Three Aspects of Self-Disclosure as They Relate to Quality of Adjustment

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Summary: Subjects completed two measures of actual self-disclosure (one for intimacy of self-presentation and one for inwardness of self-presentation) and a self-report of past self-disclosure, and California Psychological Inventory. For both sexes the two measures of actual disclosure correlated positively but neither instrument related positively to the self-report measure. Females disclosed more than males on both measures of actual disclosure. Quadratic, inverted-U relationships were hypothesized for the self-disclosure and CPI scales, but by and large they were not found. Linear associations were noted, the major ones being a positive pattern of correlations between the inwardness of actual disclosure and measures of flexible autonomy, responsibility and socialization for the males, a negative set of relations between the intimacy of actual disclosure and scales indicative of good interpersonal adjustment for the females, and a positive relationship between the self-report measure and scales indicative of social poise, extraversion and socialization for both sexes.

A number of studies have appeared in the past several years testing some form of Jourard's (1959, 1964, 1971) hypothesis that authentic self-disclosure to at least one significant other person is a necessary prerequisite for healthy emotional adjustment. En masse, these studies yield a confusing and contradictory picture, to the extent that some workers (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Chaikin & Derlega, 1974; Cozby, 1973) have advocated the abandonment of an individual-differences approach to self-disclosure in favor of construing it as a dependent variable affected by situations.

One hypothesis which could account for the mixed results obtained on the disclosure-adjustment question is that the relation is really a curvilinear one, with a mid-range of self-disclosure associated with the highest levels of healthy functioning, and with poorer adjustment associated with either (non-normative) extreme of self-disclosure (Cozby, 1973; Jourard, 1964). This could explain the fact that positive, negative, and zero-order linear relations have all been reported. The present study tests this hypothesis by examining quadratic as well as linear analyses.

The previous research resists summarization because of the diversity of measures used for both self-disclosure and adjustment. The most widely-used individual-difference measure of self-disclosure has been some variant of Jourard's Self-Disclosure Questionnaire, or JSDQ (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958), a self-report, retrospective instrument by which subjects rate to what extent they have made their true experience known in various areas to each of the target persons: mother, father, best male friend, best female friend, and spouse. Ratings are summed for each target person, and these sums are added for a total score. Results with this instrument have tended to confirm the original hypothesis. Predicted positive relations with total JSDQ scores have been reported for ratings of interpersonal competence (Halverson & Shore, 1969; Jourard, 1961b), for Rorschach productivity (Jourard, 1961a), and for quality of self-concept (Shapiro, 1951). Predicted negative relationships were reported with neurotic diagnosis (May, 1968), and authoritarianism (Halverson & Shore, 1969). Predicted relationships have been found between scores for certain target persons (but not total scores) and general adjustment as measured by the MMPI (Gorman, 1975), quality of self-concept (Jourard, 1971), and (in female subjects only) a measure of emotional stability (Pederson & Highbee, 1969). Null relations have been reported for total JSDQ scores and an index of self-esteem (Fitzgerald, 1963), and neuroticism (Stanley & Bownes, 1966). One result in the direction con-

trary to expectation has been reported: between scores of a group of males for the "best male friend" target person, and a measure of emotional stability (Pederson & Highbee, 1969).

A number of workers, dissatisfied with the uncertain validity of the JSDQ, have turned to behavioral ratings of actual, current self-disclosure. Various measures of self-disclosure have been used, and in different settings, with the results reported in terms of level of adjustment equally variant. In individual psychotherapy, higher levels of "self-exploration" and "experiencing" (constructs conceptually related to self-disclosure) have been found to be associated with greater therapeutic benefit (Truax & Carkhuff, 1967; Rogers, Gendlin, Kiesler, & Truax, 1967). In encounter groups, ranked depth of self-presentation was found to be negatively related to self-esteem (Doyne, 1974) while in a different set of groups, proportion of self-references in speech was found to be unrelated to the same measure of self-esteem (MacDaniels, 1973). When being interviewed by an experimenter, proportion of self-references was inversely related to positiveness of transactional style (Bath & Daly, 1972), and negatively (for a group of prisoners) to adjustment as measured by the MMPI scales: *Pd, Sc, Pa, Pt,* and *Ma* (Persons & Marks, 1970). Ranked depth of essays written for an experimenter was found to relate positively to measures of neuroticism and emotional instability for male subjects, but no relationship was found for females (Pederson & Breglio, 1968). Responses to the Greene Self-Disclosure Sentence Blank (described below) completed for an experimenter related positively to the acceptance of death (Jourard, 1971), but bore no relation to Rokeach dogmatism (Greene, 1971).

Three needs must be addressed before more light can be shed on the question of the relation between actual, behavioral disclosure and healthy functioning. These have to do with the measures chosen for self-disclosure, situational factors (e.g., kind of relationship), and the measures chosen for adjustment.

Surveying attempts to study current behavioral self-disclosure, one is impressed that the most objective (and hence reliable) measures are often the least appropriate conceptually (e.g., number of words uttered per unit time), while the most conceptually pertinent measures are often so sketchily defined as to threaten low levels of inter-rater reliability across studies (e.g., depth of disclosure). The construct "self-disclosure" is conceptually complex (Chelune, 1975; Pearce & Sharp, 1973). Two aspects which seem important to distinguish in examining relation to healthy functioning are the intimacy of the content conveyed (how private and/or self-pejorative it is) and the inwardness of perspective adopted (to what extent is the speaker disclosing personal experience as opposed to impersonal observations?). The present study employs two measures of actual disclosure stressing the conceptually pertinent but somewhat distinct dimensions of intimacy of content, and experiential inwardness. Both measures are defined by explicit manuals, and have been found to be adequately reliable and valid. The Greene Self-Disclosure Sentence Blank (SDSB) is a 20-stem instrument with instructions which request sentence-completions which express personally important feelings (Greene, 1971; Jourard, 1971). Responses are scored for the presumed centrality of the material in the subject's life, and for its risk-value. Hypothetical completions of the stem "yesterday I ..." representing lower to higher scores could be: 1. saw somebody, 2. saw my mother, 3. realized I love my mother, 4. realized I hate my mother. This scale is taken as rating the intimacy of self-presentation. It operationalizes in part the common assumption that a revelation of "risky" material, which carries a greater possible chance for social disapproval, represents a "deeper" level of self-disclosure. Adequately high levels of inter-rater reliability, test-retest reliability, and criterion and construct validity have been reported (Carpenter, 1977; Epting, Suchman & Barker, 1978; Jourard, 1971).

A Personal Approach Scale (PAS) has been developed by Carpenter (1977) to rate free-response descriptions of persons.

Scores are assigned in terms of the inwardness of perspective reflected by the statement, and by its degree of distinctiveness and differentiation. In the current version of the scale, a score of 0 is assigned to statements which contain no inward or experiential frame of reference (e.g., I drive a truck; I am usually nice to people). Statements which do contain an inward frame of reference are scored from 1 to 4 depending upon the distinctiveness and elaboration conveyed, (e.g., level 1: "I'm sentimental and have a warm heart"; level 2: "I am interested in improving myself"; level 3: "I desire attention and want to be loved"; level 4: "I want to love and be loved but I'm afraid I will be hurt again").[1] This instrument is used here to assess the *inwardness* of self-presentation, or the willingness to adopt an internal, experiential stance of self-depiction, to a certain degree of elaboration. It should not be confused with other instruments, such as Rotter's IE Scale, which measure attitudinal constructs presumably orthogonal to this issue of self-perspective. Pearson coefficients of inter-rater reliability for this scale have varied from .82 to .90, and concurrent validity has been demonstrated (White, Note 1). Of these two measures of actual disclosure, clearly *intimacy* is dependent upon the pejorativeness and "privacy" of self-presentation, whereas *inwardness* is not.

The situation in which observed-disclosure has been elicited may have differed in the extent to which subjects construed them as appropriate arenas for self-disclosure. Self-disclosure in a normatively appropriate context has been found to relate differently to level of adjustment than disclosure in a normatively inappropriate context (Chaikin & Derlega, 1974; Chaikin, Derlega, Bayman, & Shaw, 1975; Cozby, 1972; Truax, Altman, & Wittmer, 1973). The situation most often studied — disclosing to an experimenter — is studied again here. In an effort to insure that subjects perceived it as an appropriate setting for self-disclosure, responses were collected anonymously from subjects in writing, after the study was completely described, and permission to decline to participate without penalty was made clear. Even so, the artificiality of the experimental situation must be remembered, and appropriate caution used in generalizing from any findings to nonexperimental areas of experience.

The extent to which aspects of healthy functioning have been measured by diverse, little-used instruments of uncertain construct- and criterion-validity has been a handicap in this research. A widely-used, well-validated, multi-dimensional instrument is used in the current study: the California Psychological Inventory (CPI).

The present study is an attempt to examine the differential relations of three aspects of self-disclosure (retrospective self-report, intimacy, and inwardness) with several dimensions of healthy functioning as measured by the CPI. Both quadratic and linear analyses are made. Because sex differences have regularly appeared in the relations of disclosure to adjustment, data from males and females are analyzed separately.

Method

A 40-item version of the JSDQ (Jourard, 1971), the CPI, and the SDSB were completed by 124 male and 129 female undergraduates at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Each student also wrote a 20-sentence essay in terms of the instructions: "Say what you are really like as a person. In 20 statements say the most important things you can think of about what you are really like." These essays were scored by the PAS. All materials were explained fully before they were administered, and it was made clear that all responses would be identified only by anonymous code-numbers. The importance of the participation being voluntary was also stressed. A number of subjects declined to participate and they were given experimental credit equivalent to that of the participants. The experimenter was male.

The JSDQs were scored for retrospective self-disclosure to each of the target persons, and the target-person scores were averaged to provide an overall score for each subject. The SDSBs were scored

[1] Complete rating instructions have been filed with the American Documentations Institute. Write to the author for information.

according to the raters' manual by three judges each of whom had been trained to a Pearson reliability level (with other raters in training) of at least .85. These scores were taken as representing the intimacy-level of each subject's self-presentation. PAS scores, representing inwardness, were also scored by three raters trained to at least the same criterion level. Sentence blanks and essays were rated in separate sets, and blindly, so as to prevent any inadvertent "halo effects" on the part of raters. The CPIs were scored for the standard 18 scales.

Analyses for quadratic and linear relations were carried out for the data of both sexes between the disclosure scores and the CPI scale scores.

Results

Relationships Among Measures of Disclosure and Sex Differences

The scores for intimacy and inwardness were significantly correlated both for males (Pearson $r = .35, p < .001$), and for females ($r = .39, p < .001$). For men, the global self-report score was correlated *negatively* with intimacy ($r = -.21$, $p < .05$). None of the other correlations for either sex were significant. Clearly, the self-report and the actual-disclosure scores are not empirically equivalent. Females scored higher than males in Intimacy ($t = 5.55, p < .001$) and in Inwardness ($t = 4.40, p < .001$), but not in the self-report measure ($t = 1.07$). However females did report higher disclosure to the Best Female Friend ($t = 2.37, p < .05$).

Quadratic Analyses

For the males, only 2 of the 54 analyses (3 aspects of self-disclosure × 18 CPI scales) performed yielded quadratic trends which were significant at the level $p < .05$. Inwardness was related to Sociability in the predicted inverted-U form ($F(2,123) = 3.70, p < .05$), while an opposite-to-prediction (U-Curve) relation was observed between Global Self-Report and Good Impression ($F(2,123) = 3.06, p < .05$). These weak findings seem best left uninterpreted.

For the females, five quadratic relationships were observed, all with the Global Self-Report measure. The predicted inverted-U relationship was found with Communality ($F(2,127) = 6.98, p < .01$) and with Socialization ($F(2,127) = 5.08, p < .01$). U-curve relations were observed with Capacity for Status ($F(2,127) = 11.06$, $p < .01$), Self-Acceptance ($F(2,127) = 4.28$, $p < .05$) and Flexibility ($F(2,127) = 4.28, p < .05$). Assuming that these findings are replicable, it appears that females who scored in the mid-range of the Global Self Report measure were characterized by a greater internalization of society's norms and values than their extreme-range counterparts, but that they were also less socially ascendant, self-accepting and flexible. While this result may be meaningful, it is hardly a confirmation of the Jourard-Cozby hypothesis. In general, these findings suggest that the problem raised by the mixed results reported previously in this area is not explicable by the existence of unnoticed curvilinear relationships between self-disclosure and adjustment.

Analysis of Linear Relationships for Males

Eighteen significant linear relationships are observed for the males, all but two of them with Self Report and Inwardness. (see Table 1.) Intimacy was related most notably to Femininity, a scale which has been taken to indicate "emotional sensitivity" (Mitchell, 1963). Inwardness is related fairly strongly to Achievement via Independence, Intellectual Efficiency and Tolerance. Generally, in factor analyses these all are found to load on a factor denoting cognitive flexibility and "adaptive autonomy" (Parloff, Datta, Kleman, & Handlin, 1968). Positive relationships were also found with achievement via Conformance and Self-Control. Along with Tolerance, these scales typically load on a factor taken to indicate general interpersonal adjustment (Megargee, 1972). Relationships to Socialization and Responsibility were also found. These scales have been found to load on a factor which has been called "superego strength" (Mitchell & Pierce-Jones, 1960). With the exception of a slight relationship to Capacity for Status, Inwardness seems largely

Table 1
Linear Relations Between Self-Disclosure and CPI Scales for Males

Scales	Aspects of Self-Disclosures		
	Retrospective Self-Report	Intimacy	Inwardness
Dominance	.17*		
Capacity for Status	.27**		.24**
Sociability	.32***		
Social Presence	.29***		
Self Acceptance	.22*		
Well Being			
Responsibility			.35***
Socialization	.31***		.23**
Self-Control			.20*
Tolerance			.28*
Good Impression			
Communality		.17*	
Achievement via Conformance			.22*
Achievement via Independence			.29***
Intellectual Efficiency			.28**
Psychological Mindedness			
Flexibility	−.17*		
Femininity	−.17*	.29***	

Note: $n = 124$.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

orthogonal to the CPI factor which has been called "social poise or extraversion" (Megargee, 1972). The picture is quite reversed for the Retrospective Self-Report measure, which is positively related to each of the scales (Dominance, Capacity for Status, Sociability, Social Presence and Self-Acceptance) loaded on that factor. A positive relationship is also observed with Socialization, and slight negative relationships are found with Flexibility and Femininity.

In general, it seems that for the males, both Inwardness and Retrospective Self-Report are positively related to CPI measures of adjustment. Both are related to level of Socialization, but higher degrees of Self-Reported Disclosure are related to greater ascendancy and extraversion while higher Inwardness scores are related to higher levels of interpersonal adjustment and adaptive flexibility.

Analysis of Linear Relationships for Females

The results for the Retrospective Self-Report measure for the females are similar to those found for the males. A positive relationship is observed for Socialization and Communality ("superego strength"). Dominance, Sociability and Social Presence are related positively, while the other two scales on the "social poise or extraversion" factor had been found to bear a U-curve relationship instead (see Table 2).

For females the patterns of results for the two dimensions of actual disclosure were quite different from those found for males. Intimacy was found to correlate negatively with six scales, five of which make up the general factor of "interpersonal adjustment." The remaining negative correlation is with Socialization. Inwardness did not correlate significantly with any CPI scales for the females.

Discussion

Three general conclusions are suggested by these findings. First, the curvilinearity hypothesis (Cozby, 1973; Jour-

Table 2
Linear Relations Between Self-Disclosure and CPI Scales for Females

Scale	Aspect of Self-Disclosure		
	Retrospective Self-Report	Intimacy	Inwardness
Dominance	.20*		
Capacity for Status			
Sociability	.36***		
Social Presence	.20*		
Self Acceptance			
Well Being	.18*	−.25**	
Responsibility			
Socialization	.33***	−.23**	
Self-Control		−.24**	
Tolerance		−.23**	
Good Impression	.17*	−.20*	
Communality	.21*		
Achievement via Conformance		−.23**	
Achievement via Independence			
Intellectual Efficiency	.19*		
Psychological Mindedness			
Flexibility			
Femininity			

Note: $n = 129$.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

ard, 1964) was not confirmed for males and received only partial support for females, for whom the Retrospective Self-Report measure bore the predicted inverted-U relation to scales interpreted as indicating "superego strength." While possibly of interest, this effect would require replication prior to interpretation. In general, these data suggest that the previous mixed results reported on the disclosure/adjustment question are not explicable by undiscovered curvilinear relationships.

For both sexes, the Retrospective Self-Report measure (the JSDQ total score) has a positive and linear relation to CPI scales indicative of social poise, self-acceptance, socialization, assertiveness, and extraversion. These findings are congruent with a number of relationships reported between the JSDQ and measures of interpersonal facility and self-confidence (Bath & Daly, 1972; Halverson & Shore, 1969; Jourard, 1971; Shapiro, 1951) and measures of extraversion (Taylor & Oberlander, 1969). The validity of the JSDQ has not been established. Several studies, like this one, have found nonsignificant or even negative correlations between JSDQ scores and observed-disclosure ratings in an experimental situation (Hurley & Hurley, 1969; Pedersen & Breglio, 1968; Vondracek, 1969), but the more pertinent question has to do with the relationship between JSDQ ratings and the level of actual past disclosure to the actual target persons. For example, would high scorers be found to have had interactions with mothers, fathers, best friends, and spouses which are judged to be relatively high in the Intimacy and Inwardness dimensions studied here? Or is the self-disclosure self-attribution commonly made on bases other than these? The studies which might answer such questions have not been done. The study of actual self-disclosure in genuinely intimate relationships appears to be an especially interesting direction for future research to take considering the amount

of evidence which has accumulated linking some aspects of good adjustment with self-reported disclosure to intimates.

The final conclusion suggested is that sex differences seem very important in determining the relationships between the actual-disclosure variables of intimacy and inwardness on the one hand, and CPI measures of adjustment on the other. In this experimental situation, intimacy of self-presentation bore no relation to any scales connoting quality of adjustment for the males, and was negatively related to several scales for the females. Clearly, presenting the self intimately (disclosing personally important and/or self-pejorative material) was not indicative of CPI-measured adjustment. Perhaps, in spite of the experimenter's efforts, the situation was not seen as really appropriate to highly intimate self-presentation; and was seen as especially inappropriate by the females. Higher disclosure in consensually inappropriate contexts has been found to be linked with lower levels of adjustment (Chaikin, Derlega, Bayman, & Shaw, 1975; Persons & Marks, 1970; Truax, Altman, & Wittmer, 1973). Further research is needed to explore this possibility.

Inwardness, or the tendency to present the self experientially but not necessarily pejoratively, was related positively to several CPI scales for males but to none for females. Highly scoring males appear to be relatively mature, autonomous, effective, and principled. Whether these qualities are effected causally by a tendency to present the self experientially (as Jourard would have said) cannot be determined from correlational data. But these results are distinctive in offering the first support for a positive relation between actual self-disclosure in an experimental setting and some validated measures of adjustment. Perhaps, at least for males, inwardness of self-disclosure lacks connotations of confession and self-abasement which may be linked to the intimacy dimension in such an impersonal setting. Clearly future work in this area will need to attend to the differential meaning of different aspects of self-disclosure to the two sexes in such an experimental situation. Research comparing self-disclosure in naturally occurring relationships with that given in experimental situations would also be helpful in clarifying the different meaning of disclosure in each.

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