of person-talk. Central to this viewpoint is the fact that it is the narrator who is responsible for the creation of the personages. And this is exactly what is emphasized as the kernel of the constructivist approach to personality (Hampson, 1984).

Personality in the constructivist approach is not conceived of as a neutral entity of which the meaning can be fixed independently of the method of assessment (Scheff, 1968) or of the viewpoint of the assessors (Kouwer and Linschoten, 1951; Rosenberg and Medini, 1982). Personality in this approach is primarily to be seen as the result of a process of negotiating the meaning of a person's actions. This does not mean that the negotiated personality is just a ball being tossed back and forth in the process of the interaction. On the contrary, the conclusions that are reached are usually influenced by conventional standards and communicational demands (Gergen, Hepburn and Fisher, 1986).

The narratological (or constructivist) approach to personality draws attention to different contexts in which the portrayal of personality is a central issue. Two of these contexts are discussed in some detail. The *clinical case seminar* constitutes the first context. Rosenberg and Medini (1982) argue that in the case seminar the description of the patient often follows less a need for understanding and explaining the behaviour of the patient than for forwarding the plot the interlocutors have in mind. For example, a hidden objective in such situations is often the audience acceptance of a theory. The description of the personality of the patient may be more guided by the ideological background of the teller than by more neutral descriptive motives. This means that in this context the process of constructing the personality of the person serves, at least partially, rhetorical goals. Besides the ignorance of what is going on 'within' a person, this is another serious handicap to understanding and explaining a person's behaviour.

The second context is *everyday talk about persons* (De Raad, 1985). The usual situation in everyday talk is that the conceptions of persons remain unarticulated. This is due to the lack of a 'contract' (Carson, 1969) to be *descriptive* when talking about persons. Whereas in the clinical context there is at least some explicit coordination in pursuing a goal, the everyday context is characterized by a relative anomaly. Interactions may halt, start again in another direction, flag, and restart. This linking of transient interests is probably reinforced by its oral character. The grounds for fabricating the characters are also in this context rhetorical in kind. Moreover, the characters that emerge in the interlocutors' talk may be even more fictitious than in the clinical context. The latter two features (rhetorics and fiction) are repeatedly exemplified in *gossip* (Fine and Rosnow, 1978) and in those conversations where a person reminisces of situations in which he or she takes the leading role (Hannerz, 1967). It is assumed that the aforementioned narratological system is one of the core metaphors (cf. Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) in understanding and structuring everyday talk about persons.

Everyday talk about persons presumably grounds the ideas people form about each other. Although the utterances about self or other may just form the verbally expressed tip of an iceberg of silent conceptions, it is exactly the putting into words through which opinions acquire form and substance. Everyday person-talk is thus pre-eminently to be considered as the domain where conceptions about people are formed and changed. The general supposition is that in everyday life the various behaviours are implicitly considered to accrue to the personality of the person. In certain situations this is even an explicit theme. Especially in problematic situations (Jones and Davis, 1965) 'personality' is frequently offered as the explanatory agency (cf. Scott and Lyman, 1968).

A clear view on person-talk is obstructed by the diversity of idiosyncratic purposes of the interlocutors. One of the main research goals should therefore be to account for the reasons for making utterances about persons. In an abstract sense, the variability of purposes may be illustrated by the following distinction. On the one hand, there is a [purely] *rhetorical* form of making an utterance, of which the prime purpose is the effect it has on the addressee. This may be the case when an expression is used merely because of its symbolic loading and the effect its use has thereof. For example, once having knowledge of the kind of behaviours the category 'generous' refers to, a speaker might, in order to get some money from the conversational partner, appeal to a sense of generosity by calling this person generous. On the one hand, there is a *magical* form of which the prime function is the verbalization of the impression a person has on the speaker, which verbalization is in itself used as a suitable explanation for that person's behaviour. It is the bringing under verbal control that suggests the explanation. Somewhere in between these two there is a third form of which the main purpose is to be *descriptive*. In this case, utterances about persons are meant to communicate valid information about the object-persons of the utterances. In actual person-talk the utterances are expected to be blends of these three forms, with emphasis on one.

To give an impression of the type of talk situation we have in mind, two short sketches are given representing contextual information, the speaker's purpose, and both the interlocutors' opinions. These situations are reconstructed by one of the persons involved in these sketches:

Two students talked about a common acquaintance who had broken his relationship with his girlfriend. One of the students wanted to give his opinion about the acquaintance, and said to the other, 'He is a very independent type'. The addressee agreed and remarked that the girlfriend, on the other hand, is very dependent.

A young man tried to explain to his fiancée the behaviour of a housemate who often makes impulsive catty remarks. He said, 'She means no harm; she has just been brought up that way'. The addressee reacted to this by saying, 'If she makes such a remark, she later always regrets it.'

Reports like these two provide us not only with the different kinds of expressions by which persons are portrayed, but also with information about how these expressions are used and to what effect they are used. Accordingly, the emphasis on language (i.e. the natural language of personality) draws attention to its utility in portraying

personality as well as to its utility in gaining dramatic effects. Person-talk can thus be considered as a useful resource in two respects. First, it is a resource for *vocabularies* that reflect the common sense notions about personality. Research in this area has exploited these vocabularies for potential descriptors in order to increase the lexical scope and precision of statements on personality (Brokken, 1978; Bromley, 1977; De Raad, 1985; De Raad, Mulder, Kloosterman and Hofstee, 1988; Goldberg, 1982). Some random examples from these vocabularies are proud, neurotic, ass-hole, monkey-face, very independent type, zombie, blushes, intimidates, tries to make someone jealous, etc. Second, it is a resource for the *tactics* that are used in conversations for the purpose of creating or maintaining social order. The description of these tactics may provide information about the pragmatic value of the vocabularies. Examples of such tactics are indicated by verbs like disclose, flatter, praise, justify, intrigue, etc.

The pragmatics of the language of personality is studied in order to deal with those aspects of the language system that fulfil a role in regulating communication. In this respect, the language of personality is first of all an instrument to perform certain acts. Making explicit these regulating aspects not only helps to clarify everyday intercourse, it is also of particular importance for personality assessment. In actual assessment situations, it may be precisely these regulating aspects that are responsible for the low predictive power of personality statements.

In order to investigate the way personality construction is contingent upon everyday interaction, the present paper investigates person-talk with the emphasis on pragmatics. This means that the ways in which interlocutors systematically express their opinions about persons are investigated, i.e. what they ascribe to these persons, for what reasons, and with what effects. In order to answer these questions short segments of person-talk activity, similar to the two examples given, were collected as the raw units of investigation. Each of these segments contains information about what a speaker said about a person, and what this speaker meant by what he or she said. These segments also contain information about what the addressee did or said in reaction to what the speaker had said.

Research in the area of pragmatics has thus far focused on a charting of the *motivations* the speakers give for making the person-utterances, of the *contents* of the utterances, and of the *effects* that are produced by the use of the utterances (De Raad, 1984, 1985).

The study of the relations between the performing of the utterances by the speakers and the reactions on the part of the addressees resulted in the identification of a number of sequential patterns called 'person-talk scenarios' (De Raad, 1985, 1986a). The most striking scenarios and the differences between them were syntactically marked by the personal pronouns 'I', 'You', and 'He' or 'She', respectively, indicating that the object-person in the utterance is the speaker, the addressee, or a third person. *First-person* utterances are particularly used by speakers who consider themselves as being irritated or insecure. The speakers make these utterances to express their feelings. And the utterances are then followed by support and incitement on the part of the addressee. The therapy situation is prototypical of these qualities. *Second-person* utterances particularly refer to the addressee as being aggressive and uncultured. These utterances are performed in order to elicit some change in the addressee, and are followed by rejection or justification on the part of the addressee. The prototype of this kind of situation is the account of (own and deviant) behaviour (cf.

Scott and Lyman, 1968). *Third-person* utterances are particularly used to exchange negative information about the object-person. The addressee usually agrees with the speaker's opinion. The gossip situation is prototypical for these qualities.

The present investigation aims to replicate the earlier De Raad (1985) studies, the main difference residing in a more realistic group of subjects for the present study: *pairs* of acquaintances who provide information about a person-talk situation in which one person played the role of speaker and the other played the role of addressee. Such a group of subjects also provides the possibility of retrieving descriptions of the same situations from different perspectives, namely from that of the speaker and that of the addressee. For each of the two perspectives the sequential patterns in the talk situations are investigated.

METHOD

Subjects

Ninety pairs of unpaid subjects took part in this study, a pair being defined as 'People who regularly talk to each other'. They were all students, representatively covering the disciplines in the student population. Ninety-five subjects were females and 85 were males. Of all pairs the members knew each other well or fairly well. Of 24 pairs both members were females, of 19 pairs both members were males, and of 47 pairs the members were of different sex. The role relationships between the members of the pairs can all be described as 'symmetric': they were good friends, room-mates, etc., and the more complementary role relationships such as father-son and teacher-student did not occur in the sample.

Procedure

The subjects were asked to try to recall a situation from the recent past in which they *had said something about* 'somebody'. The pairs were randomly assigned to one of three conditions through the use of three different versions of a questionnaire. These questionnaires differed only with respect to 'person-form': under the *first-person* condition the two members of a pair were each separately asked to recall a situation in which he or she had said something *about him/herself to his/her partner*. Under the *second-person* condition the members of a pair were separately asked to recall a situation in which they had said something *about their partner to that partner*. Under the *third-person* condition the members of a pair were separately asked to recall a situation in which they had said something *to their partner about a third person*, a person who was not present during the talking.

More specifically, the subjects were requested to find a situation which they expected their partners to remember. They had to write down the utterance that was made in that situation *literally*. The subjects of a pair were not allowed to talk to each other except when permitted by the experimenter. After both subjects of a pair had written down a person-utterance they had to show that utterance to their partner in order to check whether the partner was able to match the utterance *with* the correct situation. Where this was not the case, the partners were allowed to help each other by mentioning time and place. If help was of no use in this recognition task, the subject was requested to recall a different utterance.

Next the subjects were asked to give a short but complete description of the situation and of the context in which the utterance had taken place in such a way that potential readers would have a good understanding of the meaning of the utterance. Furthermore, each subject had to provide the following kind of information twice. From the perspective of their role of speaker they had to describe the *intention* of their utterance, the *act* they intended to perform *in* using the utterance, and the *reaction* of the partner to their utterance. From the perspective of their role of addressee they had to describe, having read the utterance written down by the partner, the *intention the partner had* with his/her utterance, the *act* the partner intended to perform in making the utterance, and *their own reaction* to that utterance.

Under both perspectives the subjects first had to describe the required information in their own words. Secondly, the subjects had to judge the *intentions*, the *acts*, and the *reactions* in terms of a set of 15 rating scales that were developed from the semantic field of language which is particularly apt for expressing intentional activities, namely verbs (De Raad, 1986b). Each of the 15 scales consisted of three items, each in turn comprising three verbs (Table 1). The verb scales were used under six conditions by each subject: for each of the three sorts of information (intentions, acts, reactions), and

Table 1. List of verb scales

1. CONSPIRACY	— conspire, whisper, collaborate — associate with a person, contrive, contract — play into each other's hands, scheme, plot
2. INFLUENCE	— impose, summon, persuade — press a person, demand, rouse — incite, stimulate, influence
3. CHALLENGE	— challenge, compete, bait a person — draw a person, appeal, provoke — elicit from, strive, stand up to
4. COQUETRY	— cajole, ogle, coax — flirt, caress, seduce — hug, fondle, coddle
5. EDIFICATION	— instruct, explain, put forward — argue, illustrate, bear witness to — point out, pose, mention
6. GREGARIOUSNESS	— trumpet forth, chatter, babble — boast, blurt out, talk — show off, twaddle, have a chat
7. AGGRESSION	— call names, insult, blame — disapprove, accuse, play a nasty trick — blow a person up, hurt, harm
8. OBSERVATION	— keep watch, title, name — see to it, observe, judge — keep an eye on, spy on, attribute
9. LENIENCY	— abandon, be non-committed, leave in the lurch — keep aloof, put up with, tolerate — comply with, climb down, swallow

Table 1 continued

10. APPRAISAL	— extol, praise, back a person — compliment upon, applaud, crack up — commend, congratulate, cheer
11. ENTERTAINMENT	— titter, play a trick on a person, giggle — jest, chuckle over, snigger — pretend (act), fib, joke
12. CONFIDENTIALITY	— confide, whisper, take into confidence — pour out one's heart, own up, complain — have a good cry, confess, relieve feelings
13. INFORMATION	— inform, making enquiries, hunt out — sound out a person, take one's bearings, consult — question, gather information, apply to
14. RESTORATION	— put right, justify, redeem, — excuse, explain away, buy off — repair, smooth over, compensate
15. SUPPORT	— comfort, help, reassure — assist, look after, cheer up — support, protect, put heart into a person

under the two perspectives (speaker, addressee). The instruction to the subjects was to indicate for each of the 45 items the extent to which the pertaining three verbs, according to their *common meaning*, described the meaning of the intention, the act, and the reaction that was written down. The judgements could be expressed on a four-point scale, anchored by *does not apply* (1) and *does apply* (4).

The content of the utterances

In order to categorize the personality-relevant information in the utterances the scales of the so-called Standard Personality Adjective List (Hofstee, Brokken and Land, 1981) were used. These scales (Table 2) represent the seven basic meaning dimensions of the (Dutch) language of personality. Each of these scales consists of three items, each in turn comprising two or three adjectives that have about the same meaning.

The 180 person-utterances were isolated from their context of use and were given to five subjects with the instruction to judge the content of each utterance in terms of the 21 items of the adjective list. The subjects, who were all students of psychology, had to indicate for each item the extent to which the pertaining three adjectives, according to their *common meaning*, described the meaning of the utterance. The judgements could be expressed on a four-point scale, anchored by *does not apply* (1) and *does apply* (4).

The analyses

For the verb scales (under each of the six conditions) and for the adjective scales reliability analyses were performed (Tables 3 and 4). Because of the relative low reliability of the verb scale 'Leniency', this variable was not used in further analyses.

Table 2. List of adjective scales

1. (UN)CULTURE	— uncultured, indecent, vulgar — impolite, ill-mannered — banal, coarse
2. (IN)STABILITY	— tearful, whiny, nervy — certain, self-confident — independent, self-reliant
3. AGREEABLENESS	— bright, cheerful, sunny — enthusiastic, passionate — enjoyable, pleasant, nice
4. AGGRESSION	— offensive, rebellious, pugnacious — bossy, domineering — hot-tempered, hot-headed, short-tempered
5. CONSCIENTIOUSNESS	— thrifty, economical — dutiful, punctual, exact — diligent, industrious
6. INTROVERSION	— contemplative, reflective, philosophical — reserved, withdrawn, aloof — self-contained, impervious
7. CONSERVATISM	— progressive, modern — preservative, conservative — radical, revolutionary

Table 3. Inter-item reliabilities (coefficients alpha) of the verb scales under six conditions

Scales	Ratings performed by					
	Sp		Ad		Sp	Ad
	ISp	ASp	ISp	ASp	RAd	RAd
1. Conspiracy	0.63	0.71	0.72	0.77	0.74	0.79
2. Influence	0.81	0.85	0.84	0.79	0.68	0.73
3. Challenge	0.73	0.73	0.72	0.83	0.80	0.67
4. Coquetry	0.79	0.86	0.75	0.80	0.77	0.79
5. Edification	0.62	0.61	0.68	0.65	0.74	0.79
6. Gregariousness	0.63	0.74	0.67	0.78	0.62	0.74
7. Aggression	0.77	0.84	0.85	0.84	0.74	0.86
8. Observation	0.73	0.76	0.83	0.80	0.74	0.68
9. Leniency	0.40	0.46	0.50	0.47	0.58	0.61
10. Appraisal	0.89	0.90	0.87	0.82	0.82	0.65
11. Entertainment	0.84	0.88	0.86	0.86	0.77	0.80
12. Confidentiality	0.82	0.83	0.80	0.86	0.76	0.84
13. Information	0.77	0.85	0.82	0.83	0.82	0.83
14. Restoration	0.71	0.77	0.73	0.75	0.78	0.73
15. Support	0.94	0.92	0.86	0.86	0.91	0.86

Sp=Speaker; Ad=addressee; ISp=intention of speaker; ASp=act of speaker; RAd=reaction of addressee.

The procedure described resulted in eight sets of data for the 180 person-talk situations, namely a set for *person-form*; a set for the *content* of the utterances (expressed on adjective scales); for *intentions*, *acts*, and *reactions* (expressed on verb scales) as perceived from the perspective of the speaker; and for *intentions*, *acts*, and *reactions* as perceived from the perspective of the addressee.

Table 4. Inter-item reliabilities and inter-judge reliabilities (coefficients alpha) for the adjective scales.

Scales	Inter-item reliability	Inter-judge reliability
1. (Un)culture	0.91	0.88
2. (In)stability	0.69	0.79
3. Agreeableness	0.81	0.80
4. Aggression	0.72	0.85
5. Conscientiousnes	0.57	0.80
6. Introversion	0.59	0.85
7. Conservatism	0.32	0.63

Although the distinction between the intention a person has and the act this person performs is of theoretical interest, the distinction turned out to be practically untenable. For both concepts the same operational definition was used (the verb scales). Many subjects had difficulties with the difference between the respective instructions. Therefore, the correlations were computed between the corresponding scales for the intentions and the acts for the perspective of the speaker and that of the addressee. For the two perspectives the correlations, averaged over the 15 scales, were 0.82 and 0.83. For this reason it was decided to add the scores for intentions and acts for each of the 15 scales and separately for the two perspectives. The new variable based on the combination of intention and act is henceforth called 'intentional act'.

In order to be able to identify patterns of person-talk sequences (scenarios) separately for each of the two perspectives, namely for the perspective of (a) the speaker and (b) the addressee, redundancy analyses (cf. Van den Wollenberg, 1977) followed by rotations to the canonical correlation solution were performed on the pertaining two sets of data of which one set characterizes the speaker and the other set characterizes the addressee.

In order to see whether the data-structure is invariant under the two perspectives, the canonical components found under the 'speaker's perspective' were compared with the canonical components found under the 'addressee's perspective'.

RESULTS

The content of the utterances

In De Raad (1985) it was observed that in only 10 per cent of the person-utterances personality descriptive adjectives had been used. Since that finding was not expected, the 180 utterances of the present study were examined on the types of descriptors used. It turned out that in 14 per cent of the utterances adjectives and in 8 per cent nouns

(or metaphors) had been used. In the majority of the cases (78 per cent) the utterances were built around verbs.

The perspective of the speaker

In order to identify the person-talk scenarios under the perspective of the speaker, first a redundancy analysis was performed on the two sets of data respectively describing the speakers' roles in the person-talk situation (the predictors) and the addressees' roles in that situation (the criteria). In redundancy analysis, linear functions (components) from the one set (X) of variables are formed that satisfy the criterion of maximum explained variance in the other set (Y). Redundancy analysis is given preference to canonical correlation analysis, which simply maximizes the correlation between the components, and this correlation does not tell us anything about the communality of the two sets of variables. In redundancy analysis, each successive component is orthogonal to the previous ones. Redundancy is non-symmetric, meaning that the explained variance of the set Y given the set X is not necessarily the same as its reversal: the explained variance of set X given set Y . The situation described is more or less similar to principal component analysis; it has, in fact, been shown that principal component analysis is a special case of redundancy analysis (Van den Wollenberg, 1977).

In the present application, the complete redundancy solution yielded 40.5 per cent explained variance of the criteria given the predictors. The reverse procedure was not followed because only the chronological order is relevant here. The first seven pairs of redundancy components appeared to be of interest in terms of explained variance (see Table 5).

Table 5. Redundancies of criteria, given dimensions of predictors for the two perspectives

	Redundancies for the point of view of	
	Speaker	Addressee
1	13.7	12.8
2	7.7	7.5
3	5.6	5.4
4	3.3	4.6
5	2.4	3.8
6	2.3	2.6
7	1.7	2.5
Total	36.7	39.3

In order to interpret the results the complete two sets of orthogonal components were rotated in such a way as to obtain bi-orthogonality, which means that the components in one set become orthogonal to the components in the other set. The first seven of the resulting canonical components were rotated according to Varimax (Table 6).

Each of the canonical components is supposed to identify a variant of person-talk scenarios. The loadings of the person-form and of the content variables are quite low.

Table 6. Canonical components: perspective of the speaker

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SET I							
<i>Person-form</i>							
First person	-27	-23	-16	24	04	-10	23
Second person	18	07	15	-20	-25	-06	-28
Third person	09	16	01	-04	21	16	05
<i>Content (adjective scales)</i>							
1. (Un)culture	16	-02	10	-09	26	19	-09
2. (In)stability	04	-23	-02	17	-08	-15	-21
3. Agreeableness	25	06	07	-01	-18	-05	49
4. Aggression	00	07	-05	-06	08	26	-11
5. Conscientiousness	-04	05	02	-13	-03	05	08
6. Introversion	-06	07	-10	07	14	-09	-08
7. Conservatism	-04	-03	-04	03	03	-04	14
<i>Speaker's action</i>							
1. Conspiracy	21	20	12	05	10	87	-03
2. Influence	17	27	05	04	07	02	-15
3. Challenge	28	24	10	01	28	06	05
4. Coquetry	13	01	93	-01	-10	11	02
5. Edification	-17	70	-07	22	11	17	18
6. Gregariousness	68	05	11	-07	02	21	41
7. Aggression	-05	07	-18	14	75	29	-03
8. Observation	23	60	16	-23	43	-06	-21
10. Appraisal	25	02	50	-05	-18	06	15
11. Entertainment	85	-01	02	-13	-02	25	-08
12. Confidentiality	-07	03	06	91	14	08	02
13. Information	-03	55	-15	22	-28	22	-05
14. Restoration	02	08	13	24	30	00	06
15. Support	09	40	16	32	-17	-10	-27
SET II							
<i>Addressee's reaction</i>							
1. Conspiracy	27	08	05	18	23	88	05
2. Influence	12	36	14	36	24	-11	24
3. Challenge	29	08	06	05	25	-04	25
4. Coquetry	04	-04	95	08	-01	03	02
5. Edification	-08	83	-09	-09	11	22	02
6. Gregariousness	75	11	05	-03	-10	09	32
7. Aggression	-02	13	-10	10	84	20	01
8. Observation	09	48	10	08	41	11	07
10. Appraisal	12	-01	55	08	03	-02	62
11. Entertainment	88	-15	17	-01	06	12	-12
12. Confidentiality	03	48	10	51	09	-06	-28
13. Information	-03	43	17	28	-26	31	29
14. Restoration	14	31	-02	-07	23	-02	-22
15. Support	-10	-01	-01	88	-01	16	04

Note: Decimal points have been omitted.

But since both the direction of the loadings (plus or minus) and the contrasts between them generally confirm earlier findings, they are used in the interpretation.

The *first* canonical component describes a scenario characterized by mutual enter-

tainment and gregariousness in which second-person (in contrast to first person) utterances are made that refer to the addressee as being agreeable and uncultured. The scenario is labelled as *entertainment*.

The *second* component is characterized by third-person (in contrast to first person) utterances, referring to people as being stable. The action–reaction contiguities are to be described by mutual edification, observation, and information. The variables that are of relevance here point to a scenario to be labelled as *information exchange*.

The *third* component is characterized by second-person utterances and by mutual coquetry and appraisal. This scenario may be labelled as *flirtation*.

The *fourth* component is a scenario characterized by first-person utterances in which the speakers refer to themselves as being unstable, by actions that describe confidentiality, and by reactions that describe support. Prototypical for these qualities is the *therapy situation*.

The *fifth* component is characterized by third-person (in contrast to second person) utterances that refer to persons as being uncultured; these utterances are mainly made to express mutual aggression regarding these persons. The scenario may be labelled as *back-biting*.

The *sixth* component is characterized by third-person utterances that refer to people as being aggressive and uncultured. Both the actions and the reactions are described by conspiracy. This scenario may best be labelled as *gossip*.

The *seventh* component is characterized by first-person (in contrast to second person) utterances in which the speakers refer to themselves as being agreeable. The actions are described by gregariousness and the reactions are described by appraisal. This scenario centres around *self-esteem*.

The perspective of the addressee

Redundancy analysis on the data obtained under the perspective of the addressee yielded 44.9 per cent explained variance of the criteria given the predictors (complete solution). Also in this case the first seven pairs of redundancy components appeared to be of interest in terms of explained variance (see Table 5).

For interpretation purposes the complete two sets of orthogonal components were rotated to bi-orthogonality. Of the resulting set of canonical components only the first seven were rotated according to Varimax (Table 7).

The *first* component obtained under the perspective of the addressee is characterized by first-person utterances in which speakers refer to themselves as being introverted. The utterances are meant to be confidential to the addressee, who in turn gives his/her support. The scenario may be identified as the *therapy situation*.

The *second* component is characterized by utterances referring to persons as being stable. The action–reaction pattern is described by mutual edification. The scenario may be described as one of *information exchange*.

The *third* scenario is characterized by second-person utterances in which the addressees are referred to as being unstable. The utterances are made to influence and to challenge the addressees, who in turn usually show restorative activity. Prototypical for these qualities is the *dominance–submission* relationship.

The *fourth* scenario can be labelled as *entertainment*. The utterances are in the second-person (in contrast to first person) form, and they refer to the addressees as being uncultured.

Table 7. Canonical components: perspective of the addressee

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SET I							
<i>Person-form</i>							
First person	50	00	-18	-15	-01	-17	-01
Second person	-38	-03	68	10	-13	15	-20
Third person	-12	03	-50	05	14	02	21
<i>Content (adjective scales)</i>							
1. (Un)culture	-12	00	-05	26	20	15	32
2. (In)stability	10	-42	21	02	08	00	-06
3. Agreeableness	-19	-03	-07	-13	-08	12	-09
4. Aggression	08	16	-20	13	04	-03	03
5. Conscientiousness	00	05	09	-10	-15	-03	-14
6. Introversion	23	19	-06	-16	-09	23	12
7. Conservatism	00	00	07	09	06	-01	01
<i>Speaker's action</i>							
1. Conspiracy	10	08	05	06	92	09	16
2. Influence	03	33	61	00	00	06	16
3. Challenge	19	40	44	21	-03	38	22
4. Coquetry	01	-09	07	10	-06	90	29
5. Edification	-06	74	02	-21	20	-06	10
6. Gregariousness	-05	-12	03	17	07	-02	-03
7. Aggression	04	05	-02	11	19	05	73
8. Observation	-14	15	30	11	14	13	02
10. Appraisal	-13	00	03	22	-08	34	-13
11. Entertainment	-17	-04	09	89	09	01	02
12. Confidentiality	88	07	-09	-08	21	-01	01
13. Information	15	49	-06	-03	27	02	-04
14. Restoration	24	-10	26	10	-12	-07	31
15. Support	-01	11	38	04	00	13	15
SET II							
<i>Addressee's reaction</i>							
1. Conspiracy	13	11	-05	12	94	03	13
2. Influence	47	31	11	06	-01	-02	15
3. Challenge	20	46	26	21	00	32	37
4. Coquetry	-01	-01	00	00	21	89	-01
5. Edification	-04	88	11	-08	10	-12	-03
6. Gregariousness	-06	-06	04	30	19	11	-01
7. Aggression	00	02	00	06	17	-12	97
8. Observation	07	20	-13	-10	14	01	28
10. Appraisal	12	04	-05	02	01	-03	-06
11. Entertainment	-04	-09	01	95	09	01	11
12. Confidentiality	26	20	14	05	09	19	15
13. Information	15	27	01	-13	24	16	05
14. Restoration	-02	03	97	03	04	-01	01
15. Support	89	-05	-02	-13	08	05	-01

Note: Decimal points have been omitted.

The *fifth* scenario is best described as *gossip*. The utterances are mainly in the third-person form and refer to persons as being uncultured.

The *sixth* scenario is characterized by second-person utterances in which the

addressees are referred to as being introverted, and by actions and reactions that describe coquetry. The scenario may be labelled as *flirtation*.

The *seventh* scenario is characterized by third-person utterances, in which people are referred to as being uncultured, and in which the conversation takes a mutually aggressive form. This scenario may be labelled as *back-biting*.

Invariance of the person-talk scenarios

Changes in variables, particularly the verb scales, did not allow formal tests for comparing the canonical structures found in the present study with those obtained in earlier studies (De Raad, 1985, 1986a). A comparison at face value, taking person-form and the verb scales as marker variables, suggested that, with the exception of the 'flirtation' scenario, all scenarios of the present study can be compared with scenarios found earlier.

In order to investigate the invariance of the canonical structure under the two perspectives maintained in the present study, a rotation to perfectly congruent weights (Ten Berge, 1986) was applied to indicate to what extent components found under one perspective are obtained under the other perspective. A matrix of weights was computed on the basis of the matrix of loadings on the seven canonical components found under the perspective of the speaker, after they were rotated according to Varimax (Table 6). This matrix of weights was applied to the correlation matrix of the variables used for the addressee perspective. The procedure can in fact be considered as a cross-validation of weights in terms of explained variances. Next the reversal of this procedure was carried out. A matrix of weights based on the seven components found under the perspective of the addressee (Table 7) was applied to the correlation matrix of the variables used for the speaker perspective. The results of this procedure are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Variances explained by canonical components under the perspective of the speaker and of the addressee, and in two directions

Perspective of	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Joint amount
Speaker	3.3	3.3	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.3	1.7	18.5
Addressee	3.0	3.1	2.4	2.5	3.0	2.3	2.3	17.8
Addressee	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	17.1
Speaker	2.7	2.9	2.3	3.2	2.9	2.9	2.6	17.9

In the first and third rows of Table 8, the sums of squared loadings for the seven components from the two respective solutions can be found. In the second and fourth rows the corresponding sums of squared loadings indicating the invariance of the original components are to be found. The original components explain a joint amount of variance of 18.5 (50.0 per cent) and 17.1 (46.2 per cent), respectively. In order to answer the question of how much variance can be jointly explained by the respective target components, the amounts of variance were also computed after rotation of these components to the nearest orthogonal positions. The resulting amounts of variance are 17.8 (48.2 per cent) and 17.9 (48.4 per cent), respectively. The conclusion

from this procedure is that the canonical structure resulting from the perspective of the speaker is well replicated in the data obtained under the perspective of the addressee, and vice versa.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study provide support for the earlier findings that everyday conversations about persons is well structured into identifiable patterns of talk called 'person-talk scenarios'. Moreover, the present results show evidence of the invariance of the scenarios under different observational perspectives.

In the Introduction, the present study was said to be performed with a more realistic group of subjects, namely pairs of acquaintances, the members of which had played the respective roles of speaker and addressee in the talk situation. The two different types of description being forwarded from the two interlocutors' perspectives indicate the relativity of what is realistic in this respect: no definite argument can be provided on the basis of which significance can be attached to one perspective over the other. Both perspectives provide for a certain authenticity, each to be understood in its own right.

Because the person-talk situations were reconstructed after the fact, the process of reconstruction may have been biased (see also De Raad, 1985). One possible bias that could have been an influence here is the bias in selection of the talk situations through the selection of the subjects. The group of subjects consisted of students only and it was homogeneous as regards the role relationships between the members of the pairs. Also, the choice of the person-talk situations was restricted by the domain of conjointly experienced events. Yet there is no reason to believe that this selectivity has influenced the replicability of the person-talk scenarios.

A special comment should be made with respect to the relative weight of the person-form variables in the make-up of the scenarios. Particularly under the perspective of the speaker the loadings are of only moderate significance, meaning that the canonical components do not explain much of the variance of the person-form variables. Although the findings confirm earlier interpretations, person-form may eventually turn out not to be the powerful marker variable in everyday conversations about persons as was suggested by De Raad (1985, 1986a).

The content variables again do not play a very articulate role in the scenarios. Two types of explanation for this recurrent finding may be provided. One is that adjectives are hardly used in spontaneous talk about persons, and it might therefore be relatively difficult to code the meaning of the utterances onto adjective scales. The other is that spontaneous utterances about persons should be conceived of as partial judgements. They only provide a judgement with respect to that aspect of a person that gave rise to the utterance in the first place. The use of the standard list of adjective scales presupposes a relatively complete impression of the person.

The most striking aspect of the person-talk scenarios is their distinctive *rhetorical* nature. Talking about persons in everyday life primarily seems to be instrumental to personal or social goals. The content of the utterances can best be understood in function of the conversational purposes. Interestingly, whereas the original focus of this research was on the ways object-persons of everyday talk are portrayed in the utterances, and on the speakers' reasons for this, it turned out that thus far more is

learned about the interlocutors themselves; they tell about themselves through what they say about others and through their styles of acting and reacting. In this respect the naming and labelling of the object-persons in the utterances primarily appear to be instrumental to that effect.

It should be noted that the study of the interlocutors' activities tells about the interlocutors in two respects. One is, of course, that it may tell something about their intentions with the utterances. The other is that it may tell something about their traits, motives, attitudes, and desires. The difference between these two types of information is studied in Van der Meulen and De Raad (1990). In the present paper, the first type of information has not been under discussion. The second type of information, the intentions, is discussed not on the basis of what other people may infer from what a person says, but on the basis of the interlocutors' own accounts.

What comes to the fore throughout this Discussion section is the primacy of the *discourse situation*, conceived of as interlocutors *doing* something to each other, over persons as *topics* of discourse (cf. De Raad, 1986b). It is not so much the behaviours of the object-persons of talk that is at stake, but rather the feelings, attitudes, and opinions of the interlocutors with respect to these behaviours. These feelings, attitudes, and opinions are appropriated as a dramaturgical instrument in order to stage one's own identity, as an everyday problem-solving tactic in order to restore breaches of expectation, or are simply put into standard wordings in order for the interlocutors to have some control over what is disquieting them.

The form that is used by the interlocutors to make themselves intelligible to each other is the short-lived narrative. The interlocutors express their experiences, convey their intentions, undertake some action, and await a reaction. Not only do the statements with respect to the object-persons resound these persons' presumed moral characters, but they also bear witness to the moral view of the narrator. The more the behaviours of the object-persons are understood as indicative of their character or personality, the more persuasive is the argument carried by the narrative. This is particularly the case when the attention is drawn to those aspects of persons which the persons themselves are not fully aware of or are reluctant to show. These persons' actions are then understood to 'betray' or 'reveal' their basic traits, beliefs, values, and/or motives. More research is needed in order to decide whether the vocabulary used in everyday person-talk actually denotes traits, or whether the interlocutor uses '... mischievous verbal snares tempting him into the pitfalls of hypostatization and other perils of "verbal magic"' (Allport and Odbert, 1936).

Since the realm of person-talk lacks a 'natural', apparent framework for understanding its constituent events, it may be fruitful to explore the narratological viewpoint in more detail. This can be done by attending the (classical) works of art such as novel, drama, and film. This scene of art embodies, so to speak, the narratological viewpoint. The scene includes the important ingredient that it relatively freely admits of exhibiting inner experiences. On this scene events such as fighting, lecturing, making love, or murder are incarnated by characters who are usually highly individuated. The styles of acting mark the characters off and most of the salient events accrue to them. Characters in works of art are not only produced for reasons of 'psychological characterization'. They are also produced for 'rhetorical' reasons, for instance, to further the plot, to give authenticity to the plot, to entertain the public, or to mediate human values. In works of art, ideological motives may even push documentary aspects totally into the background. The archetypical template for the more edifying

forms of fictional character description is probably Theophrastus (1946) [see also La Bruyère (1954) and Canetti (1974)].

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RÉSUMÉ

Dans cette recherche, 90 paires de sujets ($N=180$) ont été priés de décrire une situation récente au cours de laquelle ils ont raconté quelque chose au sujet d'une personne. Les paires de sujets se sont ensuite vues assignées arbitrairement à trois conditions qui différaient mutuellement de par la question principale, à savoir si les sujets avaient dit quelque chose sur eux-mêmes, sur leur partenaire ou sur une tierce personne. Chaque situation de conversation était décrite à partir de deux perspectives, c'est-à-dire celle du *locuteur* et celle de l'*allocutaire*. Les descriptions des situations de conversation ont été évaluées séparément sur le contenu des propos sur les personnes et sur le comportement intentionnel des deux interlocuteurs l'un envers l'autre. Une analyse de redondance a été effectuée sur les deux séries de variables, la première étant celle qui décrit le rôle du locuteur dans la situation de discussion, et la seconde celle qui décrit le rôle de l'allocutaire. Les résultats ont subi une rotation à la solution de corrélation canonique. Ceci a livré sept composantes canoniques pour chacune des deux perspectives nommées. Chacune des composantes identifiait un scénario de discussion comme un scénario reflétant un *divertissement mutuel*, un scénario décrivant le *flirt* et un autre des *commérages*. Une comparaison des deux structures canoniques apprit que les scénarios de discussion obtenus sous la perspective du locuteur étaient bien repliqués dans les données obtenues sous la perspective de l'allocutaire et vice-versa.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In dieser Studie wurden 90 Probandenpaare ($N=180$) gebeten, eine neuere Situation zu beschreiben, in welcher sie etwas über eine Person gesagt hatten. Die Probandenpaare wurden per Zufall drei Bedingungen zugeteilt, welche sich bezüglich der Hauptfrage unterschieden, nämlich ob die Probanden etwas über sich selbst, über ihren Partner oder über eine dritte Person erzählt hatten. Jedes Gespräch über Personen wurde aus zwei *Perspektiven* beschrieben, nämlich aus der des *Sprechers* und aus der des *Zuhörers*. Die Beschreibungen der Gesprächssituationen wurden unabhängig voneinander beurteilt im Hinblick auf den Inhalt der Äußerungen über die Personen und im Hinblick auf die intendierten wechselseitigen Aktivitäten der Gesprächspartner. Die Datenanalyse beinhaltete für beide Variablenätze (dem, der die Rolle des Sprechers und dem, der die Rolle des Adressaten in der Gesprächssituation beschrieb) eine Redundanzanalyse mit anschließender Rotation zur kanonischen Korrelationslösung. Für jede der beiden Perspektiven ergab diese Analyse sieben kanonische Komponenten. Jede der Komponenten identifizierte ein Szenario eines Gespräches über Personen, wie z.B. ein *Unterhaltungs*-Szenario, ein *Flirt*-Szenario und ein *Klatsch*-Szenario. Ein Vergleich der zwei kanonischen Strukturen erbrachte, daß sich die in der Perspektive des Sprechers etablierten Szenarios in der Perspektive des Adressaten replizieren ließen und umgekehrt.

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