

RELATION OF SOCIAL DESIRABILITY TO INTERNAL DIMENSIONS OF THE SELF-IDEAL CONGRUENCE CONSTRUCT

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Using the Self-Insight Test, 80 participants' self-ratings, ideal ratings, and self-ideal discrepancies on 6 areas of the self acceptance construct were correlated with scores on the Edwards and Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability (SD) scales. Results on both SD scales indicated positive associations between SD and all six measures of self. In terms of relative self-ideal discrepancy, inverse relations were found on emotional stability and leadership dimensions for both SD scales. In general, findings support previous studies but suggest only specific dimensions of the individual's self system are prone to SD response bias influences.

Keywords: social desirability, self-ideal congruence, internal dimensions, relationship.

During the past decade, researchers have noted the influence of social desirability (SD) on discrepancy measures between rated self and ideal self. Pervin and Lilly (1967) showed that high scores on the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MC SD) were significantly related to high self-judgments and low self-ideal self-discrepancies on the Semantic Differential. Mohanty (1965) found SD to be a salient variable in Q-sort measures of self-ideal congruence. Still earlier studies found a strong negative association between self-reported ratings of self-ideal congruence and SD scores (Crowne et al., 1961; Kenny, 1956).

Although these investigations clearly indicate a relationship between SD and *generalized* measures of self acceptance, little is known regarding the specific facets of the individual's self-concept that are involved. Husek (1961), for one, has found that persons scoring high on SD scales perceive themselves as intelligent and good leaders. In the present study therefore, an attempt was made to assess the relationship of SD to a number of specific dimensions of the self acceptance construct.

METHOD

Booklets comprising the Edwards SD Scale (1957), the Marlowe-Crowne SD Scale (1964), and Forms A and B of the Self-Insight Test (SIT) were distributed on an individual basis to 40 male and 40 female undergraduates. Detailed description of the SIT appears else-

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where (Mukherjee & Sinha, 1970). While many presently utilized personality tests incorporate self-ideal self scales, only a few are available that deal with the specific dimensions of the self acceptance construct.

Briefly, the 50 descriptive statements forming the SIT are categorized into six dimensions of the self image: sociability, flexibility, competence, emotional stability, leadership, and acceptance of others. Respondents rate themselves on 9-point scales, ranging from *distinctly above average* to *distinctly below average*. SIT Form A measures how the participant perceives himself while Form B measures his aspirations and ideals. Both Forms A and B are identical except for the covering page of Form B, which is changed to induce an “ideal self” instructional set. Test-retest reliabilities for the six scales (Form A) range from 0.66 to 0.80 (Mukherjee & Sinha, 1970). All SIT scale values were scored so that a high score indicated high self ratings on Form A, and high ideal self ratings on Form B. The signed difference between the total rating given a particular trait on Form B and that given it on Form A was taken as the measure of relative self-ideal discrepancy (SID) with respect to that particular trait.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 displays the Pearson product-moment correlations computed between participants' SD scores and their self ratings, ideal self ratings, and relative SID. A positive association was found between participants' SD scores on each SD scale, and their self ratings on the SIT. In terms of relative SID, inverse relationships were indicated on emotional stability and leadership dimensions for both SD scales. A strong negative association was also apparent on the competence dimension of the Edwards SD Scale.

TABLE 1
PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SELF
RATINGS, IDEAL SELF RATINGS AND SELF-IDEAL DISCREPANCIES
ON THE SIT AND MC SD SCORES, AND EDWARDS SD SCORES (N = 80)

SIT Dimension	SIT Form A (self)		SIT Form B (ideal)		Relative SID	
	MC SD	Edwards SD	MC SD	Edwards SD	MC SD	Edwards SD
Sociability ...	0.50 ³	0.29 ²	0.29 ²	0.22 ²	-0.18	-0.11
Flexibility ...	0.36 ³	0.25 ¹	0.19	0.13	-0.04	-0.04
Competence ...	0.35 ³	0.50 ³	0.08	-0.10	-0.18	-0.56 ³
Emotional Stability ...	0.46 ³	0.41 ³	0.07	0.09	-0.37 ³	-0.34 ²
Leadership ...	0.19	0.42 ³	-0.15	-0.03	-0.28 ²	-0.33 ²
Acceptance of Others	0.52 ³	0.30 ²	0.16	0.17	0.00	-0.02

Note: ¹ $p < .05$; ² $p < .01$; ³ $p < .001$

In general, the present results support earlier investigations reporting a significant negative correlation between self-reported SD scores and self-ideal congruence measures. However, the findings also suggest that only particular dimensions of the individual's self system are prone

to SD response bias influences. The fact that no relation in relative SID occurred on sociability, flexibility, or acceptance of others dimensions provides proof for this contention. Instead of examining the relationship of SD to the all-inclusive personality construct, self acceptance, further attempts should be made to define the internal dimensions of this construct, and to determine how these different dimensions relate to SD response tendency.

Although in agreement with the majority of past studies, the results are in curious contradiction to a recent study reporting almost zero correlation between SID on the SIT and MC SD scores (Mukherjee & Sinha, 1971). One possible explanation for the inconsistency in findings may be found in the sampling populations utilized. While the data for the latter research was provided by graduate students from an Indian university, this study tested Canadian undergraduates. Thus, the differential findings from studies (using the same tests) serves to question the *generality* of the hypothesis that the tendency to minimize SID is a function of a SD response bias. Cross cultural studies are now required to resolve this issue.

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