THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELF-ESTEEM TO THE RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTING COMMUNICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The importance of self-esteem in the resolution of conflicting messages from verbal and non-verbal channels was investigated. Twenty-six (26) female college students completed a self-esteem measure and were labelled as high and low self-esteem scorers based on their individual scores. Each group viewed a series of four videotaped scenes of a male actor proposing a date with the subject. The messages from verbal and non-verbal channels of the proposal were either consistent or conflicting. Subjects answered a series of twelve questions after viewing each scene. The answers to the questions served as the dependent measures. A 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance with repeated measures on the last two factors was used to analyze subjects' resolution of the experimental messages. High self-esteem subjects resolved conflicting messages in a positive direction as predicted. As was anticipated, the low self-esteem subjects were more sensitive to negative components of conflicting messages. The result did not indicate the superiority of non-verbal channel over verbal channel in all interpersonal communications. The results are interpreted in the context of other studies which demonstrate the importance of self-esteem to socio-environmental effects on perception of communication.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem Studies

Scholars in the past half century have, in their own terms, paid homage to a need for self-esteem. In the Clinical-Personality realm, Alder (1927) talked about the "great upward drive"; Horney (1945) proposed the "need to feel superior"; Maslow (1943) argued for the existence in humans of the "need for self-esteem"; Murphy (1947) talked about the "struggle to keep the self-picture good"; and Rogers (1959) described the "need for self regard." Working from a sociological framework, Festinger (1945) proposed a "unidirectional drive upward"; Harvey (Harvey and Clapp, 1965) talked of "hope.... to have low expectancies refuted"; while Jones (1964) proposed a "signification need" and Pepitone (1964) talked of "unidirectional pressure toward maintaining or enhancing self-esteem."

In general, self-esteem theory assumes that the individual has a need to enhance his self evaluation and increase, maintain, or confirm his feelings of personal satisfaction, worth and effectiveness. Independent of their theoretical persuasions, all investigations in this area view self-esteem not as a fixed attribute but as varying as a function of evaluative information that the individual gains from his own behavior and from the comparative or reflected appraisals of others.

Ausbell (1952) argues that self-esteem is the outcome of achieving a status commensurate with ones conception of self-importance. He saw

a devaluation of the self concept as a necessity in the face of reality and in order to avoid severe injury to self-esteem.

Jones (1964) sees self-esteem as relating to a strategic presentation of one's self to others, reactions to evaluations from others and the resultant autistic distortion of evaluations of self and others. Hovland and Janis (1959) argue that low self-esteem people are more dependent on the approval of others than are high self-esteem people and therefore conform more in an effort to gain social acceptance.

Ziller et al. (1969) view self-esteem as a component of the self system which regulates the extent to which the self system is maintained under conditions of strain, such as during the processing of new information concerning the self. Thus, for example, self-esteem is seen as emerging largely out of a social frame of reference and hence a person's response to the social environment is seen as a function of self-esteem, and, conversely the social environment is seen as influencing the individual's level of self-esteem.

As might be expected, level of self-esteem has been found to influence significantly how individuals perceive positive and negative information about themselves (Mischel et al., 1973).

Rosenberg (1965) found that the lower a person's self-esteem, the more he was bothered by a poor opinion of himself expressed by another person. It has been found that self-esteem is related to tendencies to differentially weigh positive and negative messages about self. Mischel, Ebbesen and Zeiss (1973) demonstrated, for example, that individuals scoring high on Byrne's (1961) Repression-Sensitization (R-E), and thus low on self-esteem Scale (i.e., Sensitizers), spent

more time seeking negative information about themselves than individuals scoring low on this measure (i.e., Repressors) and thus high in self-esteem.

In sum these studies (Ziller, 1969; Mischel, Zeiss and Ebbesen, 1973; Rosenberg, 1965) have highlighted the importance of environment-self communication systems in the acquisition, retention and modification of self-esteem.

Communication and Perception Studies

When we communicate face to face, connotative meanings are conveyed to us simultaneously from different sources. We not only hear what the person says, we also react to his tone of voice, his facial expressions and also to the way he punctuates his words with hand gestures and body movements (Mehrabian, 1968; Bateson, 1956; Bugental, 1966; Heider, 1958).

Perception of meaning of a message thus requires the integration of verbal content with information conveyed through vocal and visual channels. As Bateson et al. (1962) have emphasized there is never a "single message"; in actual communication, there are two or more related messages. These are often conveyed by different channels, verbal and non-verbal channels, for example. Messages, therefore, Bateson argued can be widely incongruent and thus exert very different and conflicting influences (Bateson et al., 1956).

While it is recognized that the understanding of a message depends to a considerable degree on how information from the different channels is processed by the listener (e.g., Davitz, 1964), the study of

integration of information from different communication modalities has only recently begun to attract systematic attention (Bugental, 1966; Mehrabian and Ferris, 1967; Mehrabian and Weiner, 1967). Consequently, little is as yet known about the relative contribution of each channel, in particular the verbal versus non-verbal channels in decoding and resolving messages, either conflicting or not, simultaneously presented to an individual.

Bateson et al. (1956) argue that humans preponderantly rely upon the non-verbal media of posture, gesture, facial expression, intonation, and context for the communication of very abstract but vitally important labels like play, non-play, fantasy, sacrament and metaphor. This is augmented by the findings of Weiner and Mehrabian (1968) that present-day society tends to discourage explicit verbalization of negative feelings and emotions. Therefore, culturally, the available literature indicates, that we have grown as a people predominantly dependent on decoding non-verbal cues in interpersonal relationships. Dexterity in decoding of non-verbal cues is necessary to adequately adapt to the demands of the society.

Some empirical evidence exists to support Bateson's contention that non-verbal communication may be preponderant. Bugental et al. (1969) and Merhrabian amd Weiner (1967) each found verbalizations (content) carried lesser weight in information processing than did facial expression, a non-verbal channel of communication. However, Walker (1977) found different individuals may give different weight to verbal and non-verbal channels in decoding messages, a result which has achieved substantial support in the literature. He found a small minority of his

subjects consistently paid more attention to verbal cues than non-verbal cues in the message. He suggested that sensitivity to non-verbal may relate to individual differences in, for example, the introvert-extrovert personality dimensions.

Cunningham (1978) reported findings in which such diverse personality variables as extraversion, female gender, high self-esteem, test anxiety (Buck, Miller and Caul, 1973; Buck, Miller and Caul, 1974), self monitoring tendencies (Snyder, 1974), social approval seeking tendencies (Zaidel, Mehrabian, 1969), and teacher's rating of activity level, aggressiveness, impulsiveness, bossiness and sociability (Buck, 1975) have influenced success in transmitting non-verbal messages of emotion. Female gender (Zaidel and Mehrabian, 1969); amount of physiological reactivity to threat (Lanzetta and Kileck, 1970), have been related to success in interpreting the non-verbal communication of others.

The present study attempts to explore the importance of self-esteem in the decoding of verbal (content) and non-verbal (facial expressions, gestures, and body movements) messages simultaneously conveyed to an individual.

The Study

The study utilizes a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design with repeated measures on the last two factors in which the influence and interaction of self-esteem (high and low), information channel (verbal and non-verbal) and valence of message (positive or negative) are investigated. In it Subjects identified as high or low in self-esteem are asked to view

a series of four experimental scenes presented via videotape in which a male student requests a date. In each scene, one level of each of the two remaining variables is simultaneously varied. Subjects are then asked to indicate their perception of the experimental message and how comfortable they were in receiving the experimental message after viewing each scene on a scale of (1) to (7) for each dependent measure. It was assumed that individual difference variation would be reflected in attitudinal measures of self-esteem, that persons with high self-esteem are relatively more satisfied with respect to this need than persons with low self-esteem, so that subjects on the opposite ends of the self-esteem continuum (high versus low), would provide a distinctive and consistently different pattern of response to these messages.

In particular, it was hypothesized that high self-esteem subjects would resolve messages containing simultaneous positive and negative information in a positive direction, that is, in a direction consistent with their positive self-concept.

Low self-esteem subjects, on the other hand, because of their poor communication skills, and unstable resolution of inconsistent situations, ought to, according to Henry (1965), and Mehrabian (1969), depend on the non-verbal channel, whether the message is a positive one or not, in the resolution of conflicting messages.

Further low self-esteem subjects, because of the ego-threatening nature of the messages and sensitivity to negative evaluations from other people (e.g., Bateson et al., 1962, Rosenberg, 1965), ought to show more discomfort in resolving inconsistent messages (containing negative and positive) than high self-esteem subjects.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subjects

Twenty-six (26) subjects (Ss) participated in this study. They were all female undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at the University of Houston/CLC. They ranged in age from 20 to 46 years of age. All were administered Self Description Inventory - Form R (Cutick, 1962; Diggory, 1966; Shrauger, 1972), a measure of self-esteem. The scale, composed of 13 items, was administered in a testing session. Their scores ranged from 31.2 to 94 on self-esteem. A split-half on the composites scores was used to separate the subjects into high and low self-esteem groups.

Procedure

All Ss were shown the four experimental scenes. After viewing each experimental scene the subject answered a questionnaire. The four experimental scenes were comprised of: positive verbal - positive non-verbal messages, positive verbal - negative non-verbal messages, negative verbal - positive non-verbal messages, and negative verbal - negative non-verbal messages. The experimental scenes were randomly presented to the subjects.

Self-esteem Scale

The scale used for assessing general self-esteem was a modification and expansion of one developed by Cutick (1962) and used extensively

by Diggory and his co-workers (1966) and Shrauger (1972). The form used here consisted of 13 items in which the subject was asked to indicate what percent of the time she felt a particular behavior or outcome applied to her. The items covered interpersonal relations, physical attributes, intellectual competence, and reactions to stress. (A copy of the scale is found in the Appendix). For half of the items a percentage above 50 indicated low self-esteem. For the other half a percentage above 50 indicated high self-esteem. The average score for all 13 items was computed and this served as the subject's overall self-esteem score; the higher the score, the greater the individual's assumed self-esteem.

Videotaped Messages

Videotaped messages containing both positive and negative dating proposals served as experimental stimuli. Acted messages were used in order to obtain consistent and systematic variation. The positive proposal was characterized by friendliness and the negative proposal by lack of interest, unfriendliness and disapproval. The videotaped messages varied in four dimensions, the verbal channel, which was either positive or negative in content and non-verbal channel, which was either positive or negative in content. The verbal content of the positive and negative messages were as follows:

Positive message:

> "Hi, my name's Bob, I've seen you around here before and I think we have some mutual interests. There's a new restaurant just down the road that I

haven't tried yet and there's no one I would rather have dinner with. What do ya say?"

Negative message:

"Hi, I am Bob. I think I've seen you around before and I doubt if we have any mutual interests. Anyway, there's a new restaurant down the road that I haven't tried and I can't find anybody else to go with. What do you say?"

The content of the positive and negative non-verbal messages were as follows:

Positive non-verbal message:

Actor looked groomed in appearance, smiled at the subject while making his proposal, maintained eye contact with subject and leaned forward towards the subject.

Negative non-verbal message:

Actor leaned away from the subject, looked shabbily dressed and engaged in distracting behaviors (e.g., interjecting his proposal with yawn and sigh intermittently) while making his proposal. Actor engaged in constant eye and body movements.

Design

The study utilizes a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design with repeated measures on the last two factors. All groups of subjects in the low and high self-esteem sub-groups viewed all the following four tapes:

[1] positive verbal and positive non-verbal messages.

[2] positive verbal and negative non-verbal messages.

[3] negative non-verbal and negative verbal messages.

[4] positive non-verbal and negative verbal messages.

Dependent Measures

All subjects participating in the study were required to complete a questionnaire after each experimental condition. (A copy of the question naire is found in the Appendix). The questionnaire consisted of 12 items dealing with the subject's perception and emotional response to the videotaped messages. The items were scored on a 7-point scale. Some of the items asked the subjects "what is your perception of the experimental message?"....A great wish for a date, score (7). Ambivalent, scored (4), and does not wish for a date scored (1). "How comfortable were you in receiving his messages?" Very uncomfortable was scored (1) and very comfortable was scored (7). Only the responses of subjects to questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 were analyzed for this thesis.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The analysis of data collected in the study is presented in this chapter. The study allowed the examination of the importance of self-esteem in the resolution of conflicting messages simultaneously presented to a subject. Responses to the four videotaped scenes by the subjects were analyzed by means of a three factor mixed-design analysis of variance with repeated measure on the last two factors. There were two levels of factor (A), self-esteem (high versus low); two levels of factor (B), a communication channel (verbal versus non-verbal); and two levels of factor (C), valence of message (positive versus negative).

To analyze the response to question number 1 on the questionnaire, subjects' perception of the experimental message, mean scores were calculated for the group's responses (Table 1). A 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance with repeated measure on the last two factors was then computed (Table 2).

The results indicate that self-esteem, factor (A), ($F(1.24) = 12.78$, $p < .01$); Communication channel, factor B, ($F(1,24) = 15,29$, $p < .01$); and Valence of message, factor C, ($F(1.24) = 12.41$, $p < .01$) independently and collectively (A X B X C, $F(1,24) = 6.47$, $p < .05$) affect subjects perception of conflicting messages. Similar findings were obtained in a related dependent measure reported in Tables 3 and 4.

Specifically, high self-esteem subjects consistently perceived the conflicting messages across channels as positive, whereas the low self-

TABLE 1

Mean Scores of Subjects' Perception of Experimental Messages as by Question #1

Ss	Verbal (+)	Verbal (-)	Nonverbal (+)	Nonverbal (-)	V (+,-)	NV (+,-)
HSE	5.77	4.65	4.62	3.50	5.21	4.06
LSE	3.50	2.54	4.58	3.00	3.04	3.79

HSE = High self-esteem.

LSE = Low self-esteem.

Low figure indicates negative reaction to the message.

Higher figure indicates more positive reaction to the message.

TABLE 2

Analysis of Subjects' Perception of Experimental Messages as by Question #1

Source	df	Mean Squares	F
Self-esteem (A)	1	157.538	12.782**
Ss within groups (Swgps)	24	12.325	
Communication channel (B)	1	41.885	15.292**
A x B	1	41.886	15.292**
B x Swgps	24	2.739	
Valence of messages (C)	1	96.154	12.407**
A x C	1	3.846	0.496
C x Swgps	24	7.75	
B x C	1	16.962	2.084
A x B x C	1	52.652	6.468*
BC x Swgps	24	8.141	

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

TABLE 3

Mean Scores of Claimed Accurate Perception of Experimental Messages as by Question #7

Ss	Verbal (+)	Verbal (-)	Nonverbal (+)	Nonverbal (-)	V (+,-)	NV (+,-)
HSE	6.92	5.69	5.88	4.00	6.31	4.94
LSE	4.65	4.08	4.92	3.42	4.37	4.12

HSE = High self-esteem.

LSE = Low self-esteem.

Low figure indicates low level of certainty of accurate perception of message.

Higher figure indicates high level of certainty of accurate perception of message.

TABLE 4

Analysis of Claimed Accurate Perception of Experimental Messages as by Question #7

Source	df	Mean Squares	F
Self-esteem (A)	1	191.164	18.654**
Ss within groups (Swgps)	24	10.248	
Communication channel (B)	1	63.087	13.010**
A x B	1	35.778	7.378*
B x Swgps	24	4.849	
Valence of messages (C)	1	175.241	13.834**
A x C	1	7.009	0.553
C x Swgps	24	12.667	
B x C	1	16.163	0.826
A x B x C	1	0.472	0.024
BC x Swgps	24	19.567	

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

esteem subjects perceived the conflicting as negative or positive depending on the channel. The high self-esteem group did not demonstrate preference for any particular channel in resolving the conflicting messages presented to them, nor were they sensitive to a particular communication modality. Instead, the group consistently and appropriately resolved the experimental stimuli within the available channel. Each channel, for this group, had equal communicative weight in the interaction.

Further, the results indicate that the low self-esteem subjects relied on the non-verbal channel, in particular the non-verbal positive channel in resolving the conflicting messages. Unlike the results for the high self-esteem group, the results indicate that low self-esteem subjects were predominantly sensitive to both the valence and channel of the conflicting messages, the non-verbal negative message in particular.

The interactions between Self-esteem and Communication channel alone was found significant ($F(1,24) = 15.29$, $p < .01$). The significance may indicate an individual's ability to resolve conflicting messages is affected by his level of self-esteem and the channel of the conflicting messages combined.

A significant interaction was obtained for Self-esteem, Communication channel, and Valence of message in the perception of conflicting messages, ($F, (1,24) = 6.47$, $p < .05$). The presence of the interaction may indicate a complex model of interpersonal integration of conflicting messages. It may suggest that, not only does a general discounting process occur as suggested by Bugental et al. (1970) in the resolution

of conflict between channels, but that there may be a self-referent internalization of messages simultaneously occurring with the discounting between channels when the incoming messages contain more than one valence. An interpretation of a message, then seems to depend not only on what is said and how it is said, but also on the personal characteristics of the recipient.

A 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance with repeated measure on the last two factors was computed for subjects' response to the discomfort claimed experienced from the experimental stimuli as probed in question number 3 of the questionnaire (Tables 5 and 6).

Results indicate that Self-esteem, (F, (1,24) = 18,85, $p < .01$) and Valence of the message (F, (1,24) = 4.35, $p < .05$) independently and jointly affect the subject's comfortability on receiving the conflicting messages from more than one channel. Results similar to these findings for a related dependent measure are reported in Tables 7 and 8.

High self-esteem subjects were found to experience less discomfort and the amount of reported discomfort by the group was consistent across channels. In other words, the experimental messages did not bother the high self-esteem group irrespective of communication modality.

A fascinating result was obtained for the low self-esteem group. The group reported least amount of discomfort when the experimental stimuli were from the non-verbal channel and the valence of the stimuli was positive. The most amount of reported discomfort by this group was in both verbal and non-verbal channels when the valence of the messages were negative. The Self-esteem and Valence of message

TABLE 5

Mean Scores of Reported Comfortability of Experimental Scenes as by Question #3

Groups	Verbal (+)	Verbal (-)	Nonverbal (+)	Nonverbal (-)	V (+,-)	NV (+,-)
HSE	6.40	6.00	6.23	6.154	6.21	6.19
LSE	4.38	5.23	3.81	5.23	4.81	4.50

HSE = High self-esteem.

LSE = Low self-esteem.

Low figure indicates message was uncomfortable.

Higher figure indicates message was comfortable.

TABLE 6

Analysis of Reported Comfortability of Experimental Scenes as by Question #3

Source	df	Mean Squares	F
Self-esteem (A)	1	246.153	18.846**
Ss within groups (Swgps)	24	13.061	
Communication channel (B)	1	2.461	0.921
A x B	1	1.886	0.706
B x Swgps	24	2.673	
Valence of messages (C)	1	20.346	4.348*
A x C	1	49.847	10.653**
C x Swgps	24	4.679	
B x C	1	5.539	
A x B x C	1	5.575	
BC x Swgps	24	8.683	

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

TABLE 7

Mean Scores of Subjects' Responses to Question #2

Groups	Verbal (+)	Verbal (-)	Nonverbal (+)	Nonverbal (-)	V (+,-)	NV (+,-)
HSE	6.31	6.38	5.42	6.88	6.35	6.15
LSE	4.69	5.04	4.50	5.73	4.87	5.12

HSE = High self-esteem.

LSE = Low self-esteem.

Low figure indicates subject reported not pleased with message.

Higher figure indicates subject reported pleased with message.

TABLE 8

Analysis of Responses to Question #2: "How pleased were you in receiving the Experimental Messages?"

Source	df	Mean Squares	F
Self-esteem (A)	1	165.009	14.574**
Ss with group (Swgps)	24	11.322	
Communication channel (B)	1	0.086	0.022
A x B	1	5.087	1.277
B x Swgps	24	3.982	
Valence of messages (C)	1	63.086	5.742*
A x C	1	0.01	0.001
C x Swgps	24	10.986	
B x C	1	33.472	5.194*
A x B x C	1	1.625	0.252
BC x Swgps	24	6.444	

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

(A x C) interactions, (F, (1,24) = 10.65, $p < .01$) further indicated that the low self-esteem group was more sensitive to negative conflicting messages.

TABLE 9

Mean Scores of Subjects' Responses to Question #4

Groups	Verbal (+)	Verbal (-)	Nonverbal (+)	Nonverbal (-)	V (+,-)	NV (+,-)
HSE	3.96	3.23	4.46	2.65	3.59	3.55
LSE	6.00	4.08	5.96	3.46	5.04	4.71

HSE = High self-esteem group.

LSE = Low self-esteem group.

Low figure indicates subject responded she deserved a date proposal from experimenter.

Higher figure indicates subject responded she did not deserve a date proposal from experimenter.

TABLE 10

Analysis of Response to Question #4: "Do you deserve a date proposal from the experimenter?"

Source	df	Mean Squares	F
Self-esteem (A)	1	192.5	9.148**
Ss within groups (Swgps)	24	21.042	
Communication channel (B)	1	1.885	1.138
A x B	1	3.846	2.321
B x Swgps	24	1.657	
Valence of messages (C)	1	297.846	30.467**
A x C	1	28.039	2.868
C x Swgps	24	9.776	
B x C	1	13.884	1.243
A x B x C	1	0.615	0.055
BC x Swgps	24	11.167	

** $p < .01$

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate: (1) that the level of self-esteem significantly ($F, (1,24) = 12.78, p < .01$) affects how an individual perceives conflicting messages; (2) that the channel of the conflicting messages significantly ($F, (1,24) = 15.29, p < .01$) contributes to the way in which the message is resolved; (3) that the valence of conflicting messages significantly affects ($F, (1,24) = 15.29, p < .01$) how conflicting messages would be resolved.

The first hypothesis, that high self-esteem subjects would resolve messages containing simultaneous positive and negative information in a positive direction received strong support. Reviewing past studies on self-esteem, the strong support obtained in this study is consistent with the majority of studies.

The second hypothesis, that low self-esteem subjects, because of their poor communication skills, and unstable resolution of inconsistent situations, depend on the non-verbal channel whether the message is positive or not, in the resolution of conflicting messages also received strong support. The strong support obtained is consistent with most studies in both self-esteem and interpersonal expectations at this juncture is an intriguing research finding which deserves further investigation.

The last hypothesis, which expected low self-esteem subjects because of the ego-threatening nature of the messages and because of their sensitivity to negative evaluation from other people, to show more

discomfort, was strongly supported and is consistent with studies on self-esteem reported in the literature, particularly Rosenberg's 1965 report which found that the lower a person's self-esteem, the more he was "bothered" by the poor opinion of another person.

Analysis of the reported clarity of perception of the messages suggest that claims of accurate perception is significantly more likely to occur when the decoder's level of self-esteem is high than when it is low. Perhaps positive self-concept is also associated with unwarranted confidence as to their ability to perceive clearly. Or perhaps high self-esteem may cloud their understanding of a conflicting message by means of a defense operation against attending to negative statements. There is a third possibility; most of the subjects in this study are from the suburban affluent environment of the Greater Houston-Galveston metroplex of the Southwest. It is of interest to note that most of the past studies in verbal and non-verbal communication have been carried out in urban densely populated cities. It is not inconceivable, that despite the clear individual difference in perception found in this study, that some aspects of perception could be reactions to the requirements of special environments. Hence, in crowded cities expertise in picking up non-verbal cues may be demanded by the environment. This could be an interesting research proposal in itself. Do people, as a consequence of their geographical location preponderantly perceive cues from a particular channel of communication?

The results of this study are only partially supported by studies dealing with interpersonal communication (Bugental et al., 1970, Mehrabian and Ferris, 1968; Argyle et al., 1970) which found non-verbal

channel of communication to predominate in interpersonal communications. An exception is Walker (1970) who found a small minority of his subjects consistently paid attention to verbal cues more than non-verbal cues in the messages. But the findings of the present study are fascinating in that the group found by most of these authors (females) to be sensitive to non-verbal cues in interpersonal communication were selected as subjects for this study.

A possible explanation for the lack of accurate perception of the conflicting messages on the part of low self-esteem subjects may be due to the conflict between the low self-esteem subjects' evaluation of her personal worth and the experimenter's proposal to her for a date. The proposition is augmented by the fact that low self-esteem subjects (Tables 9 and 10) felt they did not deserve a date proposal from the experimenter. Perhaps due to their low level of positive self-regard, these subjects saw the experimenter possessing qualities they could not equally complement in a social relationship. The findings of this study, therefore, lend further support to research findings that self-esteem needs are responsive to evaluative information the individual gains from his own behavior and comparative or reflected appraisals from other people.

Studies in the past (e.g., Argyle et al., 1970) have found a double bind effect due to conflicting verbal and non-verbal cues. Such findings are not supported by this study, rather there was a differential response to conflicting cues by subjects with low self-esteem. As was noted in Table 2, the low self-esteem subjects were also channel dependent and valence of message sensitive.

The effectiveness of both verbal and non-verbal channels in interpersonal communication requires some comment here. Contrary to most reports available in the literature, the verbal channel was equally effective as the non-verbal channel to the high self-esteem subjects. Only the low self-esteem subjects fitted into the commonly reported results that the verbal channel was subservient to the non-verbal channel in multiple channel communication.

The decoding of inconsistent communication investigated by Mehrabian and Ferris (1967) and Mehrabian and Wiener (1967) that suggest normal addressees resolve inconsistency conveyed by taking a weighted sum of the components is not supported by findings of this study. The findings of this study, rather highlights the possible factors that may be responsible for the direction in which an individual resolves conflicting messages presented to him in more than one channel.

I agree with Coopersmith (1967) that many laboratory and field investigations tend to support and extend the clinician's impressions of the importance of self-esteem in personal experience and interpersonal behavior. Although the evidence is often merely an inference derived from the study of other topics, the present study has systematically shown that a direct empirical validation of this inference is practicable.

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APPENDIX

SELF DESCRIPTION INVENTORY - FORM R

The following questions ask you to assess your competence in various areas of performance. Indicate your responses to the following questions in the blank to the left of each question. Just give a number from 0 to 100 that shows how you feel about your ability. Zero would be "never" and a hundred would be "all the time." You can pick any number you want, just so it is closest to how you feel.

It is important that you try to answer each item frankly and honestly. Please read each question carefully and try to answer all the items.

____ 1. When you try some new sport or physical activity, what percent of the time do you feel you have not mastered the skill as well as the average person?

____ 2. When you face new situations which require fast decisions, what percent of the time can you make them effectively?

____ 3. When you try to reach important goals of any kind, what percent of the time do you feel you have really succeeded?

____ 4. When you are required to direct the activities of others, in what percent of the cases can you feel that you fail to receive the cooperation and respect of those directed?

____ 5. When you are attempting to get someone of the same sex to form a favorable impression of you, what percent of the time do you think you are unsuccessful?

____ 6. What percentage of people of your own age and sex have a more pleasing personal appearance than you?

____ 7. In situations where it is necessary for you to speed up your performance in order to meet a deadline, in what percent of the cases can you do so without sacrificing the quality of your work?

____ 8. When you enter a new college course what percent of the time do you feel uncertain that you will do as well as the average student?

____ 9. When doing things that interest you most, what percent of the time are you satisfied with your performance?

____ 10. When you are part of group activities, what percent of the time do your ideas and opinions influence the group?

____ 11. When put in a situation which is new and unfamiliar, what percent of the time do you feel you are not able to function adequately?

____ 12. When you have to take the initiative and act independently of others, what percent of the time can you handle things on your own?

____ 13. When wise, careful judgment is needed about something, what percent of the time do you make sound judgments?

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your perception of the experimenter message?

   Please circle one:

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Definitely wants a date (7)
   Ambivalent (4)
   Definitely does not want a date (1)

2. How pleased were you in receiving his request?

   Please circle one:

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Very pleased (1)
   Ambivalent (4)
   Not pleased at all (7)

3. How comfortable does the message make you?

   Please circle one:

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Very comfortable (7)
   Very uncomfortable (1)

4. Do you deserve a date proposal from the experimenter?

   Circle one:

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   I don't deserve a date proposal from the experimenter (1)
   I do deserve a date from the experimenter (7)

5. If you were morally free to accept the invitation, might you accept it?

   Please circle one:

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

   Definitely yes (7)
   Ambivalent (4)
   Definitely no (1)

6. Does the experimenter like you?

Circle one:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Yes (7)
No (1)

7. How sure are you that you perceived accurately the experimental message presented to you?

Please circle one:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not sure at all (1)
Ambivalent (4)
Very sure (7)

8. Does the experimenter meet your ideal of a date partner?

Please circle one:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Yes (1)
Ambivalent (4)
No (7)

9. Was the experimenter clear in conveying his proposal to you?

Please circle one:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Definitely no (7)
Definitely yes (1)

10. How comfortable was the person on the tape?

Circle one:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very comfortable (1)
Neither one way or the other (4)
Very uncomfortable

11. How honest does the person making the proposal appear?

Please circle one:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very honest (1)
Very dishonest (7)

12. Give at least one reason why you think this experiment is being performed.