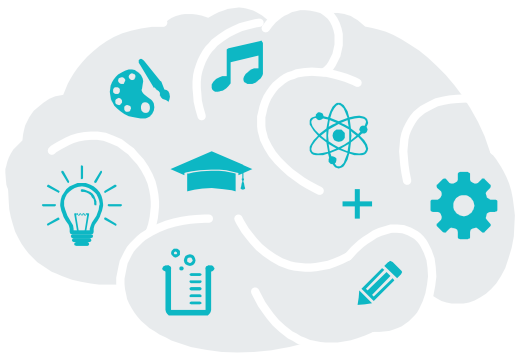


# Uncertainty Reduction Theory





## Goal

To explain how uncertainty in initial encounters between strangers is reduced by communication. To predict communication behavior of strangers in initial encounters.

## About

The **Uncertainty Reduction Theory** also known as **Initial Interaction Theory**, developed in 1975 by Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese, is a communication theory from the post-positivist tradition. It is one of the only communication theories that specifically looks into the initial interaction between people prior to the actual communication process.

## What are the theory's boundaries conditions?

- ▶ Boundaries Condition have to do with scope.
- ▶ Only dealing with uncertainty reduction, when people meet for the first the time.
- ▶ The whole theory deals with first encounters.

## Social Scientific. An example of Laws Theory

- ▶ So they want to predict.
- ▶ What kind of behaviors people use to reduce the uncertainty in first encounters.

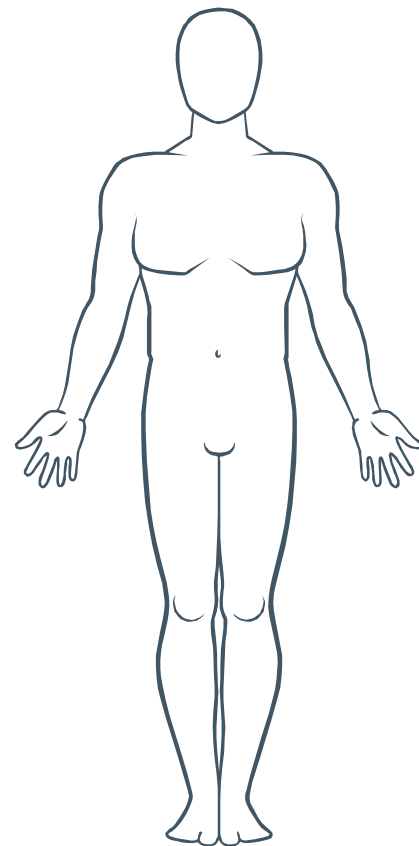
## There are 2 concepts for this theory

### **Cognition Uncertainty**

The thoughts we have in regard when we meet someone for the first time.  
Example: You go on a blind date; You think: i wonder what he looks like? would he be handsome?

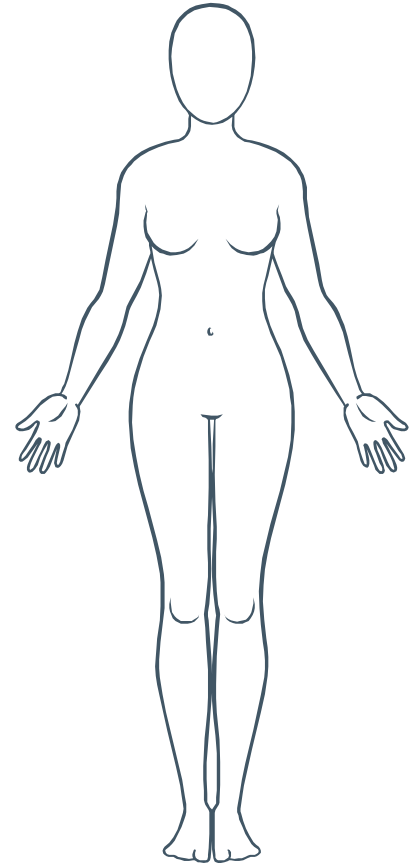
### **Behavioral Uncertainty**

Uncertainty about the appropriate behavior of the first encounter.  
Example: On the blind date, what should we do? should we hug? should i touch his shoulder?



## Related Concepts

- ▶ Communication variables.
- ▶ Goal of the theory, we reduce our uncertainty with the use of communication.
- ▶ What are some communication variables that we use to reduce our uncertainty on first time encounters?



## Related Concepts



### **Verbal Output**

How much we talk.  
How much talking is going on?

### **Non verbal Warmth**

Non-verbal behaviors that portray warmth.

### **Information Seeking**

Question asking, you may ask a lot of questions.

## Related Concepts



### **Self Disclosure**

Talking about yourself.

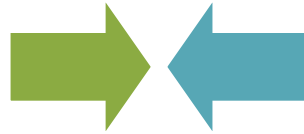
### **Reciprocity of Self Disclosure**

When we meet the intimacy level that is happening in the initial encounter.

### **Similarity**

Perception of similarity, how similar the other person is to us or how un-similar they are.

## Related Concepts



### Liking

How much we like the other person, attraction, without having any words between us. could be that we like them more or less as we talk more.

### Assumption sod U.R.T.

In interpersonal settings people experience uncertainty.



## Related Concepts

When we meet someone for the first time, we experience uncertainty.

Uncertainty is aversive resulting in cognitive tension, or stress.  
Causing us anxiety and making us wonder what is going to happen.

In initial encounters strangers are mainly concerned in reducing the uncertainty and increasing predictability.  
This assumption has been criticized in evaluating the theory.

### **Interpersonal communication is developmental.**

Goes through phases. Talks about meeting people for the first time and then going on about your business.

# Interpersonal communication is developmental

## Entry Phase

- ▶ First time meeting.
- ▶ Guided by social norms.
- ▶ Very short.

## Personal Phase

- Communication becomes more relax. As we try to get to know each other better.
- Self Disclosure.
  - Reciprocity.
  - Question Asking..

## Exit Phase

- When you are leaving.
- To determine whether or not you will see the person again or not.

# Uncertainty Reduction Theory Axioms

## Axiom 1

- ▶ Verbal Communication goes up.
- ▶ Uncertainty goes down.
- ▶ Its a negative relationship.

Example: the more we talk to someone, the less uncertainty we feel.

ON the contrary: the less uncertain we feel, the more comfortable we feel, the more we're gonna talk.

## Axiom 2

- ▶ Non verbal affiliate expressiveness or non verbal warmth goes up. Uncertainty goes down.
- ▶ Creating a negative relationship.

Example: the more we express ourselves as warm & friendly individuals, non verbally, smiling, keeping eye contact, the less uncertain we'll be.

# Uncertainty Reduction Theory Axioms

## Axiom 3

- ▶ Uncertainty goes up. Information seeking goes up. Positive relationship.
- ▶ **Predicts:** that the more uncertain we are, the more questions we're going to ask.
- ▶ **Reverse:** the less uncertain we are the less questions we're going to ask.

## Axiom 4

- ▶ Uncertainty goes up. Intimacy level of communication content goes down. Negative relationship. Self Disclosure variable.
- ▶ **Predicts:** the more uncertain we are, the less intimate our information.
- ▶ When we are uncertain, we tend to stick to the topics of, name, age, major.

# Uncertainty Reduction Theory Axioms

## Axiom 5

- ▶ Uncertainty goes up. Reciprocity goes up. Positive relationship.
- ▶ **Predicts:** the more uncertain we are the more reciprocal, we'll be.
- ▶ When we are very uncertain we tend to share information on the same level.

Example: Name gets name. Major gets major. Age gets age. Long time relationships.

## Axiom 6

- ▶ Similarity goes up. Uncertainty goes down. Negative relationship.
- ▶ **Prediction:** The more similar we perceive to be with the other person, the less uncertain we are.

Example: when you first encounter, you both find out you both know someone. Causing you to be less uncertain.

# Uncertainty Reduction Theory Axioms

## Axiom 7

- ▶ Uncertainty goes up. Liking goes down. Negative relationship.
- ▶ **Predicts:** the more uncertain we are, the less we like someone.
- ▶ **Reverse:** the more we like someone, the less unlearnt we are.





# THANKS!

**Any questions?**

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