Abstract

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the lives introverted students on the University of Illinois campus, and in particular offer insight, based in theoretical and personal discussions, as to the motives and preferences underlying their particular personality orientation. The stereotypes surrounding introverts are addressed, as well as how introverts may come to view extraversion as a societal norm, rather than viewing their personality as one of many possible healthy ones. Finally, it may offer some insight into promoting inclusion on campus for a minority group which may be primarily overlooked, and adjusting university policies in order to foster the strength and health of the student's social network, as well as their own well being. This has implications not only within the realm of the introvert population, but also in the search for acceptance of other minority groups, and creating a more inclusive campus environment.

RHET 233Q

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The Strong Silent Type: The Inward Life of the Introvert

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EXT. DAY. *I wait at a bus stop, silent, leaning slightly against the stop shelter. A STRANGER walks up to the stop and waits near ME, and begins talking.*

STRANGER: God, these buses are never on time.

ME: Hm? Oh, yeah. It's like five minutes late. [Standardized acknowledgment, offer a little information.]

STRANGER: I need to get out to DCL, I'm gonna be so late for my class.

ME: CS major? [Clearly he wants to talk, so keep it going.]

STRANGER: Yeah. It's tough, but I think it's worth it. What are you majoring in?

ME: Psych, I'm a junior. Not as bad as CS, but there's a lot of work. I do like it though. [Short responses are bad. Identify with him through the common struggles of the student.]

The bus arrives. STRANGER gets on first. I follow and sit down several seats away. He seems nice enough but I'm not very interested in continuing the conversation.

Introduction

Above is the script I follow when I engage in small talk, a practice I find slightly confusing but apparently necessary in polite social encounters. It is not fake or artificial, unless one considers the speech of an immigrant conversing in his second language to be fake as well. It is the learned speech and responses I use to become a part of a culture and society that favors the outgoing, the gregarious, the assertive. The easy socialization and free breeze of social warmth with relative strangers expected by Western society is not a trait that comes naturally for myself, and represents a skill learned over the course of many years and many unavoidable misunderstandings. Like any speaker of a second language, my attempt to communicate with those who form this dominant

culture may be slightly heavy with idioms, but these idiomatic social practices allow for the

management of impressions and avoidance of the stereotypes sometimes associated with others

like myself. The stereotypes, that we are antisocial, that we are cold, that we are guarded or

arrogant, are too often attached to those who find casual sociability confusing, who seem distant

except to close friends, or desire independence from others.

 I am not antisocial. I am not cold. I am not distant or arrogant. I am an introvert.

Like others who identify with the label, I am socially reserved, fairly quiet in group

settings, find practices like small talk confusing or laborious, and tend not to seek out highly social

events. At large parties I am frequently at a loss; the word "wallflower" comes to mind, but it is

not necessarily the result of pure shyness. With close friends or more-than-casual acquaintances, I

am relaxed, conversational, kind, and funny in my own way. I am not shy about exploring deep

and introspective conversations, about my thoughts or feelings or about mutually shared interests.

A pause in conversation, even a period of complete silence, is not necessarily undesirable; it may

even be enjoyable. And, like other introverts, my preferences and tendencies are frequently

misunderstood by a culture dominated by the rule of constant social interaction, a culture that

seems to take silence personally; in perhaps more jaded terms, one that views purposeless speech

as preferable to none at all. In attempting to illustrate the life of an introverted student at a large

state university such as the University of Illinois, I may fail in remaining objective. But this is how

I, like others who share my particular social orientation, view such an environment, an

embodiment of a culture that favors extraversion, and how we adapt to it in order to find our own

path. By showing this, by expanding the rigid concept of what is normal or desirable behavior, I

may aid understanding of a misunderstood segment of the population, offer ways of resisting the

culturally-imposed demand for extraverted behavior, and provide insight into the problems

introverts may face by nature of being an introvert living in an extravert's world. For those that see themselves reflected in these words, I may also offer the means to arrive at some sort of understanding of who we, as introverts, are.

Understanding the Introvert

In its theoretical form introversion, along with its dimensional counterpart extraversion, is largely a psychological construct that, along with dimensions such as "agreeableness" and "conscientiousness," forms part of the Big Five factor model of personality, a foundational model in personality psychology (Costa & McRae, 1992, as cited in Cuperman & Ickes, 2009). Like other psychological constructs, the actual ramifications of introversion are also frequently misunderstood outside the realms of academic psychology. As part of a factor model of personality, the dimension of extraversion-introversion indicates the tendency of one to focus on one's internal thoughts and feelings, or to develop independence and autonomy from others, whereas the extravert favors or seeks out the company of others (Hills & Argyle, 2001). Essentially, therein lies the key distinction between introverts and extraverts: the introvert will seek stimulation from within, focusing their life inwardly, while the extravert seeks stimulation from without, focusing on that which is outside oneself. In terms of real world correlates, introverts tend to be less socially outgoing, less talkative in social situations, and derive more enjoyment from solitary activities or cultivating an inner life. When socializing, introverts tend to prefer the company of a small number of close friends to large groups, and while small talk often eludes them, conversations concerning deep interests, thoughts, emotions, and the like may be endlessly fascinating, and may carry on passionately (Rauch, 2003).

Extraverts, the counterpart to introverts, are the proverbial social butterfly, assertive and

frequent in their social encounters, seeking out the company of others, and may maintain a large social network with varying degrees of intimacy, but which offers stimulation and enjoyment nonetheless. Left alone, the typical extravert would quickly tire of being alone, not because of a lack of interesting thoughts or activities, but because their basic orientation is toward gaining stimulation from outside sources: it is not enough to be engaged in thought or activity, rather, such acts must be shared with others to offer the same level of satisfaction. As such, extraverts, for whom the company of others is energizing, dominate social situations and encounters; for the introvert, the situations and styles of extraverts may be tiring, unsatisfactory, confusing or even a source of anxiety. In contrast to the introvert, the extravert looks outward for stimulation and satisfaction; the extravert constructs their life through their relationships and social networks. This also represent one of the principle reasons introverts are so frequently misunderstood by others: the introvert, unlike the extravert, constructs a life on a more internal scale. The extravert is comparatively easy for others to understand, since those same people frequently help to make up the extravert's sense of self; a deeply introspective relationship is required to fully understand the introvert. In a sense, the only way to understand an introvert is from within.

In 2003, *The Atlantic* ran an article by author Jonathan Rauch that would become the most widely read piece on the magazine's web site (Stossel, 2006). The article, "Caring for Your Introvert," became a sort of "introvert's manifesto," one of the most notable attempts to define introverts as a minority population and show, to extraverts and introverts alike, that rather than being undesirable, introversion is simply one more side to normality. Rauch not only confronts the stereotypes and misperceptions of introverts, but moves beyond this to describe what it truly means to be introverted, as well as the true reasons behind many behaviors which others may find confusing or off-putting. Much of this focuses on the previously mentioned primary distinction

between introverts and extraverts, namely, the direction in which one expends their mental and emotional effort. Rauch goes a step beyond that, describing the differing sense of reward social interaction brings for each, and characterizes the stimulation preferred by each; the extravert "comes to life" in the presence of others, and derives far greater reward from frequent social interactions than by more introspective activities. By comparison, while introverts are by no means social islands, frequent and extended interaction offers less reward, and indeed may have the opposite effect: following extended periods of socializing, many introverts require time alone with their thoughts, a practice that is "restorative as sleep" to Rauch, in order to recoup the cost of social fatigue. For the introvert, reward is found in introspective behavior that explores deeply within oneself; while this may take place alone, it may also occur with close friends or acquaintances, with whom the introvert can focus inwardly, developing a deeper understanding of oneself and those with whom they are closely connected, and in the process develop their inner life. Such introspection and the reward or sense of fulfillment it brings may be considered one of the hallmarks of introversion.

> Today I watched a thunderstorm like it was a movie. The growing, darkening clouds form the opening credits, as the solar theatre light dims to nothing. The story starts a little slow, just a few drizzling raindrops on the pavement and my window. Finally, the silver screen of clouds erupts in fantastically orchestrated melodrama: the thunder delivers his bold lines, the musical wind crests and falls with the events unfolding, the rain falls out of love with the sky, perfectly on cue. I am alone in this room, sitting in silence next to a window blurring with the rain streaming down the pane, refracting and reduplicating the streetlights outside until the patterns of water and light resemble stained glass. *Sanctuary.* The only sound comes from the rain and my thoughts. I am indescribably content.

Vitally, Rauch's article moves the traditionally theoretical discourse of dimensional models of personality a step forward, and seeks to define introversion and extraversion not simply as traits within a larger population, but as populations themselves. In Rauch's view, introverts form the

minority population to a dominant extraverted Western culture; members of Western societies are typically concerned with promoting the self, seeking "to maintain and enhance the self" (Kunda, 1999), and extraversion, whose central facets include sociability and gregariousness no matter the model and typically includes aspects such as assertiveness (Hills & Argyle, 2001), is particularly suited to making oneself stand apart from the crowd. While other domains of personality psychology, such as agreeableness or neuroticism, would not be obvious foundations for defining a population, introversion is unique in that it creates a particular and recognizable social orientation, not unlike another frequently misunderstood characteristic vying to gain acceptance within the mainstream culture: Rauch draws frequent parallels between the orientations of introversion and homosexuality. At the start of the article, Rauch describes "coming out" to his friends and family as an introvert, and by doing so aligns himself with what he sees as a larger social group; rather than viewing his introversion as setting him apart from society as a whole, he comes to identify as part of a subculture which shares his particular orientation. Additionally, in defining introversion as a personality "orientation," Rauch casts introversion as something innate and ultimately unchangeable within a person, similar to the way in which the prevailing view of homosexuality has shifted from being a "choice of lifestyle" to "sexual orientation." Most importantly, by forming a parallel with a recognizable minority group attempting to sway the conceptions and prejudices of society, Rauch creates a sense of solidarity amongst those who self-identify as introverts; rather than being victims of stereotypes or prejudice, an identity as a minority culture recasts introverts from defying the expectations of society to attempting to create a more inclusive one.

Rauch's article offers one of the first steppingstones out of the theoretical fog that tends to envelop psychological constructs like introversion and extraversion. While it is simple to define introversion and extraversion in abstract terms such as "inwardly focused," or "socially oriented,"

there is a certain disconnect when attempting to transition these broad generalizations to accurate descriptions of actual human beings. Humans are by their nature complex and difficult to describe; personality traits, despite the prevailing ideal that they should represent fixed or static properties of the individual, tend to vary across situations and contexts. To a certain extent, it may never be possible to fully describe the whole of human behavior or an individual's entire personality in terms of dimensions and facets; the labels are clearest only at the extremes of the scale.

> May is a senior at the University of Illinois, an avid pianist, with aims of becoming a school counselor and one day starting a family. On the NEO-PI-R, a standard measure of the Big Five personality domains, she scores a 45 out of 100 on the extraversion-introversion dimension, very close to the average. When I interviewed her, she identified herself as an introvert, stating that she typically prefers to "keep to [herself] and not let anyone into [her] own personal issues and situations." Her independence and comfort with being on her own reflects her identification as an introvert; similarly, she stated her preference to focus on a small, intimate social network rather than a large extended one. Still, her social habits reflected a more extraverted side to her personality. "I love talking to people and meeting new people," she said. "I always feel like it doesn't take me long to get to know someone. I get along with people right away and really well usually. I'm not really afraid to go up to people and talk to them if I need or want to." To her, this social outgoingness typified the UIUC undergraduate, and a defining feature of campus culture. If one were determined to definitively label May, the phrase *ambivert*, one who displays characteristics typical of both introversion and extraversion, could be applied. However, it may simply be the case that May, like many people, embody neither pure introversion nor pure extraversion. Rather, as reflected by her endorsement of the introversion label, her personality tends toward one or the other, and her most typical traits tend to resemble that which she identifies as. However, to limit the discussion to strict labeling would be to ignore a significant part of her personality, and avoid the realization that something as complex and unique as someone's personality is exceedingly difficult to characterize in purely theoretical terms.

Additionally, characterizing an individual using theoretical constructs such as introversion and extraversion carries an inherent difficulty in translating the theory's generalizations into accounts

of individual behavior. Rauch provides an important intermediary in this translation, offering

insights into the preferences and behaviors of introverts using a more personalized account,

revealing possible underlying motives or drives. Importantly, it is an account written from the view

of an introvert, one who has identified his personality orientation as an underlying factor of his

identity and who has endured the positive and negative experiences of being an introvert in an

extravert's world. By offering the internal views of a self-identified introvert, it aids in filling the

real-world gaps left by the theory.

How the Introvert Understands the Culture

Western society openly favors extraversion. Hills and Argyle (2001) write that in "modern

western society […] extraversion, the personality traits that is commonly associated with [the

enjoyment of friendship and happiness] is seen to be socially desirable." Happiness is a close

friend of sociability and outgoingness, which is in turn a sign of confidence and high self-esteem,

the mark of a properly-adjusted and successful individual as determined and stressed by parents,

peers, schoolteachers, colleagues and book-selling "experts" ad infinitum. From the moment our

socialization begins in pre-school or kindergarten, we are evaluated on our social behavior as much

as we are evaluated on spelling and arithmetic. Outgoing and assertive behavior is praised and

given high marks, while reservation is written up in little reports to be sent home to parents, who in

turn are expected to "correct" the problem behavior, or risk the self-esteem of the child. Of course,

such attempts at promoting sociability early on are generally with good intention, particularly

during the formative years of social behavior when personality is less well established; there is a

well-established trend in the personality and developmental psychology literature linking strong

early social attachments with healthy behaviors and attitudes later in life. However, it also

represents the narrow, often unforgiving, perception of what is desirable or appropriate social behavior; namely, that the only acceptable social orientation is one which embraces constant socialization and interaction. If one does not follow this example, they are more likely to be viewed as removed from societal-valued norms, as poorly adjusted, or even depressed. It is not entirely recent, either; Freud described introversion as signaling arrested development (Coan, 1994, as cited in Hills & Argyle, 2001). From early in life, introverts come to understand extraverted behavior as the desirable norm, and behavior reflecting introversion as something to be "fixed."

In addition, it could be argued that many introverts come to understand extraversion as the norm through one of the most powerful socialization mechanisms, popular media. While it may not seem obvious at first, there may exist a parallel with another cultural ideal internalized to the potential distress of those who do not conform, that of standards of physical beauty, and the resulting dissatisfaction in body image. A longitudinal study published in 2002 found that, along with factors such as "perceived pressure to be thin," media exposure and internalization of the slim standard of beauty significantly predicted subsequent body dissatisfaction, which in turn is a risk factor for other pathologies (Stice & Whitenton, 2002). While this study only involved young girls, there is growing evidence for body dissatisfaction among males as well, and the etiological factors, media exposure, internalization, and perceived pressure to conform to the ideal, may well be similar (Thompson et al., 1999, as cited in Stice & Whitenton, 2002). Extraversion, as a desirable social behavior, may come to be understood in the same way as culturally imposed standards of beauty and physical appearance, as both are seen as making oneself socially desirable to others, and both are overrepresented in popular media; introverts who do not understand or realize that their personality represents a particular orientation that is, in fact, not inherently negative may

experience distress similar to those who are concerned their particular body type does not conform to the ideal. There is some evidence that scores on the introversion-extraversion scale are positively correlated to perceptions of normality or peer fit, and the correlation is stronger when judging uniqueness, which is typically viewed favorably within Western culture (Wood, Gosling, & Potter, 2007). It is not surprising that extraverts should be overrepresented in popular media: their outgoing, assertive, socially focused behavior lends itself well to being in the public eye, and they are a natural interest to others. In fictional programs, for example, extraverted characters make for compelling storylines, strong character interactions, and material that is entertaining to the outside observer; characters who might be considered introverts are either relegated to supporting roles or are characterized in stereotypes, such as being unfriendly or distant. Perhaps one of the few introverted role models in popular media comes from an unlikely source, *The Simpsons*; Lisa Simpson, the intelligent, philosophical, artistic and socially reserved daughter exemplifies the introvert. While her reserved and introspective personality frequently sets her apart from her peers and the society of Springfield in general, to those who know her well she is an intelligent, friendly, creative, loving person. In this way Lisa Simpson, as an introvert role model, not only represents the struggles introverted individuals often face in a society dominated by extraverts, but also resists many of the negative stereotypes frequently associated with introverts, offering a new perspective on the nature of introverts to those who do not understand it.

At this point, much of what I have discussed pertains to introverts as a whole and within a general Western culture. Despite this, much of this may be generalized to the University of Illinois specifically; a large, Midwestern state university, it represents Western society fairly well, particularly in promoting extraversion. Campus involvement is encouraged from the start: Quad Day, held at the start of every school year, is a massive display of student clubs and organizations,

an annual event that encourages students to expand their social networks by joining any of the hundreds of RSOs (registered student organizations) represented on the Main Quad. While certainly a positive and popular event, it is an activity which is particularly attractive to extraverted students: meeting new people, talking with numerous representatives of different organizations, and traversing the massive crowds it attracts would be less attractive to the introverted student on campus. In addition, Greek culture plays a significant role in campus life: the University of Illinois supports the largest Greek system of any university ("Fraternity and Sorority Life Statistics," n.d.). Fraternities and sororities are inherently socially-oriented systems, promoting group unity and cohesion, and fostering large, extended social networks and aiming to instill in members assertive leadership qualities that will help them stand out in future situations ("Community Mission and Values," n.d.). The large presence the Greek system has within the campus culture exemplifies the importance placed on extraverted behavior within the university culture.

Still, the University of Illinois is, if nothing else, an incredibly large and diverse campus. While there appears to be an overarching favorability for extraverted behavior, the presence of numerous identifiable subcultures, and the independence of student life, means that there may be more opportunities for introverts to become integral members of the campus than would otherwise appear. To this end, I interviewed a friend of mine, Emma, a Japanese-American undergraduate at the University of Illinois. I was interested in her perspective on campus subcultures, as I had spoken with her before about the notable Asian subculture on campus, and how, despite outreach from this group, she did not feel she strongly identified with it. To her, the university did not represent one unified culture, among undergraduates or otherwise; rather, the size and diversity of the campus meant that, overall, it would be more accurate to describe it as a collection of smaller subcultures. The definition of a typical undergraduate at the university would be a very subjective

one, and would change across subsections of the student population: within certain majors, for example, there may be a perception of what is typical that would vary outside that group. Additionally, she expressed her belief that the wide variety of students on the campus meant that one did not have to necessarily identify with the majority subculture, if there is one; rather, the diversity of the student population meant that inclusion is rarely a problem.

Chris is a junior at the University of Illinois, an intelligent, affable, outgoing and scrupulous twentysomething, a fan of metal music and classical piano. I have know him for several years, and to me he exemplified the typical extravert, and was what I considered a fairly representative UIUC undergraduate, which was one of the principle reasons I chose to interview him. As I began the interview, he expressed a well-developed technical understanding of introversion and extraversion, indicating a familiarity with the theoretical basis underlying each. However, his responses did indicate some misunderstanding of the nature of introverts in real-world terms; despite a favorable view of both traits, his response expressed a slight tendency to view introverts as preferably alone or socially isolated. As the interview progressed, we began to discuss the nature of the campus culture, whether there was an identifiable dominant one, and whether it favored extraversion. Here, Chris was adamant in his belief that the size and diversity of the campus created many opportunities for inclusion, no matter someone's social preferences or inclination. Rather than having a definite student culture, the large campus was more a collection of smaller individual subcultures, creating an environment where most students could find a niche within some group, club, setting or culture. In this way, introverts may not be at a definite disadvantage in coming to identify with the university culture; rather, it is more a matter of finding a subculture one identifies with on campus. Chris admitted, though, that he did feel that extraversion was a more favorable trait on campus, as students are expected to be outgoing and become integral members of the campus in some form. However, he expressed his firm belief that the broad diversity of the campus promotes inclusion among students, and this plurality creates an inclusive atmosphere for students, regardless of introversion or extraversion.

As I left his apartment that night, I thought about what Chris had said concerning the undergraduate culture at UIUC, and I felt his point about the size of the campus creating a diverse environment was a valid and important one. I wondered, though, whether the size and diversity of the campus may also work against the introvert, as the effort in seeking out others one identifies with and the act of forging such social networks through extensively searching for a particular

niche seems to be more in line with the actions of an extravert, while the introvert would be less motivated to conduct such a thorough search. As I walked back to my apartment on Green Street, the warm night air was soaked in voices, and as I reached the heart of campus I passed the familiar sights, the scenes repeated nightly that always seemed to reinforce my view of an extraverted culture that dominates student life: the endlessly stretching lines outside the campus bars, large groups of people on the sidewalk making their way to apartments and house parties, people calling out to and talking with complete strangers. I passed one of the countless groups, and a few of them, drunk either on alcohol or the group or both, said something to me that I didn't quite catch; I smiled in acknowledgment and walked on. Fighting briefly with the sticking lock on my apartment door, I looked back at the snaking lines from the doors of Murphy's and Brothers. There it was, that small but familiar twinge, the inescapably evanescent thought I know to crush before it can take hold: that in some little way, I don't quite belong.

Happy Introverts

The popularly perpetuated link between happiness and extraversion is not entirely unfounded. In the endless effort to quantize, define, and conceptualize various facets of human behavior and emotion, Subjective Well-Being has emerged as an oft-used, if imperfect, measure of an individual's happiness, with domains including measures of life satisfaction and self-esteem (Steel, Schmidt, & Shultz, 2008). When used in conjunction with five-factor personality inventories, the strongest and most consistent trait correlate remains extraversion, with those scoring highly on extraversion frequently scoring high on measures of Subjective Well-Being as well (Pavot, Diener, & Fujita, 1990). However, a 2001 study by Hills & Argyle presents an opposing view, that by identifying the particular factors commonly thought to represent extraversion and happiness and subsequently investigating the correlations between each, "happiness is more closely associated with scale variables that reflect fulfillment and satisfaction with life rather than extraversion" (Hills & Argyle, 2001). The study also deconstructs the relationship further, demonstrating how many of the factors used to measure extraversion are in

fact measures of gregariousness, and that when controlling for this, gregariousness does not significantly predict life satisfaction. Importantly, it also confronts the notion that introversion is necessarily associated with unhappiness or isolation, concluding that the constructs of introversion and extraversion "reflects, rather than determines, how individuals choose to attain life satisfaction and happiness" (Hills & Argyle, 2001).

However, there is an important potential consequence of introversion, particularly among college students: given the role of outgoing, assertive, socially-drive behavior in establishing and maintaining a social network, introverts, who are by their nature less outgoing and less motivated to develop such social networks, may run an increased risk of inadequate social support. While introverts typically prefer more intimate or introspective activities and smaller social networks, this is not to say that social relationships are unimportant to the introvert; indeed, adequate social support appears to be vitally important to the well being of college students. In 2009, the first large scale study of the relationship between social support and mental health among college students was published; in particular, students differing from the majority of other students, such as by race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, are at greater risk of poor social support, which in turn is related to an increased prevalence of mental health disorders, of which depression is by far the most common (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009). It should be noted that this study measured quality of support, and not necessarily frequency or breadth of social contact; the smaller social networks of introverts are not themselves a risk factor for depression, but if the quality of these networks deteriorates, the introverted student may be put at risk for depression or anxiety disorders. Because efforts to improve the quality social support are most effective when targeted toward naturally occurring social networks, one important way of protecting the quality of the introverted student's social network is by addressing the base for much of the student's life, their housing (Hefner &

Eisenberg, 2009). Currently, most incoming students at the University of Illinois are assigned to random housing assignments within the dormitory system with, unless a prior preference has been indicated, a randomly assigned roommate. This method may help or hinder a student's social well being, depending on whether the roommate or residential community in general is one the student may identify with and form a connection with. While extraverts may easily form a connection with any roommate they are paired with, the introverted student may not form such a relationship as readily, and therefore is already at a disadvantage for maintaining a social support network. A possible solution would be to shift the current practice used to assign roommates and floor communities within a dormitory; rather than randomly assignment, basic matching based on mutual interests, preferences, and possibly personality profiles may be an effective alternative. In initial dyadic interactions, such as the beginnings of the relationship between roommates or floormates, similarity in attitudes, and particular, similarities in tendencies toward extraversion and introversion aid smooth interaction, regardless of the actual tendencies of the pair; incompatible pairs experience lower quality interaction (Cuperman & Ickes, 2009). While at first this may sound impractical given the large volume of students entering the university each year, by performing such basic matching within individual dormitories and residence halls, following random assignment to the building itself, is a far more manageable prospect, and may allow the improved development of supportive social networks for all students.

Finally, perhaps the most important factor in developing comfort and happiness as an introvert is simply self-acceptance. Recognizing oneself as being different without being abnormal, as being a part of a larger population with a similar orientation, is vital. As Rauch (2003) notes, by self-identifying and "coming out" as an introvert, he managed to rid himself of negative misconceptions and stereotypes, and has become comfortable in embracing his particular

personality orientation. Recognizing that introversion is simply another side of normality, and that it is simply one of many possible healthy personalities, promotes understanding of introverts on the part of others who many not understand what it means to be introverted, and also frees the introvert from the negative connotations and hurtful misconceptions that may otherwise follow them, or even worse, may come to form part of the introvert's self concept. As with any group whose nature runs counter to the frequently narrow prescriptions of societal ideals, self-acceptance is a necessary step to happiness for members of the group, and acceptance by the larger culture.

> Here I have no story yet, no single revelatory moment for my own self-acceptance. It is a long and difficult path, one I have traveled for some time and expect to travel for some time to come. In writing this, I hope to further my own understanding of myself, of who I am, of why I am. Self-acceptance, I think, is something that many people seek but few truly find. What I can say, is that in those all too brief moments when I forget about what should be, or what could be, and realize what is, in those moments where I can focus on the strength of what is in my life instead of the weight of what is not, those are the small, fragile roots of self-acceptance, seeds of peace that must be harbored and nurtured. In those moments, I am happy.

Conclusion

The introvert is an individual whose personality may often be misunderstood by a culture that tends to favor behavior that runs counter to our nature, and who may face distress in attempting live in a world which finds fault in their personality. Because of the inward focus of the lives of many introverts, it is necessary to gain access to this inner life in order to begin to fully understand introverted individuals; theory alone is not enough to elucidate the behaviors, preferences, drives, motivations and desires of those with this particular personality orientation. In better understanding this group, we may begin to better understand those who we all too often characterize in unforgiving, cold terms, and therein overlook the true nature of these individuals. Additionally, this study may offer some impetus for investigating the real world effects of various

personality constructs, and by escaping the impersonality of theory, better understand the implications of personality psychology in the lives, relationships, aims and well being of individuals, who frequently cannot be fully defined in a set number of domains or facets. In addition, the processes by which the dominant culture may begin to better understand introverts and accept this variation has implications in the processes by which other minority groups and those who do not fit a particular ideal, such as those facing body dissatisfaction issues, seek to gain acceptance and legitimacy within society at large. Finally, while there may be an argument for the diversity of the University of Illinois campus creating inherent pluralism and inclusion, there are certain steps that may be relevant in creating a more inclusive experience and promote strong, supportive social networks, which have important implications for the health and well being of students. A relatively hidden minority group, the shared desires, hopes, difficulties and perceptions of introverted individuals demand an understanding by a culture that frequently insists on extraverted behavior and views introverted behavior as a defect rather than an alternative, in order to promote mutual harmony and well being among both groups, and improve our personal relationships. It may also resist the narrow, unforgiving societal ideals that cause personal distress and dissatisfaction, and by this resistance, foster a search for self-acceptance, and the discovery of some measure of peace and happiness.

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Appendix A
Survey Questions

Section 1

1. Please indicate your year in school.

2. Please indicate your sex.

3. Do you prefer to work on your own or as part of a group?

4. Do you consider yourself a shy person?

5. Do you prefer parties or quiet conversation?

6. Do you prefer the company of many people or a few close friends?

7. Do you find it takes you a while to "warm up" to other people or "come out of your shell?"

8. Do you consider yourself a social person? Explain briefly.

9. Do you tend to maintain a fairly large social network, or a smaller number of close friends/acquaintances?

Section 2

10. Do you enjoy or feel you are good at making small talk? Do you ever feel as though you are acting a part when casually socializing?

11. Considering interactions with individuals you are comfortable with, how would you rate your social skills?

12. In as much or as little detail as you wish, describe your personality. Where would your social orientations rank in a list of your most characteristics traits?

13. After a prolonged period of socializing, do you often feel the need to be alone for a while?

14. Do you find yourself frequently the center of attention? Is this what you prefer?

15. Consider being at a party: do you prefer to meet new people, keep to those you know, or go off on your own? Do you enjoy parties?

Section 3

16. Do you feel large social events are an important aspect of the culture on the UIUC campus?

17. Describe what you believe to be the important aspects or defining features of the undergraduate culture at UIUC.

18. Do you feel like you identify with the campus culture at large? Or is there a specific subculture you feel you identify with more? Why or why not?

19. Do you feel as though your social tendencies or preferences differ from those of other undergraduate students at UIUC?

20. Describe a "normal" UIUC undergrad. Is there one? How closely do you feel you match this description?

21. If you have been on campus for more than a year, think back to your first year. How did you approach integrating yourself into a large state university environment?

22. What role, if any, did Facebook.com or other social networking sites play, in developing or maintaining social relationships during the first year on campus?

23. Briefly describe what role, if any, social networking sites currently play in your social relationships.

Section 4

24. Are you familiar with the concepts of introversion and extraversion? Do you feel there is a particular connotation to each?

25. Given the definitions of extraversion as "the act, state, or habit of being predominantly concerned with and obtaining gratification from what is outside the self" and introversion as "the state of or tendency toward being wholly or predominantly concerned with and interested in one's own mental life," would you identify yourself as either an extravert or an introvert?

26. Do you believe there is a difference between introversion and shyness?

27. Do you feel as though the UIUC environment favors or encourages extraverted students?

28. Do feel there is a particular advantage for either extraverts or introverts at the university? Disadvantages?

29. What are a few of your long-term goals (educational, professional, personal, etc.)?

30. Do you consider yourself artistic? Do you enjoy music and/or art?

31. If you identify as an extravert, briefly describe your perceptions or opinions of students who are socially reserved, prefer not to attend parties, or seem to have a "shell" around them. If you identify as an introvert, do you feel as though you are frequently misunderstood by other students?

Finally, if you choose, please complete the short version of the NEO-PI-R personality test by following the link on the attached survey consent form.

Report your score on the extraversion-introversion dimension **here:**

Appendix B
Interview Questions

Are you familiar with the terms "introversion" and "extraversion?"

Define a "typical" extravert and introvert.

Are introverts naturally shy?

What activities would you associate with introverts and extraverts?

Are there particular negative or positive connotations associated with each term?

Do you feel as though there is a "typical" UIUC undergrad?

Do you think the university favors extraversion? Are there advantages or disadvantages for either

personality orientation?

Is there a defined student culture at UIUC? Or is it just a collection of smaller subcultures?

Does society in general encourage extraverted behavior?

Do you think there are stereotypes associated with introverts, or with extraverts for that matter?

How do you think others perceive introverted people?

Is there a tendency to view introverts as aloof, distant, or arrogant?