

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CERTAIN
PERSONALITY FACTORS AND SELF-DISCLOSURE
IN A FEMALE POPULATION

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ABSTRACT

Eighty female college students were given the 16-PF and the Jourard 40-item Self-Disclosure Questionnaire in an attempt to find a relationship between the scores on the Q_{IV} -scale (Independence-subduedness) and level of self-disclosure. The hypothesis proposed that there would be a statistically significant relationship between the two. Earlier findings were significant with dependence of a situational type, and level of self-disclosure. This study also used dependency but as a personality factor and compared it with level of self-disclosure. No statistically significant relationship was found using analysis of variance as the test statistic.

Another scale on the 16-PF, was found to be related with level of self-disclosure. Analysis of variance revealed a significant difference between Scale E (humble-ness - assertive-ness) and level of self-disclosure. Further statistical analysis suggested a relationship, namely, that a more assertive person was more likely to be self-disclosing.

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Self-disclosure as a concept, basically describes the degree to which one allows himself, his hopes, his problems and insecurities to be known by others. It could also be described as a degree of vulnerability a person will allow himself in relationships with others. It involves some degree of trust in others. This concept has been studied now for over fifteen years. While work in the area has been extensive, at this point there is little understanding of self-disclosure as it relates to personality type. Why some self-disclosure is necessary in almost any human relationship, or why it even exists is not known, nor do we know what, if any, personal needs are filled by disclosing to others, or receiving same from others. Perhaps self-disclosure to others makes one feel more emotionally close, more accepted as a unique human being. On the other hand, receiving self-disclosure from others may fill our need to be needed.

In the area of research with personality variables and self-disclosure, there is a lack of consistency in design, subject pools, and measures used. Results of the studies, where significant or not, do not lend themselves to generalizations about self-disclosive behavior among individuals. Therefore, no clear picture of self-disclosive behavior, its causes and antecedents, has emerged.

Sidney M. Jourard, who popularized the concept of self-disclosure, and devised most of the measurement scales, did much of the early work in this area. He believed that the more self-disclosing one was, the more healthy the personality. As early as 1958, Jourard did a study on

self-disclosure patterns of individuals (Jourard, 1958). He designed a self-disclosure questionnaire to measure reported self-disclosure of the individual to four target persons: mother, father, best male friend, and best female friend. In this study, black and white college students, and student nurses were rated as to their degree, amount, and depth of self-disclosure to the target persons. He found that males disclose more to the mother, best male friend, father and best female friend in that order. Females disclosed more to mother, best female friend, best male friend and least to father. Thirdly, he found that whites disclose more than blacks overall, and that females disclosed more than males.

Subsequent work by Jourard investigated the relationship between self-disclosure and several other factors. He found that a person who was more highly self-disclosive was better liked by others (Jourard, 1959). In an investigation of self-disclosure and nationality, Jourard found significant differences in degree of self-disclosure among Americans, British, and Puerto Ricans, namely that Americans disclosed more than British or Puerto Ricans (Jourard, 1961a). When he correlated self-disclosure with age, he found that self-disclosure to parents decreases with age (Jourard, 1961b), and increases correspondingly to the spouse. In a study of the differences in self-disclosure among religious denominations, Jourard (1961c) found that rates of self-disclosure varied among denominations in males (Jewish males disclosed more than Protestants and Catholics) but not in females. These are only a small sample of his work in the area.

In Jourard's later writings, he is quite critical of society (Jourard, 1964). He felt that the roles imposed upon members of our society, especially the sex roles, were unhealthy since they prevented higher degrees of self-disclosure, particularly among men. Most researchers since then have limited themselves to the amount of self-disclosure found normally among members of society, and have not made moral judgements, or drawn such broad conclusions in an areas so little understood. Self-disclosure as a gauge of mental health would seem plausible, but extremely high rates in the wrong situation might be unhealthy.

During the period of Jourard's work, and since that time, self-disclosure has been used as a variable in studies of family patterns, cultural differences, degree of mental health, the reciprocity rule, social approval, time factors, intimacy, and personality factors, to name a few (Cozby, 1973).

Research has been conducted with several personality inventories in an attempt to associate levels of self-disclosure with various personality traits.

Using femininity scales (the MMPI-MF and the Guilford-Zimmerman Femininity Scale), Taylor, Altman, and Frankfurt (as cited by Cozby, 1973) found a positive relationship between self-disclosure and high femininity scores among 100 college males, aged 17-20. Swensen (cited by Cozby, 1973) also found a positive relationship between self-disclosure and femininity using the Guilford-Zimmerman. Contradicting

this were the results of Petersen & Breglio (1968a) and Petersen & Higbee (1969). Both later studies resulted in no significant difference using the Gough femininity scale with males and females.

Swensen (as cited by Cozby, 1973) using the Maudsley Personality Inventory found a positive correlation between level of self-disclosure and extraversion, on the extraversion-intraversion scale. Two studies using the Petersen Personality Inventory, Petersen & Breglio (1968b), and Petersen & Higbee (1969), found no significant relationship between extraversion and level of self-disclosure.

Using the Edwards Personal Preference Scale, Taylor, Altman and Frankfurt (Cozby, 1973) found a positive correlation between higher levels of self-disclosure and the affiliation, succorance, nurturance and heterosexuality scales. Swensen (Cozby, 1973) reported a positive relationship between higher levels of self-disclosure and the social interest, sociability, ascendance, and the social boldness scales of the Guilford-Zimmerman. Frankfurt (Cozby, 1973) found no significant correlation between higher levels of self-disclosure and the sociability, thoughtfulness, and personal relations scales.

Although the relationship between higher levels of self-disclosure and independence-dependence has not been explored, the results of some studies using dependence, as a situational factor, have indicated that there might be a positive relationship between higher levels of self-disclosure and dependence.

Altman and Haythorn (1965) completed a study of dyad dependency and

self-disclosure. Nine dyads were formed using naval servicemen with some matched personality characteristics. In the experimental condition, the dyads were completely isolated in a room equipped for all personal needs. External stimuli, i.e., books, other persons, televisions, etc., were very limited. A control group was also isolated, but allowed breaks outside, and access to external stimuli. Subjects were isolated for ten days. It was found that the experimental group was more highly self-disclosing in amount and depth (degree of intimacy) than control group dyads.

In a study of the effects of counseling styles on a client population, Kounin, Polansky, Biddle, Coburn and Fenn (1956) varied authoritarian type counselors, and more relation conscious counselors (egalitarian) and found that the more powerful appearing counselor (authoritarian) elicited less information than the egalitarian. The results seemed interpretable by the present writer in two ways. The first tended to counter the supposition that dependency and self-disclosure were positively related. The authoritarian counselor might have encouraged a more dependent relationship, and if this were the case, the lower level of self-disclosure might be a result of the dependence. In another sense, the egalitarian counselor may have encouraged less of a role type dependency and more of a natural dependency (less obligatory) due to his accepting attitude. This might explain the higher rate of self-disclosure, and lend support to a positive relationship between the two.

One last study which did lend support to a positive relationship

was conducted by Slobin, Miller & Porter (1968) in an analysis of social relations and communication in a business organization. The results exhibited a significantly higher level of self-disclosure among members to a superior, less to a subordinate.

In this study, dependency was treated as a personality factor. The variables tested were self-disclosure, as measured by the Jourard 40-item Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (Jourard, 1971), and independence-subduedness, as measured by the Q_{IV} -scale of the 16-PF Personality Inventory (Manual of the 16-PF, 1972). The previously cited studies treated dependency as a situational factor, and not as a personality factor. The authors inferred that what was found to be significant with situational dependence could be true of dependence in all cases. The reason for this study was to determine the validity of their inference.

The Jourard 40-item Self-Disclosure Questionnaire has been widely used. It provides a measure of depth and amount of self-disclosure to five target persons: father, mother, best male friend, best female friend, and spouse. (The spouse category was deleted for this study). The items are divided into six areas of personal concern; interests, personality, attitudes and emotions, body and money. (See Appendix.)

The 16-PF is also widely used in research as a measure of personality factors. In addition to the main factors, there are four secondary factors which can be assessed. One of these was used as the experimental measure. The test is relatively well-liked by researchers since it does not require a forced choice answer from subjects, of either yes or no,

to any question. It provides a middle of the road choice. Subjects seem to like this, and claim they do not feel they are being "put into a box", a common complaint of personality inventories. The 16-PF has been found to have a high retest reliability with time intervals tested between 2 and 48 months. The content validity has also been found to be high, with thousands of questions having been tried before the final item selections were made. The scale's 16 factors have had ten factor analyses done before the final form was chosen. The inventory is easily administered, takes a relatively short time for subjects to complete and is not difficult to score.

Self-disclosure has been defined as "the act of revealing personal information to others."¹ In the study, the higher self-disclosers were those subjects with a higher score on the self-disclosure questionnaire.

Dependency was defined as a low Standard Ten (Sten) score on the Q_{1V}-scale (below 5 on a continuum of 1 to 10) on the personality inventory. The description of a person with a low score was one who was more subdued in affect, less likely to make decisions on his own, and more likely to depend on others for answers to personal questions and direction. A hypothesis confirming outcome depended upon finding a statistically significant relationship between self-disclosure and dependence.

METHOD

Eighty female college students were used in this study with an age range of 18-25. Females were used because of sex-differences found in levels of self-disclosure in previous research (Jourard, 1971). After scoring, twelve sets of scores were deemed unsuitable for use due to either lack of co-operation (tests were not completed), or deceased parents (self-disclosure scores were useless). Sixty-eight scores were used for the analysis.

The subjects had the measures given to them as a group whenever possible. Difficulty in obtaining subjects made it impossible to always have enough subjects, at one time, for a group-sized administration. Sometimes an individual (40% of the time) was given the measure, and at other times, groups of two or three (60% of the time). All directions were given in a standardized manner. The subjects were given directions for completing the measures, and then asked to place their names on both answer sheets.

The design resulted in six cells of possible outcomes, Dependent-High S.D., -Medium S.D. and -Low S.D.; Independent-High S.D., -Medium S.D., and -Low S.D. (See Table 2). Analysis of variance was used to analyze the data. The least significant differences test was used as a post hoc analysis on significant variables since orderedness of data was not an issue here.

The 16-PF's remaining scales were also statistically compared with self-disclosure scores, since no other research in self-disclosure

was found that had used this personality inventory.

RESULTS

The results are summarized in Table 1. No statistical significance was found with the experimental measure (independence-dependence) and level of self-disclosure ($F=2.94$), implying that no significant relationship exists between independence and level of self-disclosure as defined in the study.

Of the other personality factors measured, only one was found significant when compared with self-disclosure. This was Scale E, humbleness-assertiveness ($F=3.237$, $p > .05$), suggesting statistical significance between assertiveness and self-disclosure.

A post hoc test, the least significant differences test, was computed for the results of Scale E. This test is the preferred one with groups, with a significant F. This is more conservative than a t-test because one uses the mean square within groups as the denominator. The results of the test were significant for two of the three group differences tested, the LO-HI ($t=2.383$, $p > .05$), and the MED-HI ($t=1.874$, $p > .05$). No significance was found between the LO-MED groups. This result suggested the presence of a relationship between the two variables, namely, that a more assertive person is more likely to be highly self-disclosing.

DISCUSSION

There would seem to be little connection between dependence as a personality factor, as measured by the 16-PF, and level of self-disclosure. This result suggests distinct differences in types of dependence, namely that a situational dependence may not elicit the same set of behaviors as personality dependence. Therefore, one must be cautious in assuming that the effects are transferable.

The significance of the E-scale (assertiveness-humbleness) seems unusual in the sense that it was the only scale which was significantly related to levels of self-disclosure. This result implies that a more assertive person is more likely to be more highly self-disclosive. This is a factor in self-disclosive behaviour which has not been discovered before in research.

Post hoc tests lent support to this finding. In comparisons of significant differences between mean scores of assertiveness for the three levels of self-disclosure (HI,MED,LO), two of the groups were found to be significantly different. These were the HI-LO and HI-MED. No significant difference was found between the MED-LO groups. This fact might be explained by the possibility that the 16-PF scores were not discriminating enough on the lower end of the E-scale.

The lack of significance in comparisons of other personality factors and the 16-PF and self-disclosure may have been due in part to the conditions under which the study was done. A problem was finding a

standard subject pool, and administering the measure to relatively standard size groups consistently. This was impossible at the time the study was conducted and this random administration did not help the control of variables.

Also the narrowing down of the subject pool to young single females was necessary to control extraneous age and sex related variables. A restricted subject pool is a frequent factor in research in personality variables, and the results are often not appropriate for generalization to other segments of the population not treated in the study.

Perhaps self-disclosure is a socially learned behavior, and does not depend upon personality-type in the usual sense at all. Any individual's self-disclosure might depend upon family background and the communication patterns established therein. It may also depend upon learned role responses to particular situational stimuli, as one might learn to disclose to his physician, supervisor, etc. Disclosure to friends may simply depend upon the amount of time spend with the other, or the degree of respect one had to the other. If assertiveness is a learned behavior, this might also explain the statistical significance found between that and level of self-disclosure in the experiment.

It might be desirable to study persons who exhibit different levels of self-disclosure. Information might be obtained from childhood histories, families, and personal and ethnic values which may help in

understanding self-disclosive behavior. If this behavior is considered appropriate and conducive to optimum personality function, one might wish to assess stability or degree of self-worth found in families of more highly self-disclosive persons, and compare with the same from persons and families where level of self-disclosure was lower.

TABLE 1
STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE
OF FACTORS

FACTOR	s^2_W	s^2_B	F
A	3.126	6.16	1.97
B	2.925	.95	.325
C	3.271	1.96	.603
E	3.64	11.78	3.237*
F	4.72	10.77	2.28
G	2.85	4.82	1.47
H	3.01	3.65	1.21
I	5.66	7.6	1.343
L	3.97	2.77	.701
M	3.62	5.78	.91
N	3.74	5.79	1.55
O	3.49	4.43	.135
Q(1)	2.74	1.68	.612
Q(2)	2.93	2.32	.792
Q(3)	3.46	.071	.021
Q(4)	2.85	.077	.271
Q(IV)	5.31	15.61	2.94

(* α = .05)

TABLE 2

MEANS OF INDEPENDENCE (5.0-10.0) - SUBDUEDNESS (0.0-5.0)
FOR EACH SELF DISCLOSING GROUP

	L	M	H
SCALE Q _{IV}	5.46	6.04	6.558
SCALE E	5.286	5.571	6.62

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FOOTNOTES

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APPENDIX

JOURARD'S 40-ITEM SELF-DISCLOSURE QUESTIONNAIRE

Who Knows You?

Introduction

People differ in the extent to which they let other people know them. We are seeking to investigate what people tell others about themselves.

Naturally, the things that are true about your personality, your feelings, your problems, hopes and actions will change as you get on with living. Therefore, the idea that other people have about you will be out of date from time to time. What was true about you last week or last year may no longer be true. When you see people after a lapse of time, and you want them to know you as you are now, you tell them about yourself so that they will have a more up-to-date picture of you. If you don't want them to know, you don't tell them, even if they ask you personal questions.

Some of the things about yourself you will regard as more personal and private than others; people differ widely in what they consider appropriate to let others know, and what they consider is nobody's business but their own.

Instructions

Below there is a list of topics that pertain to you. You have also been given a special answer sheet. We want you to indicate on the answer sheet the degree to which you have let each of several people in your life know this information about you.

You have a reasonably good idea of how much about yourself you have let each of the people know about you in the past, and how current and up-to-date their knowledge about you is at the present.

Therefore, will you indicate on the answer sheet the extent to which each of the other persons now knows the pertinent facts about you. In other words, how complete, up-to-date, and accurate is their picture of you as you are now. Use the following scale to indicate your answers:

- 0: The other person doesn't know me in this respect right now, because I haven't told him, or let him know in any other ways.

- 1: The other person has a general idea of how I am now, of what is true in this respect, but his idea of me is not complete, or up-to-date.
- 2: The other person fully knows me as I now am in this respect, because I have talked about this topic to him fully in the recent past, and things have not changed. I have kept him fully informed about this aspect of me.
- X: Write in an X instead of an O for those items which you would not confide to the person even if that person asked you to reveal the information.

1. What you dislike about your overall appearance.
2. The things about your appearance that you like most, or are proudest of.
3. Your chief health concern, worry, or problem, at the present time.
4. Your favorite spare-time hobbies or interests.
5. Your food dislikes at present.
6. Your religious activity at present—whether or not you go to church; which one; how often.
7. Your personal religious views.
8. Your favorite reading materials—kinds of magazines, books, or papers you usually read.
9. What particularly annoys you most about your closest friend of the opposite sex or (if married) your spouse.
10. Whether or not you have sex problems, and the nature of these problems, if any.
11. An accurate knowledge of your sex life up to the present—e.g., the names of your sex partners in the past and present, if any; your ways of getting sexual gratification.
12. Things about your own personality that worry you or annoy you.
13. The chief pressures and strains in your daily work.
14. Things about the future that you worry about at present.
15. What you are most sensitive about.
16. What you feel the guiltiest about, or most ashamed of in your past.
17. Your views about what is acceptable sex morality for people to follow.

18. The kinds of music you enjoy listening to the most.
19. The subjects you did not, or do not like at school.
20. Whether or not you do anything special to maintain or improve your appearance, e.g., diet, exercise, etc.
21. The kind of behavior in others that most annoys you, or makes you furious.
22. The characteristics of your father that you do not like, or did not like.
23. Characteristics of your mother that you do not like, or did not like.
24. Your most frequent daydream—what you daydream about most.
25. The feelings you have the most trouble controlling, e.g., worry, depression, anger, jealousy, etc.
26. The biggest disappointment that you have had in your life.
27. How you feel about your choice of life work.
28. What you regard as your chief handicaps to doing a better job in your work or studies.
29. Your views on the segregation of whites and Negroes.
30. Your thoughts and feelings about other religious groups than your own.
31. Your strongest ambition at the present time.
32. Whether or not you have planned some major decision in the near future, e.g., a new job, break engagement, get married, divorce, buy something big.
33. Your favorite jokes—the kind of jokes you like to hear.
34. Whether or not you have savings; if so, the amount.
35. The possessions you are proudest of, and take greatest care of, e.g., your car, or musical instrument, or furniture, etc.
36. How you usually sleep, e.g., well, or poorly, or with help of drugs.
37. Your favorite television programs.
38. Your favorite comics.
39. The groups or clubs or organizations you belong to, e.g., fraternity, lodge, bridge club, YMCA, professional organizations, etc.
40. The beverages you do not like to drink, e.g., coffee, tea, coke, beer, liquor, etc., and your preferred beverages.

Answer Sheet

Male or Female: _____ Father's Income: (Approx.) _____
 Birthdate: _____ Age: _____
 Month Day Year
 Marital Status: S M D W Mother's Occupation: _____
 Home Town: _____ Mother's Education: _____
 Father's Occupation: _____ Your Major Course: _____
 Father's Education: _____ Your Year in College: _____

	Mother	Father	Male Friend	Female Friend		Mother	Father	Male Friend	Female Friend	
1.						21.				
2.						22.				
3.						23.				
4.						24.				
5.						25.				
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18.						38.				
19.						39.				
20.						40.				