A STUDY OF SELF-IDEAL DISCREPANCY SCORES
IN SENSITIZERS AND REPRESSORS

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A STUDY OF SELF-IDEAL DISCREPANCY SCORES IN SENSITIZERS AND REPRESSORS

THESIS

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By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Of the many factors related to the behavior of human beings, perception of the self and interaction with the environment are two of the more important processes which determine individual patterns of behavior. This has led to the concept that the individual's overt behavioral responses are generally considered to be a function of his perception of psychosocial experiences.

Interest in self perception theories developing in recent years has evolved from the transition of the functionalistic and behavioristic schools of psychology to the more social interactional theories of behavior. Since perception is often a very important part of the various beliefs and ideas about the basis of human behavior, it seems that a study concerning self perception could be very useful in adding to the research knowledge being acquired in this area.

Another area of research which has received considerable attention is defensiveness, which is defined as behavior utilized by the individual as a protector of the ego's integrity. This defensiveness, its effect and/or relationship with other psychological factors have been subjects of many
investigations; however, many of these studies have been inconclusive and contradictory. With consideration of the afore mentioned statements, a study concerning self-perception and defensiveness could be helpful in clarifying some of the results of previous studies in this area.

Theoretical Background

During the first forty years of the twentieth century, self concept theory did not receive much attention from the behavioristic and functionalistic psychologies which were dominating the American psychological scene. As Hilgard (7, p. 375) points out, the introspectionists were unable to handle the self, and of course such a "mentalistic" construct as the self concept was anathema to behaviorists. Meanwhile, the Freudians and neo-Freudians were developing psychodynamic postulates implying a self referent in order to make them plausible and understandable. The theories did not immediately bring constructs of the self to the forefront in American psychology. However, in Freud's later writings, he assigned more importance to ego development and functioning. The neo-Freudians were probably the first to stress the importance of the self picture and the ego-ideal, and American psychologists began to acquire interest along psychoanalytical lines, particularly of the neo-Freudian type. The acceptance of these psychoanalytical theories, even in part, was strictly against the general experimental
psychology which was so predominant at that time. The reasons for this rejection by some psychologists were that it lacked in rigor, in susceptibility of empirical test, and in compatibility with the theoretical models then in favor. However, in recent years there has been a fusion among the general theories of motivation and cognition and the psychoanalytic or psychodynamic theories originating in the clinic. Therefore, as Wylie points out (18, p. 2), all the theories of personality which have been promulgated in the last two decades attribute much importance to the phenomenal self, i.e., the direct awareness of the self, with cognitive and motivational attributes.

With the increase of interest in self perception theory, many scales have been developed which purport to measure and explore this phenomenon. As critiques and evaluations of these instruments increased, it was discovered that the most useful constructs evolving from these scales were the measurements of the self concept and the ideal-self concept. Rogers (12, p. 136) defines the self concept as "an organized configuration of perceptions of the self which are admissible to awareness," and this is the definition that will be utilized in this research. The individual perceives his abilities and characteristics as operating through his experiences and the manner in which the concepts of the self relate to others and to the environment form the basis for the self concept. The concept of ideal-self is defined by
Wylie (2, p. 41) as "a person's concept of the kind of individual he or she would like to be."

In the past few years it has been thought that the discrepancy score obtained from self and ideal-self ratings is indicative of the amount of adjustment or maladjustment which exists within the individual. Rogers stated:

As long as the self-Gestalt is firmly organized, and no contradictory material is even dimly perceived, then positive self-feelings may exist, the self may be seen as worthy and acceptable, and conscious tension is minimal. Behavior is consistent with the organized hypotheses and concepts of the self-structure. Although the individual whose self concept is incongruent with reality may be vulnerable, the extent to which he dimly perceives these incongruences and discrepancies is a measure of his internal tension and determines the amount of defensive behavior (12, pp. 191-192).

In lieu of Rogers' statement it appears that the maintenance of congruency between the self and ideal-self concepts is of primary importance for the organism to function at maximum efficiency. The examination of Rogers' statement will be explored experimentally in this study.

Before continuing with this approach, the subject of defensiveness should be briefly discussed. Haigh expressed:

Defensiveness is seen as one form of behavior which may follow upon the perception of threat. The individual is threatened when he perceives an experience to be inconsistent with a value or concept of self or his concept of environment. The individual may react defensively in some manner distorting his perceptions so as to reduce awareness of the perceived incongruence (6, p. 101).

This study will describe defensiveness as being on a continuum, the extremes of which will be labeled sensitizers
and repressors. In general the content of Haigh's statement describes defensive behavior at the repressor end of the continuum. The repressors will be defined as by Attrocchi et al. (1, p. 67) as "those who tend to use avoidance, denial, and repression of potential threat and conflict as a primary mode of adaptation." At the other end of the continuum is found the sensitizers. The sensitizers will be defined as by Attrocchi et al. (1, p. 67) as "those who are alerted to and perhaps overinterpret potential threat and conflict and who use intellectual and obsessive defenses as a primary mode of adaptation."

Defensive behavior is manifested in varying degrees at different times and in different ways, for the defense mechanisms utilized by the individual depend upon the existing concept the individual holds of himself. Also, of primary importance is the successfulness of specific mechanisms utilized in alleviating the tensions; these tensions being produced by situations which are incongruent with the self concept. The purpose of these mechanisms of defense is to maintain a state of equilibrium in the threatened individual's integrity, and this process often results in a distortion of reality. Rogers (12) and Snygg and Combs (15) imply in their writings that the more an individual utilizes denial as a means for escaping from threatening experiences and for blocking these experiences from awareness, i.e., defensiveness, the greater will be the degree of threat he experiences.
This situation will in turn lead to a greater amount of internal tension. Because defensiveness is sometimes disrupting to adequate adjustments to reality and because it is so prevalent in human behavior, it is important to gain some understanding of the determining factors underlying this behavioral characteristic. It should be of value to investigate the relationship between the discrepancy scores on a self rating instrument, and a defensiveness scale which classifies subjects as sensitizers and repressors.

Related Studies

There has been, within recent years, an enormous amount of research done concerning self concept or defensiveness. The following studies present the results of some of these investigations.

Block and Thomas (2) found an association between Self-Ideal discrepancies and maladjustment on the MMPI scales. Significant differences were found in the Hs, D, Pd, Ps, and Sc scales. Positive relationships were found between self-ideal congruence and their Ego-Control scale and Little and Fisher's Denial and Admission Scales. Both of these were derived from the MMPI. Their findings led them to suggest that subjects reporting high self-ideal congruence might be maladjusted deniers.

Miller and Worchel (10) related Self-Ideal discrepancies in the Self-Activity Inventory to change in accuracy of
performance on the McKinney Reporting Test under continued self-esteem-threatening stress. Each subject performed first at his own rate for eight minutes on the McKinney test. Then he worked for sixteen minutes, during which time he was interrupted every thirty seconds to be told he was failing to meet a standard. This stress period was divided into eight minute sections of supposedly mounting stress. Finally, subjects worked for eight minutes without stress. Subjects were divided into three groups: high, medium, and low, on the basis of their discrepancy scores. In the second of the two successive stress periods subjects with medium discrepancies showed significantly less performance decrement (as compared to the pre-stress period) than did subjects with high or low discrepancies. Also, in the post stress period, the subjects with medium discrepancies came closer to their pre-stress performance level than did either of the other two groups.

Hillson and Worchel (6) studied groups of normal, neurotic, and schizophrenic subjects on the Self-Activity Inventory. These subjects were fairly well equated on sex, age, and educational level, and they were also comparable, to an unspecified degree, with respect to socio-economic class. These authors found that neurotics gave significantly poorer self ratings than did the other two groups. They also found that schizophrenics set their self-ideal level significantly lower than did the neurotic or normal groups. When the
effects of the self ratings were partialed out, the self-ideal discrepancy for the neurotics was significantly greater than for the normals and schizophrenics.

Another study by Sarbin and Rosenberg (14) found a significant difference in ratings of self acceptance between normal volunteer student subjects and students who had been diagnosed neurotic and recommended for therapy. The measure of self acceptance was obtained from the Self Criticality Index which was derived from Gough's Adjustive Check List. The neurotic subjects were found to be less self accepting and more self critical.

Rogers and Walsh (11), using a tachistoscope to make paired comparisons, found that a high defensive group of college females (criterion for defensiveness was a high K score on the MMPI) unintentionally rated themselves significantly lower in attractiveness than did a control group of moderately defensive college females. This finding supported their hypothesis that defensiveness would "unwittingly" influence self-evaluation. The interpretation was advanced that the defensive group's self-devaluation may have been based upon a feeling of dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction was denied conscious expression in the interest of maintaining self-esteem.

Lepine and Chodorkoff (9), in a study of the interrelationship between goal setting behavior, expressed feelings of adequacy, and the correspondence between the
perceived and ideal self, found that the more an individual tended to express feelings of adequacy, (a) the greater was the correspondence between his perceived and ideal self and (b) the less dependent his goal setting behavior would be on the evaluation of his past performance, when environmental evaluation indicated sequential change in adequacy of performance.

Wylie (17) utilized 387 basic airmen as subjects in a study of defensiveness and self concept discrepancies. The measures of defensiveness were modified from sources not mentioned. The notion was supported that defensiveness will be a function of discrepancies within the self concept and/or discrepancies between the self concept and the ideal-self concept.

Engel (4) measured adjustment by the Pd and D scales of the MMPI, by peer ratings, and by teacher ratings. It was found that adolescents whose Q-sorts were persistently unfavorable to self, over a two year period, had significantly higher Pd and D scores than subjects who persisted in a positive self concept. Shifts from positive to negative self concept over the two year period were significantly associated with higher scores on Pd and D, while shifts from negative to positive self concepts were associated with significantly higher K scores.

In a study utilizing normal, paranoid schizophrenic, and neurotic groups, Friedman (5) found results indicating
that normals have positive attitudes toward self on a realistic basis. The paranoid schizophrenic group also revealed positive self attitudes, but these were reflective of self enhancing defenses and were based on unrealistic self appraisal. The neurotic group maintained negative self attitudes based upon unrealistic perception of disturbance within the self.

Turner and Vanderlippe (16), using a Q-sort and the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperance Survey on a group of 175 upper-class students, found that those high in self-ideal congruence tended to have high scores in general activity, ascendance (strong self-defense and leadership), sociability, emotional stability (optimism and freedom from neurotic anxiety, and thoughtfulness. In each instance the scores for those high in self-ideal congruence were indicative of better adjustment than were those low in self-ideal correspondence.

Dittes (3) found that personal devaluations would lead to defensive behavior, i.e., behavior which could restore self esteem. He assumed that obtaining closure on an ambiguous task raises self esteem. His hypothesis that those receiving poor evaluations would attempt to obtain closure quickly and impulsively on three ambiguous tasks was supported.

Rosen (13) obtained statements from college students concerning self-ideal discrepancies on the MMPI items themselves. He found a correlation of .87 between K and the
number of items showing a discrepancy between subjects actual and ideal self. His interpretation of this is that high self-ideal congruence results from the defense of denial rather than from good adjustment. He also found that self-ideal discrepancies correlated with MMPI profile elevations on the Sc, Si, D, and Ps scales.

Statement of Problem

This study was concerned with the relationship of self-ideal discrepancy scores and defensiveness in a college population. To measure self-ideal discrepancy the Bill’s Index of Adjustments and Values was used. Defensiveness was measured by a scale derived from the MMPI by Attrocchi et al. (1, p. 60). The scale consists of a continuum ranging from sensitizers to repressors as previously described.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were investigated.

1. The mean self-ideal discrepancy score for the repressor group will be found to be significantly lower than the mean self-ideal discrepancy score for the sensitizer group.

2. The mean ideal score for the repressor group will be found to be significantly lower than the mean ideal score for the sensitizer group.

3. The mean scores on the neurotic triad (Hs, D, and Hy scales) for the repressor group will be found to be
significantly lower than the mean scores on the neurotic triad for the sensitizer group.

d. There will be a significant negative correlation between self-ideal discrepancy scores and age.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY AND DESCRIPTION OF INSTRUMENTS

Subjects

Eighty-one subjects participated in this study. All subjects were college students at North Texas State University. The sample consisted of both males and females with an age range of from eighteen to sixty-one years, with a mean age of twenty-three years. The subjects were students in three psychology classes. The sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate classes were represented. The sample was composed of thirteen sophomores, fourteen juniors, twenty-two seniors, and thirty-two graduates.

Materials

The subjects were administered two tests. These tests were the Bill's Index of Adjustments and Values and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory.

The Bill's Index of Adjustments and Values is a self-report instrument with two measures, a self-ideal discrepancy score and a self-acceptance score. This instrument was designed to measure variables of importance to the various self concept theories. The basic premise of these theories is that behavior is consistent with the individual's perception.
of himself. The IAV was designed to serve as a research tool, and to assess changes in adjustment which occur during psychotherapy. In this study the IAV was used in its role as a research instrument.

The IAV consists of a list of forty-nine descriptive adjectives. The subject rates himself, on a scale from one to five, as to how each word applies to him. He also rates himself in the same manner as to how he would like for the word to apply to him. From these ratings one obtains two numerical scores dealing with the person's perception of himself. One score reveals how the individual presently sees himself in relation to these words. The other score reveals how he would like to see himself in relation to these words. The numerical difference between these two ratings, disregarding algebraic signs, is an index of the individual's self-ideal discrepancy.

The repressor-sensitizer dimension was a collection of scales derived from items and scales of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. Attrocchi (1) incorporated these scales as a measure of sensitizers and repressors.

Attrocchi et al. (1) found that by utilizing a few original MMPI scales along with supplementary scales a more detailed measure of the repressor-sensitizer dimension could be obtained. For repressors, Little and Fisher's Denial (Dn) scale (2) was used instead of the whole Hy scale. It was found that persons scoring high on the Dn scale were generally
described as uninsightful, "anti-intraceptive," and morally virtuous. It was also found that muted or pseudo-normal profiles accompanied a high score on the Dn scale. In order to improve discriminatory power, the Lie (L) scale, which reveals an individual's attempt to present a good picture of himself, and the defensiveness (K) scale, which is a measure of the individual's test taking attitude, were used. Welsh (3, pp. 20 and 27) implied that high scores on the L and K scales were indicative of suppressing action toward specific items which represented threats. The intercorrelations of L, K, and Dn range from .32 to .76 (4), indicating that each is measuring essentially the same thing.

For sensitizers, the Psychasthenia (Pt) scale was used. The person scoring high on the Pt scale is characterized by excessive doubt, by compulsions, obsessions, and unreasonable fears. This person usually reacts to threats in an anxious manner often overinterpreting the threat (3, p. 81). Since there exists a negative correlation between Pt and K, the K additive was not used. To lessen the possibility of measurement error the Depression (D) and Welsh's Anxiety (A) (3, pp. 264-281) scales were used. A high D score is indicative of an individual characterized by poor morale, lack of hope in future, and dissatisfaction with present status (3, p. 73). Welsh (3, p. 276) used the A scale to identify "students who lacked self confidence, especially confidence in their own
judgments, who had difficulties in making decisions, and who were easily threatened by ambiguous situations."

For obtaining a numerical score for the sensitizer-repressor dimension, the T scores for D, Pt, (without K), and A were subtracted from the T scores of the L, K, and Dn scales. The repressors were defined as the thirty subjects obtaining the highest positive scores; the sensitizers were defined as the thirty subjects obtaining the highest negative scores.

**Method**

All tests were administered during regular classroom periods on two successive days. The MMPI was administered on the first meeting and the IAV on the second. Subjects were given no information except to follow the standard directions of the tests.

**Statistical Treatment**

Due to the tests utilized in this study each subject's performance yielded six scores. These scores were classified as a self-ideal discrepancy score, an ideal score, a repressor-sensitizer score, and scores on the Hs, D, and Hy scales of the MMPI. The latter three are termed as the neurotic triad.

The subjects were divided into sensitizer and repressor groups. For each subject in these groups the following indices
were obtained: (a) IAV discrepancy score, (b) ideal score, (c) neurotic triad scores, and (d) age. The mean IAV discrepancy score was obtained for each of the two groups labeled sensitizers and repressors. A mean ideal score was obtained for each group. Mean scores of the neurotic triad scales were also obtained for each group. Ages of all subjects were correlated with their discrepancy scores.

Hypotheses one and two were tested by applying Fisher's *Z*. Hypothesis three was tested by Hotelling's *T*². Hypothesis four was tested by Pearson's Product-Moment correlation and tested for significance by applying a *t* test. For all hypotheses the .05 level of significance was used as the level to be obtained before rejecting the null hypothesis.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The distribution of the repressor-sensitizer scores ranged from +105 to -97. The range for the thirty subjects in the repressor group was from +21 to +105 with a mean of +67. The range for the thirty subjects in the sensitizer group was from -26 to -97 with a mean of -56. Using these scores as criteria for defining the repressor and sensitizer groups, four hypotheses were presented.

The first hypothesis was as follows:

1. The mean self-ideal discrepancy score for the repressor group will be found to be significantly lower than the mean self-ideal discrepancy score for the sensitizer group.

The means, standard deviations, and level of significance resulting from scores obtained on Bill's Index of Adjustments and Values by the repressor and sensitizer groups may be observed in Table I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repressor</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28.90</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>10.49</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitizer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>62.60</td>
<td>15.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
It is immediately apparent that the difference between the discrepancy scores on the IAV of the repressor and sensitizing groups is highly significant. The mean score for the repressor group was found to be 28.90; the mean score for the sensitizing group was established as 62.60. When tested for significance, a $t$ ratio of 10.49 was obtained. A $t$ ratio of this size with 58 degrees of freedom was found to be significant at better than the .001 level; therefore, the first hypothesis was corroborated.

The second hypothesis was:

2. The mean ideal score for the repressor group will be found to be significantly lower than the mean ideal score for the sensitizing group.

On the observation of Table II it was noted that the mean ideal scores for the repressor and sensitizing groups were 219.96 and 231.72 respectively. When treated statistically a $t$ ratio of 4.28 resulted, as shown in Table II.

**TABLE II**

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE BETWEEN THE MEAN IDEAL SCORES ON THE IAV OF THE SENSITIZER AND REPRESSOR GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repressor</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>219.96</td>
<td>10.67</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitizer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>231.72</td>
<td>10.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This $t$ value was also found to be significant at better than the .001 level, which confirmed the second hypothesis.
Hotelling's $T^2$ statistic was used to test the significance between the repressor and sensitizer groups on the neurotic triad. The third hypothesis stated:

3. The mean scores on the neurotic triad ($H_s, D,$ and $H_y$ scales) for the repressor group will be found to be significantly lower than the mean scores on the neurotic triad for the sensitizer group.

The results are presented in Table III.

**TABLE III**

**LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE BETWEEN THE MEAN SCORES ON THE NEUROTIC TRIAD OF THE SENSITIZER AND REPRESSOR GROUPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TSQR</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$P$</th>
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<tr>
<td>87.65</td>
<td>26.21</td>
<td>3/56</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Table III reveals that a test of significance for the three scales between the two groups resulted in a $T^2$ value of 87.65. This score was converted to an $F$ ratio of 26.21 and found to be significant at better than the .001 level. Therefore, the third hypothesis was confirmed.

The $F$ ratio shown in Table III indicated that a significant difference existed. A more detailed analysis of the data revealed that although the two groups scored significantly different on the neurotic triad as a single index, when broken down into the contributing variables, the $H_y$ scale failed to be significantly different. The results of comparisons of the
repressor and sensitizer groups on each scale are presented in Table IV. It is immediately apparent that the differences between the two groups on the Hs and D scales were significant.

**TABLE IV**

**LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE BETWEEN THE MEAN SCORES ON THE Hs, D, AND Hy SCALES OF THE SENSITIZER AND REPRESSOR GROUPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Repressors</th>
<th>Sensitizers</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Sd</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Sd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hs</td>
<td>10.36</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>15.30</td>
<td>4.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>15.86</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>24.60</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hy</td>
<td>19.70</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>21.03</td>
<td>5.85</td>
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</table>

Analysis of Table IV revealed that the Hs and D scales obtained t ratios of 4.42 and 6.83 respectively, both of which were significant at better than the .001 level. The Hy scale obtained a t ratio of .99 which was not significant but was in the hypothesized direction.

The results presented in Table IV can more readily be seen in Figure 1.
The fourth hypothesis was concerned with comparing the self-ideal discrepancy scores of all subjects with their ages. This hypothesis stated:

4. There will be significant negative correlation between self-ideal discrepancy scores and age.

The data were treated with Pearson's $r$ and a correlation coefficient of $-.34$ was obtained. This correlation was tested for significance by the $t$ test which resulted in a $t$ ratio of 2.70. A $t$ ratio of this size with 54 degrees of freedom was found to be significant at better than the .01 level of significance. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was accepted.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION OF DATA

The results of this study help to specify one of the variables related to self-ideal discrepancies by demonstrating that repressors and sensitizers differ in self-ideal discrepancy. Also, the results add to the growing number of correlates of the repressor-sensitizer dimension. The data of this study, in accordance with Attrocchi et al. (2), suggest that the sensitizers have more negative, i.e., hostile and submissive, self-concepts than repressors; therefore, the sensitizers exhibit greater discrepancies between the self and ideal-self. It appears the sensitizer's self derived hypotheses emphasize the negative attributes while the positive attributes are skipped over lightly, for they are probably threatening to the individual's mode of adjustment and his self concept. The sensitizer seems to protect himself in that his negative self evaluations illicit sympathy and support from others rather than criticism. Because of the behavior he exhibits, whether he is given support or criticism, his self hypotheses are reinforced. Therefore, as Gordon (3) stated, he is an individual who may experience depression, constant anxiety, and is constantly obsessed
with his weakness and helplessness. Because of his state of tension, as Rogers (5) suggests, the sensitizers may tend to see experience in absolute and unconditional terms, to confuse fact and evaluation, and to rely on ideas more than reality testing.

At the opposite end of the continuum we find the repressors. The positive evaluations of this group may be intended to convince self and others that little or no hostility is present. Hillson and Worchel (4) found that the repressors emphasized their own affection and interpersonal effectiveness and vigorously deny and repress any negative feelings. This mode of behavior when carried to extremes may result in disintegrated behavior because the distortion of reality experience becomes increasingly greater. Rogers (5) says that internal tension increases with each repression or denial of reality, yet the overt picture remains essentially the same.

The results of the second hypothesis add to the Adlerian theory on the dynamics of the neurosis (1). As was confirmed in the third hypothesis, the sensitizers are more characteristically neurotic than repressors. The ego disintegration of the sensitizers apparently results in a self deprecation which, because of the lack of balance, may react in a compensatory way and attempt to control some of the anxiety. In this attempt overcompensation often results.
Consequently, it seems the repressors set goals unattainably high, and because of failure, constantly reinforce their feelings of inferiority.

Discussion of the first two hypotheses and the description of the sensitizer and repressor groups give subjective support to the objective findings of the third hypothesis. The difference between the sensitizer and repressor groups failed to be significant in the case of the Hy scale. This may indicate that both groups have a similar tendency in alleviating anxiety. However, the utilization of symptoms suggested by this scale for each group may be quite different. The sensitizers may use the symptoms as another device to obtain sympathy and at the same time negate the possibilities of being criticized. The repressors, on the other hand, in order to present a tension free appearance, may channelize all their anxiety into a physical symptom. However, the interpretation should take into consideration the possibility of real physical pathology existing among the subjects of one or both groups. Nevertheless, it has been shown that discrepancy scores may be used to predict, with some degree of confidence, whether the individual's typical behavior is neurotic or not. The definition of neurosis used should be the same as that described by the MMPI scales.

The positive findings of the fourth hypothesis suggest that with increase in age there is a tendency to become more
defensive in a denying and avoiding sort of way. Apparently this tendency results in a more conservative reaction to the environment by not allowing experiences into consciousness which are incongruent with the self concept. Before accepting the results of this hypothesis, the sample population should be closely examined and data from a more general population collected and analyzed.
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CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationships which exist between self-ideal discrepancy scores and defensiveness as measured on a repressor-sensitizer dimension. The Bill's Index of Adjustments and Values was used to measure the discrepancy between self and ideal-self concepts. Defensiveness on the repressor-sensitizer dimension was measured by a collection of MMPI scales, as described by Attrocchi et al. (2).

The sample consisted of eighty-one subjects, all students at North Texas State University. The sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate classes were represented in the sample. These subjects were divided into repressor and sensitizer groups on the basis of scores obtained on Attrocchi's repressor-sensitizer dimension. The thirty subjects with the highest positive scores were defined as the repressor group. The sensitizers were defined as those with the highest negative scores. Mean self-ideal discrepancy scores and ideal scores were obtained for each group and treated statistically to determine if a significant difference existed. The
repressor and sensitizer groups were also compared on scores obtained on the neurotic triad. All subjects' self-ideal discrepancy scores were correlated with age.

Statistical techniques utilized were the t test, Hotelling's $T^2$, and Pearson's Product-Moment correlation. The level of significance was set at .05. This level was attained in all cases, which confirmed all four original hypotheses.

It was found that there was a high level of significant difference between the discrepancy scores of the repressor group and the sensitizer group. This difference was significant in the hypothesized direction at better than the .001 level of confidence. Thus, in this particular study, it can be said that the degree of perceived discrepancy between self and ideal-self concepts would be a factor to consider as an indicator of a type of behavior utilized as a means of adjustment.

Investigation of the second hypothesis revealed a significant difference between the mean ideal scores of the sensitizer group and the repressor group. This hypothesis was confirmed at better than the .001 level and in the hypothesized direction.

The third hypothesis was confirmed at better than the .001 level and in the hypothesized direction. This finding revealed that the sensitizer group exhibited behavior more
characteristic of the neurotic, as defined by the neurotic triad, than did the repressor group.

The fourth hypothesis stated that there would be a significant negative correlation between self-ideal discrepancy scores and age. This hypothesis obtained a correlation coefficient of \(-.34\). This correlation was treated with a \(t\) test and found to be significant at better than the .01 level.

Conclusions

This study agrees, in general, with other investigations in this area (2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12). Block and Thomas (3) found an association between self-ideal discrepancy scores and maladjustment on the MMPI scales. It was found in this study that the degree of self-ideal discrepancy can be indicative of a mode of adjustive behavior. This behavior is described by the repressor-sensitizer dimension as defined by the MMPI scales used, both original and supplementary. This was found to exist at better than the .001 level of confidence. Consequently, it would seem that perceived discrepancies between self and ideal-self concepts could be quite disintegrating to the whole individual. These discrepancies could reduce the effectiveness of the organism's functioning in all phases of behavior.

The general discomfort experienced by persons seeking clinical assistance is believed by Rogers (9) to be a function
of perceived discrepancies between the self and ideal-self. This would indicate that establishing some congruency would be a goal for therapy. It should be noted that the use of discrepancy scores might be beneficial in evaluating progress being made in various therapy situations. In the school counseling situation, discrepancy scores could be used to analyze the problems of adjustment or maladjustment. The functioning inefficiency of many students having difficulty may through analysis of discrepancy scores be referred for proper treatment and/or counseling. The analysis of discrepancy scores should be made with consideration of the modes of behavior manifested by the repressor and sensitizer groups. Although the discrepancy score has only a broad descriptive value, it may be used for gross discrimination purposes. One of the purposes for which it could be used is in the role of a supplementary diagnostic instrument.

Hillson and Worchel (7) found that self-ideal discrepancy scores were significantly larger for neurotics than for a psychotic group. Thus, it could be used to lend support to other findings resulting in a diagnosis of neurosis or psychosis.

The results of the second hypothesis, which dealt with the mean ideal scores of the sensitizer and repressor groups, might indicate a therapy procedure for the sensitizer-type individuals. There appears to be a breakdown of defenses
which profoundly affects the efficiency with which they behave. As Sarbin and Rosenberg (11) pointed out, there is a tendency for these types of individuals to be derogatory toward themselves, yet in accordance with Adler's theory (1) they set fictitiously high goals which are unrealistic and unattainable. Their failure to obtain these goals may reinforce their self concept and result in increased feelings of anxiety and inferiority. A therapy based on the theory of successive approximation would serve a twofold purpose in the treatment of these individuals. It would, through reinforcement of successful behavior on simple tasks, enhance the self picture, and on the other hand, allow the individual to concentrate on not too distant goals.

The significance found in the third hypothesis seems to reinforce the conclusions drawn from the first two hypotheses. It suggests that the sensitizers are more characterized by neurotic behavior; thus, they are the group more likely to develop into clinical problems. One of the basic criteria for the classification of neurosis is anxiety. The level of anxiety can be considered an indicator of the degree of disintegration of the ego which has taken place within the individual. Ego disintegration is considered to be one of the primary reasons why an individual seeks clinical assistance.

The fourth hypothesis revealed a significant negative correlation between age and self-ideal discrepancy scores.
This finding might suggest that defenses are acquired over a long period of time and over a number of experiences. The individual may, through experience, become aware of his inadequacies and realize he cannot attain his aspired level. He may, as Ford and Urban (4) suggest, assimilate experiences in his self concept enabling him to reconcile his goals to his abilities.

Due to the sample utilized in this investigation and the fact that the older subjects were predominantly school teachers who, as a group, have been found to exhibit an authoritarian personality, which is characterized by defensiveness of the repressor type, the results might not hold true for the entire population. A study using a more representative sample might be profitable.

Recommendations

Since the results of this study have shown that the degree of discrepancy scores between the self and ideal-self concepts are related to types of adjustive behavior it is deemed feasible that elaboration of this study should be coordinated with other behavioral traits and characteristics. Also, the results of this study should be further investigated in hope of more discriminating results.

The research in this area is limited and theory is too ambiguous, often permitting opposing hypotheses. For example, one might suspect that repressors, supposedly being more
constricted, would present fewer obvious cues, therefore making prediction of their responses more difficult. On the other hand, sensitizers are more manifestly anxious and might, therefore, appear to be poorly organized in their behavior, again making prediction difficult. Perhaps with greater interest in this area of psychology it will be possible to develop better tools for measuring these phenomena. Therefore, some of the inadequacies which presently exist in the various pencil and paper tests will be diminished.

Another motivating factor of behavior which has been considered very little in self concept theories is that of unconscious determinants. When research instruments can be designed to adequately measure and discriminate effects of unconscious motivation, some of the ambiguity of existing theories may be alleviated.

Another factor to consider is that of the number of subjects in the groups. With variables and conditions permitting, perhaps a more complex design using a larger population should be contemplated.
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