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ABSTRACT

The effects of modeling and instructions on self-disclosure were investigated. High school students (N=54) were presented with a non-disclosing model contrasted with a highly-disclosing model and with a no-model condition, and verbal instructions that either did not elaborate on self-disclosure, described it as a virtue ("positive") or indicated it was an undesirable trait ("negative"). Subjects were assigned to one of nine treatment conditions. They listened to the instructions and/or audiotaped model appropriate to their condition and then audiotaped their responses to the identical questions answered by the model. Behavioral ratings of self-disclosure on these audiotapes served as the criterion variable for the study. A 3 X 3 analysis of variance indicated that the level of disclosure of the model affected the subjects' disclosure. The manipulation of the instructions variable indicated increased disclosure for the positive instructional conditions but showed no decrease for the negative condition.
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The Effects of Modeling and Instructions on
Self-Disclosure of High School Students

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Self-Disclosure

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ABSTRACT

This study involved an attempt to influence self-disclosure through the presentation of (a) a non-disclosing model contrasted with a highly-disclosing model and with a no-model condition, and (b) verbal instructions that either did not elaborate on self-disclosure, described it as a virtue ("positive") or indicated it was an undesirable trait ("negative").

Fifty-four high school students, an equal number of males and females, were assigned to one of nine treatment conditions. Students listened to the instructions and/or audiotaped model appropriate to their condition and then audiotaped their responses to the identical questions answered by the model. Behavioral ratings of self-disclosure on these audiotapes served as the criterion variable for the study.

A 3 x 3 Analysis of Variance indicated that the level of disclosure of the model affected the subjects' disclosure ($p < .05$). The manipulation of the instructions variable indicated increased disclosure for the positive instructional conditions but showed no decrease for the negative condition.

The Effects of Modeling and Instructions on
Self-Disclosure of High School Students

Self-disclosure, by its very nature, is closely tied to the counseling relationship. In order to help clients resolve concerns, counselors first need to be given access, through client self-disclosure, to their clients' thoughts and feelings.

Efforts have recently been made to investigate methods of increasing the amount of self-disclosure by clients or experimental subjects. Two methods of increasing self-disclosure have been well documented in the research literature: (a) instructions requesting disclosure (Green & Marlatt, 1972; Masters and Branch, 1969; Stone & Gotlib, 1975; Scheiderer, 1977), and (b) modeling of self-disclosure (Myrick, 1969; Sarazon, Ganzer, & Singer, 1972; Stone & Stebbins, 1975; Stone & Gotlib, 1975; Scheiderer, 1977).

Studies directly comparing instructions and modeling have been inconclusive in determining the relative power of the two techniques. Doster (1972) found instructions to be more facilitative, while Green and Marlatt (1972) and Whalen (1966) found the most powerful technique to be a combination of instructions and modeling.

The present study was designed to assess the effects of modeling and instructions upon the self-disclosure of high school students. It is unique in both the population addressed and in the inclusion of presumed "response inhibitors" as well as "response facilitators."

Specifically, the study tested the effects of three types of audio-taped model: (a) a "positive" model who disclosed at high levels in response to the same questions later asked the subjects, (b) a "negative" model who disclosed nothing at all, and (c) a no-model control.

On the instructions variable, there were also three levels: (a) general instructions including a "positive" statement about the virtues of self-disclosure, (b) general instructions including a "negative" statement about self-disclosure as an undesirable trait, and (c) minimal instructions with no remarks concerning the virtues or undesirable aspects of disclosure.

It was hypothesized that the "positive" conditions of both independent variables would stimulate greater self-disclosure than the control conditions. Also, it was expected that the "negative" conditions would serve to inhibit responding to levels below the control conditions.

Method

Subjects

Fifty-four volunteer subjects were selected from five 11th and 12th grade "Introduction to Psychology" classes at Forest Park High School,

The subjects ranged from 16 to 18 years of age. An even number of males and females participated in the study. Subjects, blocked on sex, were randomly assigned to one of nine treatment conditions.

Procedure

The procedures employed in this study were based on those of Stone and Gotlib (1975). Individual appointments were arranged for each subject. Upon reporting for their appointment, subjects were given three index cards, labeled "school life," "social life," and "family life." The experimenter

then played the audiotaped instructions appropriate for the subject's treatment group.

Instructional conditions. There were two sets of instructions ("positive" and "negative") in addition to a minimal instructions control condition. The instructions were based in large part on those employed by Green and Marlatt (1972) and Stone and Gotlib (1975). In each set of instructions, examples of the target behavior were excluded to reduce confounding with the modeling condition.

The instructions used in the minimal instructions condition were as follows:

Everyone talks about high school students and what they are like but few people have actually tried to find out anything from the students themselves. We are interested in getting an idea of how students feel about certain areas which confront all of us. We thought the best way to find out how students feel about certain areas would be to ask them to talk. Your instructions are to talk into the tape recorder for the next twelve minutes concerning what you think about your school experiences, your family, and your social life.

The following audiotaped statement comprised the positive instructions condition:

Many psychologists believe there is a relationship between a healthy personality and talking about oneself freely to others. An inability to disclose oneself to others may be the cause of internal conflicts, anxieties, frustrations, boredom, neuroses,

and psychoses. Many of us assume roles which do not really depict our real selves. Alienation from one's real self not only arrests personal growth, but it also tends to make a farce out of one's relationships with people.

This statement was followed by the identical instruction given to the minimal instructions group and by one additional sentence:

When we say we want you to talk about what you think concerning these areas, this means we want you to concentrate on verbalizing your ideas, emotions, reactions, and responses concerning these areas.

The following audiotaped statement represented the negative instructions condition:

People who talk about themselves and their true feelings are frequently thought of as being egotistical, self-centered, conceited, and, in some cases, just plain strange. Psychologists feel that people who dominate a conversation by talking about themselves are perhaps slightly maladjusted and, very likely, bores. It is probably better if we do not disclose everything about ourselves to others.

This statement was followed by the instruction given to the minimal instructions group and by the additional statement on specificity that had also been given to the positive instructions group.

Modeling condition. Following the audiotaped instructions, subjects were presented with one of three possible levels of the modeling condition. One third of the subjects received no model whatsoever. The remaining subjects

were told, "In order to give you additional information, a tape segment of a previous subject will be provided." The "positive" modeling condition consisted of a six minute audiotape of what was purported to be a male high school student (actually a thirty-three year old male) responding to the same topics that the subject would later address. The model in the positive condition was very highly self-disclosing, including many positive and negative feelings about the designated topics. In the "negative" modeling condition, also a six-minute audiotape, the model was essentially non-disclosing. He expressed facts but no personal opinions or feelings.

After listening to the instructions and, where appropriate, a model, subjects were assured of anonymity and were asked if they had any questions. Answers to questions repeated relevant parts of the instructions.

Each subject was told to begin talking about the topic on the first index card. The subjects were informed that every four minutes the experimenter would knock on the door to indicate they should talk about the next topic. After 12 minutes had passed, the experimenter entered the room and told subjects to stop talking.

Measure

Haymes' (1971) technique for obtaining a behavioral measure of self-disclosure was employed as the criterion variable. In summary, the scoring procedure involves rating the audiotapes by assigning (a) two points to first person references involving disclosures of emotions, needs, self-awareness, or fantasies, and (b) one point to disclosures of the same types when they are reflexive, third person references.

Two raters were trained in Haymes' (1971) scale for rating self-

disclosure. Interrater reliability was assessed using three minute samples from nine subject tapes, one from each experimental condition. The obtained interrater reliability was $r = .85$. After completion of the reliability check, one rater scored all the tapes. Each tape was rated in 30 second intervals for 12 minutes (four minutes on each topic). In any 30 second segment, only the score for the maximally disclosing statement was used. The rater was unaware of the purpose and design of the study.

Results

Initially, a 3 x 3 x 2 ANOVA (instructions x modeling x sex) was carried out on the collected data. Since neither the main effect for sex nor any interaction involving sex were found statistically significant, the analysis was collapsed on the sex variable.

The 3 x 3 ANOVA, testing the effects of the modeling and instructions treatment, is summarized in Table 1. Significant main effects for modeling and instructions were obtained. No interaction between modeling and instructions was evidenced. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for each cell and the grand means for each condition.

Insert Table 1 about here

Insert Table 2 about here

Since significance was obtained for both conditions, a Tukey post hoc test for Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) was carried out on the

modeling and instructions treatments. All three modeling groups were found to be significantly different from one another ($p < .05$): the positive modeling condition self-disclosed more than the no-modeling group, which exceeded the negative modeling treatment in disclosure.

Only one comparison of instructional condition means was statistically different: the positive instruction group disclosed more than the minimal instructions group.

Discussion

The effects of modeling and instructions upon the self-disclosure of high school students were assessed in this study. As had been hypothesized, the effects of modeling were found to be either inhibiting or facilitating, depending upon the type of model employed. The "negative," non-disclosing, model suppressed self-disclosure to levels below the no-model group. Correspondingly, the "positive," highly-disclosing, model encouraged greater disclosure than the no-model group.

The anticipated effect of positive and negative instructions was not obtained. The inclusion of the virtues or undesirable aspects of self-disclosure did not significantly effect the amount of subject disclosure. Across each of the modeling treatments, there was very little difference between the disclosure of the positive and negative instructional groups (Table 2).

The significant difference that was found between positive instructions and minimal instructions was likely attributable to a difference in degree of specificity (Stone & Gotlib, 1975). Both positive and negative instructions

groups were encouraged "to concentrate on verbalizing your ideas, emotions, reactions, and responses." The minimal instructions group were unexposed to this specific description of the criterion behavior. The finding that the negative instruction group's mean for self-disclosure was higher (although not significantly higher) than the minimal instruction control group tends to support the power of the specificity of instructions. That is, despite information about the undesirability of self-disclosure, subjects who were given more specific directions tended to disclose at higher levels.

Further research, employing designs able to separate the effects of instructional specificity from the positive/negative instructional set, is needed. The power of the attempt to introduce a positive or negative set might also be increased by placing this discussion immediately prior to the experimental task itself. In the present study, the attempt to influence the values set of the subjects may have been presented too early, allowing for the subsequent instructions to overcome any immediate effect of the positive or negative set.

Another possible direction for this research would employ a modeling and instruction design upon subjects selected because of their tested attitudes toward self-disclosure. For example, if individuals who hold negative feelings about self-disclosure (i.e., perceive disclosure as undesirable) could be easily influenced to disclose through models and specific instruction, this would effectively substantiate the potency of such procedures.

Until such additional research is accomplished, however, we are left with the tentative indications provided by the present study that: (a) high school students' self-disclosure can be facilitated by a disclosing model, and

(b) an instruction intended to encourage either positive or negative feelings concerning the value of disclosure has no apparent effect on high school students' self-disclosure. These results bring to mind the adage, "Do as I say and not as I do." Based on the present data, such advice will produce the desired results only if what is said is specific and if what is done is consistent with what is said.

Footnotes

¹This research is based on the senior author's doctoral dissertation in Counselor Education at the University of Cincinnati.

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Table 1

Two-Way Analysis of Variance Summary

Table for Modeling by Instructions

<u>Source</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
Modeling	2	344.80	31.18	.01
Instructions	2	43.63	3.94	.05*
Modeling X Instructions	4	.52	.05	NS
Error	45	11.06		
Total	53			

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for
Self-Disclosure by Modeling
and Instructions Conditions

Instructions Condition	Modeling Condition						Grand Means
	Positive		Negative		No		<u>Instructions</u>
	<u>Model</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	
Positive	11.67	5.59	3.17	2.67	6.33	3.64	7.06
Negative	11.17	3.53	2.17	1.35	5.50	1.71	6.28
Minimal	8.83	2.79	.50	.76	2.83	2.73	4.05
Grand Means							
Modeling	11.8		1.95		4.89		