

Friendship Modelling

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Research Motivation

I have been pretty confused by the **social landscape** I've faced in the past few months. Multiple breakdowns after repeatedly let down made me realize there might be either something wrong with my mindset or my expectations: I either have been too trusting (or, inappropriately transparent in a way that adds weights) to people, or made myself unintelligible to others.

Attempting to come up with explanation power towards how and why things are so around me, I tried to categorize what all my relationship outcomes are all about. I know there exist models like OCEAN and VIA apart from the popularized MBTI test for personality evaluation; but instead I want to investigate on the quality outcomes of friendships I've had – so that I can improve the quality of my social decisions thereafter.

For readers researched in psychology and human relationships, feel free to recommend some readings/ comment on my views!

Multivariate Model Proposed

Inspired by way regression models were introduced by my FINA 4303 (Fixed Income Securities) course – with models like *Nelson-Siegel* and *four-factor Fed Funds Rate prediction* models introduced, I attempted to summarize my social encounters and build myself a theory similarly:

- Intuitively, I am trying to break down each encounter I had with regression analysis – with unknowns
 - X_1: Conversation Frequency
= $f_1(\text{Cost of disposable time, interest, importance})$
 - X_2: Conversation Dominance
= $|\text{Actual Dominance} - 50\%|$
 - X_3: Intensity of information exchange
= $f_2(\text{Min}(\text{IQ}_1, \text{IQ}_2))$
 - X_4: Thoughts Compatibility
[Relevant to personality (MBTI) and background (upbringing, career), say K-means clustering w/ PCA]
 - X_5: Perceived Intimacy and understanding
[Heavier factor load as time passes]
- Relationship quality Q could be a function of above:
$$Q = g(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5)$$

The more data points (= more people) I infer, the more conscious I am about my ideal type and population statistics.

→ In this way, I can assign “fair” values of friendship quality to everyone I met – and make better decisions accordingly.

As time passes, I imagine I’ll have more information power to determine the factor loads for each variable and regress well.

Self-evaluation with Model Variables

For now, I can only analyse how conscious I am to each variable, and what I could improve – below presents a summary:

w.r.t. X_1 (Conversation frequency),

- I believe if people are really interested in how I think, they will take the time to read me.
→ I keep a semi-open structure to my documentations, so that people can always know more if they wish. Somehow, the contingent structure seems to work.
- X_1 can be proxied by the conversation time each time you chat with someone: long convo time implies good chemistry –both sides are not tired of each other.

- A darker thought: X_1 is partly associated with social status. ppl proxy achievement with salary – so, some people quantify their “successes” with salary and the company they work for.

w.r.t. X_2 (Conversation Dominance),

I decided to maintain conversations with gradient descend approach. Initially I try to initiate “encouraging” signals to begin conversations (alike to setting some nodes of a neural network to non-zero), and adjust signals according to external responses.

- End results: Conversations either die out, or keep flowing at a decent speed at equilibrium.
- However with recent experiences, I learnt that I might be too keen sometimes on sharing and too impulsive in trusting strangers – technically speaking, my step sizes of gradient descend might be too huge at times that I overshoot things.

Maybe just, people don't like abrupt changes?

w.r.t. X_3 (Intensity of information exchange),

- I am aware that what I write is only as good as the info I take in and digest – I thrive on info transparency.
- IQ proxies one's ability to process info and relate concepts; openness might hint info exchange power.
- I used to question whether it is moral to take a pinch of elitism toward things as doing so could make me overly arrogant. With my encounters however, I believe elitism should be enforced to a reasonable extent:

One's selectiveness in friends should be

- (1) upper-bounded by the fact that one will have their head in the clouds if they are overly idealistic and ignore reality, and
- (2) lower-bounded by the amount of information and inference one can process concurrently.

w.r.t. X_4 (Thoughts Compatibility)

As a "TP" type people in MBTI,

- I find myself most comfortable with fellow "TP" types – From my childhood experience of being excessively judged without being understood, I strongly dislike the notion of judging without gathering adequate information. (and I work/ write without boundaries – too dynamic haha)
 - I keep thoughts spontaneous – and that I tend to think and reflect about things deeply whenever I have time.
 - Aware of my blind spots in thoughts, I have tried to remain open in the mindsets I have and accept different views; however I learnt that sometimes I should stand firm.

w.r.t. X_5 (Perceived Intimacy and understanding)

It is only now that I realize, I haven't really paid attention to so.

- Maybe most of my past friendships were short (<1y) that, I neglect the fact that humans are homeostatic; but I got a bit too focused on the present moment in a way I overestimate.
After all, people come and people go.
- The people I want to be with should be capable to play my devil's advocate in friendly, non-judgemental manners.
- However, I am not aware enough of the fact that most humans are judgemental and will present biased views. I am still learning how to properly defend myself under constant attacks without sounding too bitter.
- I am committed to people that are kind-hearted and (try to) understand me well. But if I got broken over time, I won't trust the person anymore permanently and will become hostile.
 - However, I haven't enforced this rigidly enough.
- My excessive demand for intimacy and being understood has led me in suboptimal friendship choices and relationship downfalls. **I simply craved for the sense, not actual quality.**
 - The solution is probably not to keep meeting more people (supply side) – instead I should reduce craves (demand side) by concentrating on constructiveness [further working out my mind and technical skills] and diverting more time to self.
 - I should be more aware in the belief that, over time the talent density around me keeps increasing and I will more likely get understood – I should up my delayed gratification and get accustomed to not being understood.

Minimalism Advocate

As an introvert, I wish to settle in a small group of highly trustworthy and intelligent minds so that I don't need to go through the ups and downs of the bond-breaking and forming process – I've experienced enough.

If most data points in the regression model implies perceived overvaluation compared to my actual thoughts, I should just declutter my way out.

I wrote about trimming my social circle going forward in my semester reflections (#15). It's probably high time to raise standards – from this point onward, I hope I'll choose people whom I get close with more wisely and minimize replacements – by, simply exercising judgements well.

If people are not seeing I as close as I considered them, I should get moving: Focus on people that truly matter.