Who Blogs?
Understanding the Correlation of Personality and Blogging in Cultural Discussions

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ABSTRACT
Second language (L2) teaching strategies have long evolved with changes in educational technology. In today’s Web 2.0 environment, we strive to ensure students richly participate in computer-mediated communicative (CMC) activities so as to expand students’ target language and/or target culture knowledge. One key element lacking in the literature is the importance of knowing who our students are in relation to what they do in the CMC environment. The Big Five personality inventory has previously helped researchers to identify the association of openness, agreeableness, neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness with social Internet use, particularly highlighting that those who choose to blog are high in extraversion and high in neuroticism. This present study of blogging in a L2 teaching methods course tracked students’ blogging habits and commentary in conjunction with an analysis of their personality types. This mixed-methods study revealed that openness and conscientiousness were the strongest predictors of interaction in CMC cultural discussions. As we engage students in blogging, unveiling the role of personality will help educators to enhance interaction and learning within CMC cultural discussions. Knowing how personality types impact participation can allow for improved course and activity design and enhance active and engaged conversation to the benefit of all.

KEYWORDS
Blogging, Personality, Altruism, CMC, Openness, Conscientiousness, Culture
INTRODUCTION

Web 2.0 technologies empower learners to develop cultural understanding through exploration and discussion in the target and/or the native language. To bring about interactive learning, individuals share their knowledge, their identity and their experiences and make connections through socio-collaborative and interpersonal activities (Tu, Blocher, & Gayle, 2008). In previous decades, interactive, electronic conversations occurred in discussion boards and chat rooms whereby students could interact anonymously, reducing their reluctance to participate (Young, 2003). Such online interactions, at times, engaged students more richly in cultural and L2 discussions when compared to those in the L2 classroom (Kern, 1995). Despite these benefits, students’ lack of ownership over the technological environment (Pena-Shaff, Altman & Stephenson, 2005) and the presence of a teacher-centered approach hampered students’ freedom to explore and construct knowledge based on their own interests (de Bruyn, 2004). Today, blogs support the creative, multi-level interactive approach to learning called on by Fischer and Farris (1999) when they developed their robust, interactive Libra environment. Blogs provide opportunities for students to express themselves openly, to engage in knowledge construction and to participate in cultural, comparative discussions; students can control their blog’s appearance and can express themselves richly, creatively, in a multi-modal fashion. Despite this technology’s openness to creativity, its flexibility and ease of use, something seems to prevent students from fully expressing themselves within the blog arena. To shed some light on this concern, research has recently found that personality can correlate with one’s level of participation in general Internet and blogging activities (e.g., Amichai-Hamburger & Ben-Artzi, 2003; Guadagno, Okdie, & Eno, 2008; Hsu & Lin, 2008) and impact the extent to which one blogs or utilizes tools within this Web 2.0 environment. However, to date, no known research has focused on personality and blogging in an educational environment, much less an L2 or target culture CMC environment. Will personality correlate with an educational blogging activity devoted to cultural discussions? The following literature review examines the teaching of target culture, CMC and blogging research, and the correlation of personality in Internet activities. This overview sets the stage for the focus of this study: To what extent does personality correlate with a student’s level of participation in an educational blogging activity focused on target culture discussion? What impact does assigned blogging have on students’ willingness to express themselves and to support their peers in learning about other cultures? And most importantly, who are these student bloggers and what role, if any, does personality play when blogging about target cultures?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Culture Teaching Strategies

There is no agreement among educators as to how to teach culture, what models, methods or strategies to use, not to mention in what language culture should be taught (Schulz, 2007). A teacher may take on an “oh, by the way” approach and
teach culture as he or she remembers a particular cultural event; a teacher may focus on “Big C” cultural elements, such as literature, art and music, or on “little c” cultural elements, such as going to the local grocery store or understanding a typical school day; a teacher may have students discuss culture in the target language, possibly limiting the depth at which one discusses the material; a teacher may host cultural discussions in the students’ native language, possibly supporting in-depth development of culture knowledge but not L2 learning. Though hard pressed to find the “best way” to teach culture, we know that technological tools have the greatest potential for providing teachers and students with authentic materials and discussion to promote cultural growth and comparisons of target and native cultures. Given the evolution of technology from a purely passive approach to a very active “read/write” approach (Richardson & Mancabelli, 2007), educators now have the potential to take cultural learning to a new level.

Web 2.0, CMC and Blogs

In its early stages, CMC was known for its anonymity, not to mention its modest cyberspace appearance (McKenna & Bargh, 2000). One simply typed a message, and anonymity at times left users wondering with whom they were communicating (Joinson, 2001). Research soon demonstrated that CMC activities have the potential to motivate students to communicate meaningfully in their L2 (Brown, 1994; Hanson-Smith, 2001; Meskill & Ranglova, 2000), alleviate students’ anxiety, promote learner autonomy and cooperative learning among peers, to help students express ideas and opinions (Beauvois, 1992, 1998; Godwin-Jones, 2003; González-Bueno, 1998; Kern, 1995; Shield & Weininger, 1999; Sproull & Kiesler, 1991; Sun, 2009) and promote a learner-centered approach with students capable of controlling more of their learning in the technological arena (Fotos & Browne, 2004; Sun, 2009).

With the introduction of the blog environment, individuals became “contributors of information” (Sun, 2009), typically displaying their writing through text posted in reverse chronological order. The interactive world opened up with readers posting comments to blogs; blog authors would then read the comments, and thus re-visit and reconstruct their own ideas and post additional commentary as desired. In a community where all members are discussing similar topics within their own blogs, such negotiation of meaning is very powerful, very educational, and very interactive (Blevins, 2007). Because blogs support both visual and acoustic expression, links can be made to websites, videos, images and podcasts to provide a rich narrative representation of the self in relation to the topic explored. The use of multiple forms of media helps lead to personal co-construction (Blevins, 2007), provides for diverse perspectives and interpretations and allows for multidirectional communication within the community (Herring, Scheidt, Wright, & Bonus, 2005).

Numerous studies have demonstrated how blogs can support learning. In particular, Baggetun and Wasson (2006) found that blogs support a sense of freedom of expression more so than the classroom environment; blogs support interaction
with individuals of different backgrounds and experiences and also promote active rather than passive learning. Ducate and Lomicka (2005) discovered that the simplicity of blog technologies allows students to focus more on their creative L2 discussions rather than on the technology itself. Ducate and Lomicka (2008) further found that blogging fosters creativity and ownership among students and provides them the opportunity to expand their cultural knowledge beyond the textbook setting. Pinkman and Gakuin (2005) revealed that blogs are useful for encouraging ELT students to communicate in the target language; blogs increase students’ motivation and interest to communicate and thus to blog further after the semester ends. And finally, Sun (2009) demonstrated that students view voice blogging, blogging aurally rather than in writing, as an effective way to learn, self-present, exchange information and network socially with others as a part of the L2 learning process. Though these studies are very supportive of blogging in the education arena, bloggers still vary widely in the amount of comments and ideas offered on theirs and others’ blog sites, suggesting that individual motivation and personality influence participation and interaction within a blog setting (Kaiser, Müller-Seitz, Lopes, & Cunha, 2007). Now that blogging is commonplace in the education arena, it is important to better understand who it is that blogs, the personalities that influence blogging and how personality may interact with educational activities, which in this case are cultural discussion activities.

**Personality and the Internet**

Recently, researchers have more closely examined bloggers themselves using the Five Factor personality test, perhaps the best representative of our basic structure of personality (e.g., Guadagno et al., 2008; John & Srivastava, 1999). The test’s five traits, described in Table 1, are fairly stable across time and culture (Digman, 1989; McCrae & Costa, 1997), though individuals will differ on each of the traits presented (Costa & McCrae, 1992).
Table 1. Summary of traits and characteristics of the Five-Factor personality test (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Dingman, 1990; Guadagno et al., 2008; Hough, 1997; Ogot & Okudan, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>Extent to which triggers stimulate negative emotions in individuals.</td>
<td>High neuroticism: emotionally unstable, quick to anger, easily discouraged or embarrassed, more prone to stress, anxious and insecure. Low neuroticism: calm, composed and emotionally stable, not easily discouraged, difficult to embarrass, less prone to stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>Extent to which one is comfortable interacting with others.</td>
<td>High extraversion: friendly, assertive, sociable, cheerful, enjoys excitement and fun; active. Low extraversion: reserved, sober, less active and interactive with others, appears quiet and displays less enthusiasm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>Extent to which one has interests and the depth to which they are pursued.</td>
<td>High openness: creative, imaginative, enjoys variety and independence; curious, open to exploring. Low openness: prefers the routine, narrower focus, conservative, down to earth, more conformist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>Extent to which one can get along with others.</td>
<td>High agreeableness: trusting, helpful, good-natured, forgiving and honest. Low agreeableness: suspicious, uncooperative, skeptical, guarded, not willing to get involved, hard-headed, superior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>Extent to which one is focused on goals.</td>
<td>High conscientiousness: well-organized, self-motivated and disciplined, reliable, thorough, careful. Low conscientiousness: unprepared, disorganized, careless, low achievement drive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
version, neuroticism, gender and Internet use. Women high in neuroticism and low in extraversion were most likely to socially interact via the Internet. Men high in extraversion were most likely to access leisure services while men high in neuroticism were less likely to use information tools. Amichai-Hamburger, Wainapel, and Fox (2002) found that individuals high in neuroticism or low in extraversion were better able to express themselves in a social networking environment as compared to expression in a non-Internet arena. Amichai-Hamburger and Ben-Artzi (2003) found similar results but further discovered a correlation between neuroticism and loneliness with the latter mediating women’s participation in Internet activities. Hsu and Lin (2008) examined the relationship between blogging and attitude. They found that ease of use, enjoyment and knowledge-sharing (reputation and altruism) positively related to individuals’ attitudes toward blogging. Most relevant to this present study, Guadagno et al. (2008) examined the relationship between the Big Five and blogging. In two separate studies, results indicated that students who were high in extraversion or high in neuroticism were most likely to be bloggers. They additionally found that gender played a role; women who were high neurotics were more likely to blog than were those low in neuroticism. No correlation was found between men, their level of neuroticism and blogging.

Each of these studies reveals a high correlation between personality type and behavior in interactive Internet activities such that personality predicts Internet use. This current study proposes to examine the relationship of blogging and personality as it pertains to a semester-long blogging assignment focused on cultural discussions in a L2 and Web 2.0 teaching methods course. In particular two questions are examined.

Question 1: How will personality traits based on the Five Factor model (neuroticism, openness, extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness) correlate with students’ target culture blogging interactions?

Question 2: What personality traits are more dedicated and participatory in educational blogging activities as related to target culture discussions?

No known research exists on the relationship between personality type and blogging in the educational arena. Therefore, it is to the study of the correlations present between personality and target culture blogging activities that we now turn.

THE STUDY

This study examined 18 students from two separate courses engaged in the study of L2 teaching, Web 2.0 technologies and cultural development at a Midwest American university. Of these students, 4 were male and 14 were female. Additionally, 8 of the students were at the graduate level, 10 at the undergraduate senior level. Varied languages and cultures were represented such that 8 students studied French and focused on French and Quebecois cultures, 1 student studied Japanese and thus focused on the Japanese culture, 1 student studied ESL and focused on the Korean and Chinese cultures, 4 students studied German and focused on German and Austrian cultures, while 4 students studied Spanish and had...
interest in South American, Latin American and Hispanic cultures. Of these 18 students, one student was Austrian and was fluent in English and German. The remaining 17 were American though three had been raised in a bilingual setting, speaking Spanish in the home while speaking English in public school.

The goal of this class was to learn about the use of Web 2.0 technologies in L2 teaching. One semester-long assignment engaged these future teachers in an authentic experience with blogging technologies and target culture discussion. Throughout the semester, students maintained a personal blog, using blogger.com, and discussed an element of their target culture every two weeks based on the “word of the day,” a random word accessed via the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2010) website that served as the driving force in their exploration of their target culture as well as the “jumping off point” to stimulate thought and discussion. Words that emerged during the course of the semester included reconcile, girandole, whipsaw, purfle, acedia and dilatory among others. Using these words, students would conduct research in both native and target languages to find and make a connection with their target culture in whatever personal manner interested them utilizing literature, music, art, current events, study abroad experiences, political and historic events and so on. This approach was taken to encourage students to think more deeply and abstractly about their target culture outside of the stereotypical culture box without any ability to vary from the “word of the day” and without any suggestion as to what cultural aspect might relate to the “word of the day”. In addition to blogging, students were also required to visit a minimum of three classmates’ blogs every two weeks and to provide feedback/commentary (24 comments total per student throughout the semester) on the blog posted. Students, however, could explore more than the minimum number of their classmates’ blogs, provide additional feedback and post to their blogs more than the eight times required. However, because of the presence of so many varied second languages and target cultures, all discussions took place in English, a strategy that supported a culturally comparative process in the classroom community. Additionally, only those enrolled in these courses were allowed access to the blogs, preventing additional posts or comments from outside of the classroom community, thereby controlling the students’ efforts as both author and reviewer. As this was a community of learners, a closed blog environment furthered their ability to bond with each other and to carry on frank conversation, something alluded to in the first example found in the appendix (See Appendix A for two “word of the day” blog examples).

The research was both quantitative and qualitative in focus. From a quantitative perspective, the researcher tracked students to identify how they interacted with each other, very much in line with Fischer’s (2007) analysis of what students do within the CALL environment. The examination of personality in relation to tracking students’ participation supported correlation analysis related to: 1) the number of blog topics posted, 2) the number of comments received on one’s blog, 3) rebuttal comments or the number of comments made by an author to comments received, 4) the number of comments given to others on their blog sites, 5) the number of visual media embedded within each blog, 6) personality type and
7) gender. To examine correlations with personality, students completed the Big Five Personality Test, a behavioral personality test previously used in studies that focused on Internet use and public blogging (e.g., Amichai-Hamburger & Ben-Artzi, 2003; Guadagno et al., 2008; Hsu & Lin, 2008). Statistics included means and standard deviations as well as more sophisticated analyses such as pair-wise comparisons and multivariate analyses to help delineate any significant correlations present. From a qualitative perspective, students participated in retrospective interviews at the end of the semester and responded to questions related to target culture development and blogging. Thus, students’ personal opinions and statements complimented many of the statistical results found in this study.

RESULTS

Quantitative Analyses

Table 2 presents means and standard deviations of personality and gender based on students’ results on the Big Five Personality Test. The higher the scores, the more men or women were associated with a given personality trait. For example, women tended to be more agreeable and conscientious overall than men, while men tended to be more open overall than women. Pair-wise analyses revealed that men and women did not differ significantly in terms of personality alone in this study.

Table 2 - Means and Standard Deviations of Personality and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Trait</th>
<th>Total Sample (n=18)</th>
<th>Males (n=4)</th>
<th>Females (n=14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>53.88</td>
<td>33.25</td>
<td>59.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>28.26</td>
<td>25.91</td>
<td>26.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>55.11</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>51.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>24.04</td>
<td>23.13</td>
<td>24.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>43.16</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>25.24</td>
<td>7.72</td>
<td>26.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>62.22</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>63.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>31.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>42.72</td>
<td>41.75</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>30.07</td>
<td>28.91</td>
<td>31.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 presents means and standard deviations of blogging activity and gender, based on students’ actions within the blogging environment. No significant differences emerged between individual blogging activities and gender.

### Table 3 - Means and Standard Deviations of Blogging Activity and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blogging Activity</th>
<th>Total Sample (n=18)</th>
<th>Males (n=4)</th>
<th>Females (n=14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Blog Posts (8 required)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>9.16</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Comments Received</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>32.05</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>10.91</td>
<td>13.44</td>
<td>9.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Rebuttal Comments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Visual Media Used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>9.27</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>8.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>8.37</td>
<td>14.15</td>
<td>6.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Comments Given on Other’s Blogs (24 required)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>29.11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>13.16</td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>13.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 presents correlations between multiple blogging activities and gender.
Using multivariate statistical analyses, a significant relationship was found between gender and multiple blogging activities. In particular, women who wrote more blog posts about their target cultures received more comments ($r=.63$, $p<0.0001$), used more media ($r=.73$, $p<0.0001$) and offered more comments to others ($r=.54$, $p <0.0016$) than did men and women who posted fewer blog posts about their target cultures. Additionally, women who received more comments on their culture posts used more media ($r=.59$, $p<0.0003$) and gave more comments to others ($r=.65$, $p<0.0001$) as compared to those who received fewer comments. Further, women who received more comments wrote more rebuttal comments on their own culture blogs ($r=.51$, $p<0.0031$) as compared to men. Results also showed that women who wrote more rebuttal comments to others’ comments on their own blogs also used more media ($r=.55$, $p<0.0010$) than did men, but also gave more comments on others’ culture blogs ($r=.63$, $p<0.0001$) than did men or women. A final correlation existed between media used and comments given such that women who used more media to discuss their cultural focus also gave more comments ($r=.46$, $p<0.0077$) as compared to men and women who used less media. There were no significant differences present between men in this study.

Though no general correlations existed between personality and blogging activities in this study, correlations were present between personality and blogging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog Activity x Blog Activity x Gender</th>
<th>Cronbach’s $\alpha$</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blog Posts x Comments Received x Gender</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0001^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Females</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0041^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog Posts x Media Used x Gender Between Females</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0001^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog Posts x Comments Given x Gender Between Females</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0002^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments Received x Media Used x Gender Between Females</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0016^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments Rec. x Comments Given x Gender Between Females</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0233^{*}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments Rec. x Rebuttal Comments x Gender</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0003^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuttal Comments x Media Used x Gender Rebut. Comments x Comments Given x Gender Between Females</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0001^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Used x Comments Given x Gender Between Females</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0011^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments Rec. x Rebuttal Comments x Gender</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0031^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments Rec. x Comments x Gender</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0010^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments Rec. x Rebuttal Comments x Gender</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0001^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments Rec. x Comments x Gender</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0045^{*}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments Rec. x Comments x Gender</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0077^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Used x Comments Given x Gender Between Females</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>$p&lt;0.0292^{*}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*$P<.05$, **$P<.01$
activities with the inclusion of gender (Table 5).

Table 5 - Correlations Between Personality, Blogging Activities and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality x Blogging Activity x Gender</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness x Blog Posts x Gender</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>p&lt;0.0339*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness x Media used x Gender</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>p&lt;0.0446*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among Females</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>p&lt;0.0304*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness x Comments Given x Gen.</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>p&lt;0.0186*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness x Rebuttal Comments x Gender</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>p&lt;0.0416*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01

Multivariate statistical analyses revealed a significant relationship between certain personality traits and blogging activities. Women who were more conscientious wrote more culture blog posts than did men (r=.38, p<0.0339). Conscientiousness also correlated with media used such that women who were more conscientious also used more media to support their culture blogs than did men or women who were less conscientious (r=.36, p<0.0446). Conscientiousness also correlated with comments given such that women who were more conscientious gave more comments to others than did men (r=.41, p<0.0186). In terms of openness and responses to comments received, this too correlated with gender such that women who were more open were more likely to offer rebuttal comments to comments received about their culture topics than were men (r=.36, p<0.0416). There were no significant differences among the men.

Qualitative Analyses

The design of this study was mixed since it was believed that while quantitative information provided evidence of the significant differences present, qualitative data would provide added, immeasurable and even unanticipated insight into the relationship between personality and cultural blogging. Indeed, students’ reactions to blogging about their target cultures, as given in retrospective interviews, provide further evidence of the relationship between personality and blogging. For ease of exposition, quotes are attributed to individual students by pseudonym when an extended example is discussed and by a descriptor related to personality categories (e.g., open or conscientious) when the personality factor is deemed to be relevant. For more general points, no attribution is provided.

First, in relation to receiving feedback and blogging, students commented that the more feedback they received, the more curious and motivated they were to further engage in blogging:

I loved getting comments even if people disagreed or said I could elabo-
rate more; I just loved it because someone cared enough to write. The
exception would be if someone just put “nice post.” But I don’t think
anyone just put that on my blog. When people wrote a few lines, I loved
it even if it was negative. (Mary Ellen, French Graduate Student).

One very open student confirmed that this was indeed motivating for him: “I
had more fun responding to the comments to my blog than to others’ blogs.” De-
spite these encouraging findings, some students were not as open and did not post
comments or richly interact with classmates. One “less than open” female student
observed:

There were a few posts where it appeared that people didn’t exactly try
very hard and I was like, I didn’t want to try and comment on those
because if they weren’t trying, I wasn’t going to. (Linda, Spanish Under-
graduate Student)

Another very open female student simply enjoyed the responses given but did not
feel compelled to comment further: “I didn’t respond to comments on my blog; I
was like, oh, they said that…cool!” Another “less than open” male countered that
if there was nothing to say, there simply was nothing to say:

What led me to comment on a blog? That was the greatest thing imped-
ing me from commenting--If I had nothing to say I mean, other than
‘that’s great,” I’d just rather say nothing at all. (Bob, German Under-
graduate Student)

In one poignant scenario, two students participated in a friendly, yet heated
exchange. Suzanne, a “less than open” female, commented that the anger she felt
towards a male student’s blog post on Bolivian religion and culture made her want
to keep reading and commenting: “If I missed anyone’s blog, I at least wanted
to read Elliott’s. It made me want to keep reading and keep responding.” Elliott,
a very open male student, commented: “Suzanne wrote something on my blog
about the Virgin of Guadalupe, and I got so mad I couldn’t wait to respond.” This
passionate exchange only added to their interpretation of their target cultures.
And yet, despite their healthy banter, such open expression intimidated others: “I
think different personalities kept people from posting like, I mean obviously El-
liott’s blog is too intimidating for me, like it’s way too serious for me…” Others,
however, expressed disappointment that classmates did not openly compel them
to try harder: “I was kind of sad that people didn’t ask me questions--challenge
me!!” Despite this, students’ openness in the blog environment evolved into class-
room discussions:

As far as the impact of blogging on my relationship with my classmates,
I think we’ve always been talkative, but now we’re quite open with each
other, and now I can say I totally disagree with you on that and that type
of thing. (Suzanne, German Undergraduate Student)

Even where openness, as a personality trait or as a manner of expression, led to
feelings of intimidation, passionate anger or satisfaction that others posted to their
site, the overall result was a feeling of knowing and understanding classmates that
much better:

I feel like I know my classmates, because honestly its one thing, wow,
you really honestly care about that; we really cared about what we were blogging about. I’ve had [Spanish] classes with the same people for two years, and I feel like I know people better in this class after one semester than those I’ve had class with for two years. (Linda, Spanish Undergraduate Student)

Conscientiousness also emerged as a primary theme in this study. When asked what led one to blog, one low-conscientious male student admitted: “What led me to comment on a blog? Grades, honestly, led me to comment…but there were blogs that interested me personally, and I wanted to comment on them.” (Bob, German Undergraduate Student). On the other hand, one very conscientious female student stated: “I always try to ask questions on others’ blogs, like make them think about their posts more.” (Suzanne, German Undergraduate Student)

Examining both personality types, one highly open and conscientious female student stood out as a kindred spirit both within the classroom and the blog environment; she was supportive of her classmates, their creativity and expression, and the overall interpersonal learning process:

The blog has the voice of the one and the comments that join it and as long as the blog is voiced in an interesting way, others are going to comment. I loved ALL the individual comments; there’s so much intelligence in this room! The quality of writing attracts me to a blog and there was a lot of that in this class…Even where there was grounds for respectful disagreement, it didn’t seem like it kept people from responding that we disagreed. (Anne, French Graduate Student)

Conscientiousness also reflects thoroughness, and in this study, students spoke of a need to be “thorough” to avoid embarrassment: “I don’t mean to pick on Elliott but I’d do a spell check to make sure it was correct! I didn’t want him to laugh at me!” (Linda, Spanish Undergraduate Student). Alternatively, one low conscientious male student suggested that if he wrote too much text, if he was too thorough, it would discourage others’ interest in his blog:

One thing I always worried about when I typed up my blog was that it was too wordy or too long ‘cause I know that for myself, when I see a blog full of text I tend to just glance over it rather than reading it thoroughly…So, I was afraid that most of the time people would just glance over my stuff. (Bob, German Undergraduate Student)

One student confirmed this; she felt that she simply had nothing to add to “thorough” posts: “I wouldn’t comment if I just didn’t have anything; I know that sometimes it seemed that the blogs were so thorough that it didn’t feel like there was anything that I could add but good job all!” (Christine, Spanish Undergraduate Student)

Comfort also impacted the thoroughness of students’ participation: “I commented more on blogs of people like I think I know better…so, people I didn’t feel like I know well, then I didn’t comment as much.” (Linda, Spanish Undergraduate Student) And yet, despite such feelings of insecurity, all students felt that all feedback was helpful: “Any criticism on our blogs was constructive criticism; none of it was negative.”
Media also correlated with conscientiousness and provided a prominent outlet, in particular for women in this study. One student spoke specifically of how pictures enhanced her cultural expression and allowed her to better express her thoughts and ideas for her peers: “The pictures helped me to express what I meant better. I used images sometimes to not have to write as much, to get my point across faster.” Another spoke of the benefits of images to enhance her comprehension:

I love pictures, they clarify so much--a picture is worth a thousand words; like if I don’t have any idea what the person is talking about, the picture is there. Like the macaroon, I’d never seen one of those and there it was! (Linda, Spanish Undergraduate Student)

However, it was not just images but also the collection of media that benefited comprehension and interest:

The fun thing for me was the mixture of the different kinds of media. It’s all there in one little gateway. You can include images, text, music, video, you name it, it’s just all right there…all of that austere technology that you used to need to know to be on the web is just not a problem anymore. (Charlie, Japanese Undergraduate Student)

DISCUSSION

Cultural and comparative blogging might be more complex than realized when we consider personality in relation to interaction strategies. Results in this study were unlike previous findings (Guadagno et al., 2008) whereby extraversion and/or neuroticism played significant roles in determining who blogs. Instead, only openness and conscientiousness were predictors of students’ active participation in the educational, cultural blogging activity. Additionally, gender played a role; women who more strongly engaged in the activity also interacted more with peers as compared to men and women who were less active bloggers.

The characteristics of openness in individuals include creativity, imagination, variety in interests and curiosity (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Dingman, 1990; Guadagno et al., 2008; Hough, 1997; Ogot & Okudan, 2006), all ideal characteristics for active pursuit of cultural knowledge on a personal level. Therefore, it is not surprising that the more open students were, the more rebuttal comments they wrote in response to comments received to further promote interaction and to explore interests and curiosity about other cultures, \(p<0.0416\). As previously found (Kim, 2008), the more feedback students received, the more curious and motivated they were to further engage in blogging as well. Lawler’s Theory (1994) states that motivation is influenced by expecting particular outcomes; in a blogging environment a writer may expect to receive comments based on his or her posts or rebuttal comments. Examining the correlations between multiple blogging activities and gender, the more one provided rebuttal comments to what others wrote on one’s culture blog, the more one gave comments to others \(p<0.0001\) and the more comments one received \(p<0.0031\). Thus, openness promoted greater interaction and depth in the cultural conversation, further
engaging others to participate. However, openness did not always result in “feel
good” interactions. Intense emotions sometimes encouraged interaction in heated
discussions as in the case of the two students who enthusiastically interacted, al-
beit via anger, about Latin American culture within their blogs. This friendly but
heated banter at times negatively impacted others who may have felt intimidated
by the discussion.

Correlations also emerged between conscientiousness, blog posts, comments
given and gender. Given that the characteristics of conscientiousness include
being well-organized, disciplined, reliable and thorough (Barrick & Mount, 1991;
Dingman, 1990; Guadagno et al., 2008; Hough, 1997; Ogot & Okudan, 2006), it
is not surprising that in an educational setting, the more conscientious students
were, the more they posted to their culture blogs ($p < 0.0339$) and the more they of-
fered feedback to classmates ($p < 0.0186$). Analyses of correlations between mul-
tiple blog activities and gender further demonstrated that the more women posted
to their blogs, the more they gave comments to others ($p < 0.0016$); but also, in
turn, the more comments they gave to others, the more they received in return
($p < 0.0001$). Hsu and Lin (2008) suggest that such knowledge-sharing motivation
has two complementary traits: egoistic and altruistic (Deci, 1975). Though ego-
ism is based on economic and social exchange theory and includes economic re-
ward, in an educational setting, this could come in the form of grade “rewards,” a
concept reinforced by one student who stated that he offered comments to help his
grade rather than to support others. The second, the altruistic motive, assumes that
one is willing to increase the welfare of others minus expectation of personal re-
turns. In education, this would entail interacting with others to help them expand
their knowledge and develop greater self-awareness. This concept was reinforced
by one highly conscientious student who stated that she commented in support of
others’ knowledge development and not just for grades alone.

Blogging is normally a voluntary act of sharing among participants. However,
when blogging is assigned, one hopes that all students conscientiously participate.
In this study, students were required to post comments on three classmates’ blogs
every two weeks. Given this assignment, one would expect a minimum of 24
comments on others’ blogs to meet their course requirement. On average, men
posted 24 comments on others’ blogs whereas women posted, on average, 30.57
comments on others’ blogs. From an egoistic standpoint, on average, students met
the course requirements and grades were duly assigned. However, these numbers
suggest that men did just enough to meet the course requirement; those women
who were more conscientious and open were more willing to help others expand
their culture knowledge and to support their learning. Altruism involves sharing
knowledge with passion and being helpful to others thereby improving the knowl-
edge of all. Thus, an altruistic community would be made up of “kindred spirits,”
individuals who are willing to help others without expecting anything in return
(Hsu & Lin, 2008). Women appeared to be these kindred spirits; they were more
helpful and supportive of fellow classmates. However, in fairness to the male
participants, the small sample size often meant larger standard deviations that
clearly challenged this outcome. Though, on average, males posted 24 comments,
a standard deviation of 10.61 suggests that some were much more helpful overall than others. With women, one can offer the same argument; a standard deviation of 13.79 suggests that one or more women were indeed less helpful than others. Greater sample size in future studies will paint a clearer picture of the role of gender in blogging interactions.

Conscientiousness also reflects thoroughness and in this study, students spoke of a need to be “thorough” to avoid embarrassment. This is not unlike Sun’s (2009) findings whereby students used a dictionary to ensure they used words appropriately in their vocal blogs. Others further countered that writing too much could discourage others from reading their posts. One even suggested that thorough posts led him to feel that there was nothing more to say. Comfort also impacted the thoroughness of students’ participation; students felt more comfortable interacting with peers they knew well compared to those they knew less well. Thus, students’ willingness to communicate and the extent to which they express themselves, when free to do so, can be impacted by numerous factors including the level of comfort one feels with others and the level of comfort one feels with a given topic (MacIntyre, 2007). And yet, despite such feelings of insecurity, all students felt that feedback was essential and helpful.

Blogs are “open systems” (Kim, 2008); they have permeable boundaries with other social software such as Youtube.com and allow one to embed images, movies and sound within them, thereby enhancing one’s expression of cultural understanding. In this study, women who were highly conscientious expressed themselves more often using visual media than did those who were less conscientious ($p<0.0446$). Given that conscientiousness includes being disciplined, reliable and thorough, it appears that highly conscientious women were more prepared, more thorough and reliable using the visual medium to support their cultural reflections than were those who were less conscientious. Indeed, as Guadagno et al. (2008) state, creative, open individuals who are willing to stretch themselves towards new things are more likely to blog, or in the case of this assigned educational activity, to blog more.

Women who used more visual media also gave more comments to others ($p<0.0077$) and wrote more blog posts about their target culture, ($p<0.0001$) compared to those who used less visual media. Pictures and movies helped students to enhance their cultural expression, their comprehension and their interest. Given that a correlation was present between the number of blogs posted and the amount of media used, and that interaction with classmates increased as a result, it makes sense to encourage students to make use of relevant, redundant information using both digital verbal and visual sources to further express themselves and increase interpersonal communication in cultural blogging activities.

**CONCLUSION**

Web 2.0 does not just present content. It surrounds and engages people, brings out personalities, relationships and interactions between learners and establishes a collaborative learning environment. Blogs, in fact, enhance students’ knowledge
by exposing them to diverse perspectives (Ellison & Wu, 2008) and, in this case, to diverse cultures. To understand the extent to which students may participate in blog discussions about target cultures, it is crucial to know more about the personalities and interaction strategies (Tu et al., 2008) present in the blog environment since unveiling such findings "underscores the need for learner training" (Fischer, 2007, p. 409). Thus, despite its sophistication, assuming that students are autonomous and will use the blog and do their blogging to the fullest extent possible within this environment is poor pedagogical strategy. Students still need guidance and encouragement as they work within their blogs, and knowing more about the personality types within a class can help the instructor better prepare that guidance.

This study demonstrated that in a controlled educational setting, students vary in terms of the personality traits that influence participation in discussion about target cultures. Students’ use of the blog in many ways complemented their personalities in unexpected ways such that students who are more open and conscientious are more likely to fully engage in educational blogging activities as compared to those who are less open and conscientious. Though women in this study were more open and conscientious than were men, we must find ways to tap into these personality traits, to enhance every student’s willingness to be creative, imaginative, curious, disciplined, reliable and thorough in their cultural blogging activities.

Evidence revealed that tracking students alone is not enough. That is, “while it clearly shows what students do, it does not explain why they do what they do” (Fischer, 2007, p. 430). This study demonstrated that a combination of interviews and tracking lead to a richer understanding of what students do and why. For example, tracking and interviewing revealed that conversations tended to die when students who were less open or conscientious only posted simple comments such as “good job.” On the other hand, where students dug deeper and challenged classmates through questions or lengthier comments, then conversation about target cultures became richer and more meaningful. Aside from the use of the visual medium embedded within blog posts, students further revealed what would encourage them to participate more in such activities:

The quality of the writing attracted me to the blogs. What led me to comment on a blog? What would lead me to say more? Content, because if it is…something I’m really interested in then I’ll write two or three paragraphs about what I think was cool about that. (Dennis, French Graduate Student)

As such, we must challenge our students to be more open and expressive within any CMC activity. We must encourage them to be more altruistic, to support learning within their community. As L2 teachers, we strive to enhance the depth of interaction in our L2 courses and to engage our L2 students beyond just single question, single answer strategies. We encourage students to dig more deeply into their cognitive structure or schema so as to develop interpersonal skills and to communicate more. Though typically a teacher-led strategy in the L2 classroom, introducing students to the use of an Initiation/Response/Feedback strategy or
IRF (Shrum & Glisan, 2010) can also encourage students to dig more deeply, to express themselves and their interests and to further inspire others’ cultural interests and expression. Through such interaction whereby students move into a more in-depth, question and feedback function of engagement, we can encourage both writers and readers to “push back” to promote interpretive, interpersonal interaction, to take full advantage of post and comment strategies in the blog environment. As one student suggested, greater depth will emerge when feedback is provided rather than not:

One nice thing about blogging is it gives you an opportunity for peer teaching or peer encouragement… If you hook ‘em well from the beginning you can get away with having a longer text! When you are going to spend so many hours with the same people, it’s a good thing to feel like you know a little bit more than just the surface; it’s nice to know people with a little depth in class, it’s just nice. (Laura, French Graduate Student)

Because increased use of digital media correlated with conscientiousness, increased blogging and interaction in this study, it makes sense to encourage students to use media more to enhance their expression. In this study, though not required to use media, it was clear that the more one used media, the more comments one received, but also the more willing and conscientious one was to interact with others. Media seemed to have a charm of its own and given that today’s student is very much engaged in digital activities, it only makes sense to encourage them to express themselves in whatever manner possible in the blog arena to promote engagement and learning. Utilizing a “youthful” term, we must strive to engage students in “mosh-pit pedagogy” (Trier, 2007). A “mosh-pit” is that large area in front of the stage at a rock concert where the audience dances at will, in any style, in reaction to the mood of the music. In the spirit of a “mosh-pit,” we can encourage students to blog utilizing relevant, authentic digital materials to support the topic at hand and express themselves in an infinite number of ways.

The mechanisms that can explain the relationship between blogging and personality in an educational environment are simply that openness and conscientiousness are two personality types that appear to complement educational activities; these are the personalities that supported greater blogging, interaction and participation. Certainly, other personalities are present, but for those who are willing to stretch themselves, openness and conscientiousness are the personality types we would expect to see in an educational environment. Relationships are such that the more open one is, the more engaged one is in the experience of blogging, and the more one supports an interactive, interpersonal communication process. Therefore, we must encourage those who are less open to trust the process and to extend themselves beyond their comfort zone. For those who are more open, we must encourage them to reach out and support classmates in an altruistic manner.

In terms of conscientiousness, it is vital to hold students to a schedule that can promote participation in the activity and help them to stay on task. This particular
study had such a stringent schedule: “I liked the structure of the activity; having one week to write our blog and then another to respond seemed reasonable…I liked having a structured date and the guideline helped me.” Though all completed the assignment as required, those willing to move beyond the requirements of the schedule and to stretch themselves and their classmates did so. As such, the more we know about our students, the more we know who it is who is blogging, and the more we can encourage them to expand themselves and others, the more we can find new ways to optimize blogging activities focused on enhancing target culture knowledge. In short, “tracking student behavior…can play a central role in determining the optimal balance of structured versus unstructured learning” (Fischer, 2007, p. 417).

A limitation of this study is the small sample size used and the presence of only four male subjects, both of which make gender comparisons tentative at best. Though participants were engaged in two identical semester-long course activities, the question remains: Was this a unique outcome or would similar results be found from a larger sample of students? Would we see greater or fewer differences between men and women if more males participated in such a study? The size of correlations found, even in this small population, makes studies with larger sample sizes promising. As an additional limitation, the target language used was English since the content of the students’ blogs was cultural in focus and supported cultural comparisons. Would similar results be found in terms of personality and blogging when students blog in a second language? Not surprisingly, educators are calling for such an understanding of our L2 students’ personalities and how they may influence interaction with classmates:

Teachers should become familiar with the personality types of their students, their levels of anxiety about speaking the L2 with others, and how they interact with peers and other L2 speakers. This information can then be used to structure experiences for learners within a classroom designed to be a community of learners, whereby hopefully learners have the support that they need to make the decision to communicate. (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 257).

Further research is needed to see what role personality plays when blogging in the L2 and the native language. It is important to examine the relationships present to fully understand how to further students’ online discussions and knowledge construction. Though technology is constantly evolving, we must continue to pursue such questions to gain greater knowledge of the relationship between personality, L2 language teaching, culture, and Web 2.0 technologies.

REFERENCES


LINDA CAROL JONES & AMALIE HOLLAND


Example 1:

*Written by Mary Ellen, French Graduate Student*

(All names changed to secure privacy.)

**BLOG POST:**

Diaphonous – Transparent; revealing; finely wrought. Three things that describe France and its people very well.

When traveling in France or when talking with one of my French friends here in town, one of the things I appreciate most is never having to guess what they think or how they feel. They are the most transparent people I know. They are what they are, they think what they think, and they’re a lot like…well, Chenonceau in the fog. France and its people are wonderful to behold, but woe to anyone who underestimates their strength and substance.

The French are probably emotionally healthier than many other cultures because they don’t let things fester. If they’re mad at you, they’ll tell you. They just come right out with it—in conversation, in politics in traffic—and they don’t play mind games. There’s something great about that. By not reining in their personal opinions (by not “going easy” on you), they’re in fact paying you a compliment. They’re assuming that you can take it…that you can engage them as an equal…that you can hang onto your convictions and defend them like a bulldog. (Better make that a French bulldog, though…)

How to apply all this to our culture? We think of ourselves as outspoken, but I think we still tend to beat around the bush a little too much. Transparency is a good thing. It wins respect. And respect wins friends.

**COMMENTS:**

**Anne** (French graduate student) - It is rather refreshing when people are straightforward. I think in the US, we are outspoken but in a very different way. We tend to pile on the snark and the quips about things that don’t relate directly to us, but we shy away from honesty with each other far too often. I agree with you that the French seem to be far more frank; consider the origin of that word, after all. 😊

**Charlie** (Japanese undergraduate student) - Now that you mention this…I met
a couple of French people while in Japan, on separate occasions, and although I
didn’t notice anything in particular with the guy, I did notice a difference in frank-
ness with the girl. She was quite direct in stating her thoughts and her inquiries of
my opinions. I chalked it up to her personality rather than a trait that is noted as
being typically French. Although, I do feel that her thoughts were rather transpar-
ent at times. Which was a nice change of pace, since I was getting a bit tired of
people tip-toeing around the hard subjects and having so many layers that I could
hardly tell if I was correctly guessing what was on their mind or not.

Mary Ellen (author of this post) - You’re right. It is definitely a nice change of
pace to deal with someone on an equal footing of “frank-ness”.

Suzanne (German undergraduate) - This is a great take on diaphanous. I think
Americans have become too P.C. in some ways. However, is such directness
always constructive? At what point do people stop listening and start getting de-
defensive? I know I always get in trouble for open mouth, insert foot, but I have yet
do decide if the problem is with the context or the content. Are Americans willing
to listen to the truth if it’s whispered as opposed to yelled? Or is truth in general
not a polite topic of conversation?

Mary Ellen (author of this post) - Suzanne, one of the things I said about our class
is this “frankness”…especially between you and Elliott. As for your question,
“at what point do people stop listening and start getting defensive,” I think the
underlying issue is this: when the stakes are high, do we stop speaking the truth
just because people don’t like it?

Linda (Spanish undergraduate) - Very interesting! I have never traveled to
France, nor have I had any specific interaction with the French (to my knowledge,
anyway), and without your post I never would have thought about this. Ameri-
cans certainly “beat around the bush” too much. I don’t know if it is because we
are afraid of hurting people’s feelings, or if it’s a deeper issue. I know that I ap-
preciate it when people are more straightforward with me.

Amanda (Spanish graduate) - I guess this is why some people think the French
are rude. Just because you say the truth doesn’t mean that you are rude!
Example 2

Written By Rebecca, Undergraduate ESL Student

BLOG POST:

High Stakes Players – Conquian (the “word of the day” for this week) is a card game from which all rummy games originate. Rules of the game are adeptly described. It seems that the game might be frustrating and tiring to me because of the tedious rules and tactics used to play. Additionally, each game holds high stakes even though the fate of the game hangs mainly on the placement of a few cards in the deck rather than the overall skill of the players.

In Korea getting into college at a good school is based on the outcome of a high stakes test called the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT). Like Conquian, the CSAT can be both frustrating and tiring because of the high stakes it holds for their future and the difficulty of scoring well. For this reason, most Korean students take their education extremely seriously. Throughout their three years of high school, it is common (and expected) for Korean students to study more than fifteen hours each day. Parents often hire tutors and night schools are frequented by tired students trying to learn enough to score highly. While most Americans would say that the CSAT is ‘just a test’, Koreans know that getting into college (and even securing a comfortable life) depends mainly on how they score on their one chance with the CSAT.

Suzanne (German undergraduate) - After reading this article I felt very happy, that I am not Korean: There is so much pressure on these high school kids and everything they do can change their whole future. I am not sure if all kids at this age are aware of the importance of this test, I am not sure if I would have been so dedicated to study so hard! Do they have a study guide? Or do the parents also hire tutors to study with them for the test?

Rebecca (author of this blog) - Yeah, I think they generally study together in night school. Sometimes they are private institutions, and sometimes parents come and chaperon the students so that they can study longer. I think that if a family can afford a tutor, then they definitely do so. As for a study guide, I’m not sure about that. The YouTube video I watched shows a pile of books and notebooks that the students throw away after the test, and she mentioned that many younger students will take many of the resources that they think will help them.

Dennis (French graduate) - This actually sounds similar to the French system of “le bac,” which are the tests they take in different subject areas to get into university. They are basically like a super AP test. As an American, what do you think about this system? Do you think that something like this would be preferable to
Rebecca (author of this blog) - Dennis – I feel like the Korean system is too hard and the American system may be too easy. Hearing from some of my Korean friends about their endless days and nights of studying just for 1 test has made me feel like this system has forgotten that high school students still have a life outside of their studies. However, I also feel like many Americans fall into the gutter of laziness because most of our education is handed to us.

Laura (French graduate) - Well, I was going to say that this resembles the French system, but that point has already been made. I can’t imagine being in an educational system that prepares you for one major test that determines the course of your life. I know I didn’t take the ACT as seriously as I maybe should have, but I knew I wanted to go to [this university], and that I was pretty much a shoe-in. I thought it was a really interesting analogy between the card game and taking this test. I see how the students practice taking the exam and all the time they spend preparing for it relates to learning how to play a game, becoming familiar with the rules, and eventually developing strategies and tricks to beat better performers.