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A Measurement of the Accuracy of Self-Appraisal of College Students with Reference to Certain Aspects of Their Personalities

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A MEASUREMENT OF THE ACCURACY OF SELF-APPRAISAL
OF COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH REFERENCE
TO CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THEIR
PERSONALITIES

by
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The statement by some psychologists that people think they know themselves, but actually do not had displeased their students. The psychologists state that most individuals cannot see themselves in an objective light even should they wish to do so, and that most would rather not in the first place.

At times the investigator feels himself in general agreement with the opinions, and attitudes of the psychologists. This is because of the occasional unreasonable behavior which certain college students display. For example, they may blame their instructors for poor grades when it is quite obvious to others that they themselves were responsible. It is not rare for students to persist in curricula for which they have little aptitude or talent. They continue to fail time after time, but still they go on with apparently little self-insight. Situations such as these have caused the investigator to wonder about the degree of self-knowledge college students actually possess. On the other hand it is generally known that they have intelligence well above the average of the general population. It is also
known that these students are superior in other ways such as in physical health and in leadership.

Thus one has evidence for and against the self-knowledge of these students. The investigator prefers now not to take a definite stand on the issue, but will wait until his results have been examined before he expresses his opinions.

The issue of self-insight must be investigated further since it holds many implications. "Knowledge of oneself is called insight (or self-insight)." If students or other individuals lack self-insight then a kind of directive counseling in which they are told what to do might prove more effective than non-directive procedures where progress in therapy is left more to the client. The issue of self-insight has implications for the argument of free will since a person lacking in self-knowledge is certainly limited in his reasonable choices of action, and in his subsequent adjustments. We must know ourselves in order to understand others both emotionally and objectively. One really cannot sympathize with another in pain, or in trouble if he himself has never been aware of his own pains and his own troubles. A psychiatric student must be psychoanalyzed himself in order to gain better self-understanding so that during therapy situations he will not project his feeling on to the patient, and

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so that he can be as objective in his thoughts and opinions as humanly possible. Without minimal degree of self-understanding all of us would be like automatons in our behavior, overt and covert alike.

We may view the foregoing discussion as important justifications for a study into the questions of self-insight. These questions are by no means new. Even may years before the birth of Christ, men had attempted to live without self-deception, to find out what they actually were like, to find out what was the greatest good for them. Various viewpoints arose from all these searchings.

Spinoza, Joseph Butler, and John S. Mill are representative of those who believe that the best good for man is pleasure and freedom from pain. What man is they could not definitly say. Going back even farther into history, one may recall that the Stoics held that wisdom was the sole good of man, including here knowledge of self. Kant plainly states that man is an end in himself. The Scholastics believe man to be a reflection of God, and that his ultimate good is beatitude. When Paedrus, walking with Socrates, asked some question concerning a local legend, Socrates replied:

Now, I have no leisure for such enquiries. Shall I tell you

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why? I must first know myself, as the Delphian inscription says; to be curious about that which is not my concern, while I am still in ignorance of my own self, would be ridiculous.

Self-insight is the trait that Lord Chesterfield claimed for himself when he wrote to his son, "I know myself (no common piece of knowledge, let me tell you). I know what I can, what I cannot, and consequently what I ought to do." In the play Hamlet, Polonius certainly considers insight an important attribute when he says to his son Laertes, who is departing, the famous lines, "This above all, to thine own self be true, and it must fellow as the night the day, thou then canst not be false to any man."

This very brief account of man's strivings to learn what he is like shows that throughout the ages man has desired to know about himself in two different ways. In the first way, man tries to discover what all men considered as a universal group are like. Hobbes, Locke and Hume would say that man must be viewed, at least for purposes of investigation, as physical and chemical and only this. They would concern themselves with the activities only of men. Many others feel that the substance of man and all that this implies must be considered in order to

3 Plato, Phaedrus, 229, cited in Allport, Personality
4 Ibid.
understand him completely. In the second way, each man wants to know himself as an individual and particular person who has a different personality from others, and who therefore differs in attitudes, ideas, wisdom, emotions, interests, etc., from his fellows. This investigator is interested in this second way that man wants to gain knowledge of himself. This way appears to lend itself more directly to psychological investigation, treatment and analysis. The purpose of a scientific study must therefore, be in accordance with this situation.

The purpose of this investigation is to measure how accurately college students can appraise certain aspects of their own personalities. To do this it appears necessary to consider the more recent literature on self-appraisal of personality in order to appreciate the many other methods used in attacking this problem.
CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a critical report on recent studies of self-appraisal. Literature on the main tool used in gathering data for this investigation, the Bernreuter Personality Inventory, will also be reviewed. The first study which will be presented on self-appraisal is thought by this investigator to be one of the most important since it gives a dynamic display of the major mechanisms of self-deception in college students. This study will be considered at length.5

Its aim was to investigate experimentally the illusions which college students have about themselves. These illusions are important since they represent the symptoms of an inadequate self-insight. The group to be studied was comprised of forty advanced psychology students. (It seems that students of psychology should not be selected for such a psychological experiment since they may have certain psychological insights not possessed by others.)

These subjects reported: (a) Their actual conduct, (b) The principles and ideals they claimed to follow, (c) Their demands upon their immediate environment regarding changes. There were four judges, two doctors of psychology and two advanced graduate students, well acquainted with each subject. They gave a general description, in free form and order, of the subjects' personality traits. Then they were asked to describe the conduct of the subject in a number of concretely defined situations in the Psychological Institute at the University of Vienna, the place of this study. 6

On the whole, there was a rather striking discrepancy between reports of the subjects and the judges, especially when it came to shortcomings of the subjects. Certain defense mechanisms seemed to prevent these shortcomings from becoming conscious, particularly when they were deep seated.

The most striking mechanism is "distortion into the opposite." For instance, one of the students was characterized by all of the judges as lacking sincerity. He declared himself to be "sincere under all conditions." There is a high correlation of this tendency (Pearson tetrachoric coefficient) with certain traits as reported by the judges e.g., the inclination toward "social incorrectness," \( r = 0.78 \), with striving for attention \( (0.65) \) with insincerity \( (0.61) \) and with lack of independence of

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6 Ibid., 409-410.
conduct and judgment (53). Here is an instance where lack of self-insight is the basis of other personality defects.

The remaining mechanisms were more subtle. One of these was "omission." For example: a student who was characterized by all the judges as scientifically very gifted, deeply interested and diligent, did not mention his scientific ability spontaneously.

There was, thirdly, a mechanism of camouflage by "justification" of a defect. One of the students who was described by the judges as being "madly over-ambitious" said of himself merely "I always do what I am ordered to do." Conduct which according to the judges was characterized as over-emotional, un-objective, and inadequate were viewed by the subjects as good adjustments to a particular situation. A subject characterized as very aggressive, reports about herself, "I do not let myself be intimidated." 9

The tendency to "belittle" the importance of defects had been noted. A subject characterized by all of the judges as "facetious in every respect," or "lacking in readiness to make an effort," or "completely lacking in seriousness in spite of the greatest ability," referred to herself as being "somewhat playful."

7 Ibid., 411.
8 Ibid., 412.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 413.
The last example could also fall into a type of mechanism which might be called "shift of order." An example of a shift of order of a positively valuable trait is the following: a subject who was characterized by all the judges in the first place as extremely socially minded in terms such as "self-sacrificing", "extremely comradely", "ready to help unselfishly", himself mentions as one of the last items of a long list: "I help others if I can". 11

Frenkel-Brunswik also notes that there is relatively more self-illusion about reports concerning generalized behavior dispositions than there is such illusion in concrete situations. References to sincerity, to absence of a tendency to "apple-polish", or to one's own rank within the community, and the like, show, for example, more illusion than do references to concrete behavior such as: "I used to lend a book". 12 This situation may have tended to affect correlations in the investigation of the present thesis, since many questions on the Bernreuter Inventory are somewhat general and abstract.

Only one subject in the group reported more than fifty per cent of his behavior incorrectly. The average was twenty-seven per cent. This subject was diagnosed by a psychiatrist as a

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
case of dementia praecox. Lack of self-insight reaching such a
high degree must indeed be considered pathological.¹³

Concerning the function of the "guiding principles" of
the subjects, it was found that the assertion of principles direct-
ed toward basic character traits and social attitudes would seem
to be in the nature of a compensation for the actual lack of such
traits and attitudes. The assertion of principles directed toward
achievement would seem, on the other hand, to be symptomatic of
the subjects' actually being well equipped in such respects.¹⁴

The "demands upon the environment" as desired by the
students tended in the direction of relieving the friction between
the students' defects and the demands of reality. For example, a
very aggressive subject demanded that others should be "more
friendly". Another subject was characterized by the judges as hav-
ing little scientific ability demanded that "the courses should be
less theoretical." The subject seems not to realize his own de-
fect but rather to project it on to the environment.¹⁵

Thus it is seen that even college students who are
trained in psychology are victims of auto-illusions. Implications

¹³ Ibid., 414.
¹⁴ Ibid., 414-417.
¹⁵ Ibid., 417-419.
of the above study show that auto-illusion has been found to correlate highly with bad social adjustment, but not so much with intellectual abilities. Allport would probably agree here since he cites a study of college students where only four per cent admitted possible deficiency in self-insight.\textsuperscript{16}

The foregoing study has shown the negative side of insight. The following studies will view it in a more positive way, and will show the many approaches to the study of self-insight.

In one study of approximately four hundred students in a beginning course in psychology at the University of Southern California the problem was to discover the extent of self-insight of the student into the items on a test of personality in order to discover possible relationships between this insight, and other identifiable traits or characteristics of personality. The California Test of Personality was twice administered. On the first occasion the students were directed to answer the questions as they believed that a happy and well-adjusted student would answer them. On the second occasion students answered for themselves. The results showed that students differ greatly in the amount of insight which they possess. Most students secured high scores on

\textsuperscript{16} Allport, \textit{Personality}, 220.
the first test and low scores on the second. The author of that study concluded that a high degree of self-insight is responsible for this difference.17

One experimenter, who uses a very subjective and undefined technique of discovering the insight of students, gives these students such tests as the Nelson Test of Mental Ability and The American Council Psychological. After the test he tells the students individually their scores, and asks them what they think of it. Insight is "measured" by the amount of agreement or disagreement of the students' estimations of their scores.18 This experimenter should realize that such group intelligence test results are incorrect many times. The criterion the author uses for his degree of insight is too general, nebulous, and undifferentiated. The technique requires improvement before it may serve as a guide for later works.

Studies in level of aspiration have a bearing on the investigation of this thesis. Level of aspiration refers to one's expectation in relation to achieving certain goals. Frank defines it as "the level of future performance in a familiar task which


an individual, knowing his past performance in that task, explicitly undertakes to reach. Level of aspiration is important because when a subject rates himself on a test in an experiment on self-insight, his rating will not only be a reflection of what he thinks himself to be, but also of what he would like to be.

A final self-evaluation will be linked to three factors of aspiration, namely: (a) The seeking of success i.e. the subjects want to view the various aspects of their personality in the most favorable light possible. (b) The avoidance of failure. This, too, hurts objective self-ratings. (c) The cognitive factor of a probability judgment. The strength of these forces and the values corresponding to the subjective probability depend on many aspects of the life of the individual, particularly on the way he sees his past experience and the scales of reference which are characteristic for his culture and his personality.

In one study of aspirational level, Devane studied individual differences in self-evaluation as a learning process and reported that group improvement in the accuracy of self-rating tended to be a constant throughout sixteen tests. (five minute

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performance on each test). His method was to give eighty-eight college students five tests of the Occupational Aptitude Series. The tests were distributed and collected one at a time. Self-estimates were asked for before and after taking each test. In the investigation of this thesis the concern is not with insight gained from seeing results of a past test, but with a more general learning process that has been taking place over a long period of years, and that has resulted from many given life experiences and situations.

Summer and Johnson\footnote{22} using a method like that of Devane's obtained correlations of .13 between aspirational level and performance before their subjects saw their past performance, but after the subjects saw their past results the correlations rose to about .48. Their sample included fifty-two negro college students between the ages of nineteen and thirty-three. This study shows that people do profit in gaining self-insight from past experience, however, the later correlation does not indicate a great deal of insight. The women here appear more restrained, tend to lower discrepancies and frequently to under evaluations in their aspirations more so than the men. This difference is seen at both


\footnote{22} F. C. Summer and E. E. Johnson, "Sex Differences in Levels of Aspiration", \textit{Journal of Psychology}, XXVII, 1940, 483-490.
high and low levels of performance. Allport attributes this to the fact that personal relationships in women's lives are of "signal importance". Subtle indications of favor and disfavor, of competition, rivalry and defect, are of utmost importance to her. The woman benefits more from personal qualities than from objective accomplishments, and therefore must be skillful in knowing both herself and others. Also because of a double standard, she must be more sensitive to all people including herself.\(^{23}\)

The investigation of this thesis will also relate to sex differences, but in relation to self-insight on a personality test whereas Summer's study dealt with self-insight on tests of knowledge of school subjects in a classroom situation.

Insight into what one likes and dislikes tends to reflect one's insight into his whole personality. Berdie\(^{24}\) using interest tests, finds that persons show more insight on the Kuder Interest Test than on the one by Strong. He attributes this not only to test items, but also to the categories used in grouping the scales and defining the self-ratings. The median contingency coefficient between the Kuder and self-rating was \(0.52\); and \(0.43\) for the Strong Interest Test. This group was comprised of five

\(^{23}\) Allport, *Personality*, 517.

hundred men between fourteen and thirty-seven years of age. It
was comprised of college students at the University of Minnesota.
Results obtained here are in general agreement with those of other
investigators, and the correlations averaged around .50.

A general review of studies of self-insight shows:
(a) There are many diverse approaches; some are objective, while
others need more refinement in method and terminology. (b) The
results of self-appraisal studies are influenced more or less by
the instruments and statistics used. (c) Self-appraisal is im-
proved by experience, but differs with the person. (d) The corre-
lations between pre-self estimates and performance show a range of
.13 to .70 with an average about .48. (e) Women can better rates
themselves than men.

Since the present investigation of this thesis employs
the Bernreuter Personality Inventory, a review of the literature
about it seems necessary.

The Bernreuter Test consists of one hundred and twenty-
five questions based on those in questionnaires previously con-
structed by Thurstone, Allport, and others. Six scales have been
prepared. Weights ranging from plus to minus seven are assigned
to each item in terms of its diagnostic value as determined by
the Kelly-Cowdery-Strong method. The algebraic sum on a partic-
ular key constitutes the score for a given trait. There are
norms for male and female adults, and for high school and college
students. Several investigators feel that Bernreuter's norms are adequate, among them are Paterson\textsuperscript{25} and Stagner.\textsuperscript{26}

The test was standardized on criterion groups which had been selected as extreme by other inventories i.e. the Thurstone, Laird, Allport, and Bernreuter's S-S Scale. Kuznets's\textsuperscript{27} criticism of the inventory's validity based on his conclusion that many of the items were taken from the tests used in validating the Inventory is not relevant. Super\textsuperscript{28} says what is significant and important is that if the other tests are valid, this one is also.

Although the Bernreuter is inadequate when there is the problem of a dynamic personality analysis, still Vaughn and Krug's study\textsuperscript{29} suggests that the Bernreuter scales are measuring a real psychological entity, not a statistical artifact, and that it has considerable validity as a research instrument. Many investi-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Donald G. Paterson, "Research Studies in Individual Diagnosis," \textit{University of Minnesota Bull.}, IV, 1934.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ross Stagner, "Validity and Reliability of the Bernreuter Personality Inventory," \textit{Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychol.}, XXVIII, 1934, 413-418.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Paul Kuznets, "An Analysis of the Bernreuter Personality Inventory." (Abstract) \textit{Psychol. Bull.}, XXXI, 1934, 585.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Donald E. Super, "The Bernreuter Personality Inventory: A Review of Research," \textit{Psychol. Bull.}, XXXIX, 1942, 94-125.
\end{itemize}
Investigators agree with this, and argue against using the Bernreuter on an individual basis, except with very great caution. The F1-C and F2-S scales by Flanagan are reported to be better constructed statistically.

With this general assent to the use of the Bernreuter as a research tool, the investigator can now proceed to the main study on which this thesis is based.


31 Ibid.
CHAPTER III

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The major problem of this investigation as was stated previously is to ascertain with what degree of insight college students can rate themselves on certain aspects of their personalities. In order to more nearly approach a precise degree of measurement, one must use a quantitative tool such as the Bernreuter Personality Inventory. To do this, a compromise must be made, one must substitute a strictly dynamic analysis of personality for a study of traits. The reasons for using the Bernreuter Test, and for dealing with traits will be presented.

Allport agrees that:

Traits are not creations in the mind of the observer, nor are they verbal fictions; they are here accepted as biophysical facts, actual psychophysical dispositions related though no one yet knows how to persistent neural systems of stress and determination.32

The investigator is justified in dealing with traits since he is dealing with only certain aspects of personality, and not personality as a whole.

32 Allport, Personality, 339.
The Bernreuter Test was selected because it tends to meet the requirements necessary for a scientific study of personality. Its definitions are precise, and it is a well-standardized instrument which allows controls. The test employs numbers, and adequate objective criteria for comparison. The merits of its validity and reliability have been shown. When persons are asked to rate themselves on traits it seems logical to use normal traits which are already somewhat familiar to them such as self-sufficiency, dominance, self-confidence, and sociability rather than to ask them to rate themselves on their degree of paranoia, or psychopathy.

Since certain of the six scales of the Bernreuter overlap, it was necessary to include only the more separate and distinct ones, and those scales of statistical worth. Scale B1-N, a measure of neurotic tendency, was omitted on suggestion that it was thought to reflect a social and clinical problem, and technically, because of the high correlation (.95) between it and scale B3-I, a measure of introversion. Scale B3-I, however, correlates highly (.90) with scale F1-C, which is statistically superior. One had to be selected, therefore, B3-I was also omitted. Thus by process of elimination the investigator chose the four better scales from the viewpoint of reasonable application, of distinctness, and of statistical worth. These four remaining scales chosen were B2-S, a measure of self-sufficiency, B4-D, a measure of dominance-submission, and the scales by John C. Flanagan, F1-C,
a measure of self-confidence, and P2-8, a measure of sociability.

The test was administered to one hundred college students from Loyola University and Mundelein College. Fifty males and fifty females took the test. The age range was between eighteen and forty years with the median range at twenty-one years.

There are four parts to the question of self-insight which will be discussed.

The first task was to get a quantitative measurement in terms of percentile scores, which would indicate the degree of self-insight of college students as a whole on each one of the four scales (traits) selected. This was accomplished in the following manner: (a) The students were given the Bernreuter Test, and told to completely and truthfully answer all the questions as directed. They did this. (b) Afterwards, the subjects were read the definition of a percentile score which was taken from the Bernreuter Manual in case they were not familiar with the term. The definition was repeated, explained and illustrated. (c) The first of the four scales on which the subjects rated themselves was self-sufficiency. They were given Bernreuter's definition of this trait. This definition was also repeated, explained, and illustrated. The subjects were then directed to rate themselves, in terms of a percentile score, as to where they thought they

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would place on this scale in relation to other college students. They accordingly placed whatsoever percentile they thought would best represent their relative position in the group. (d) Now there are two different percentile scores, the actual one obtained from the test results, and the guessed or estimated percentile which the subject best thought represented his position. A correlation by means of the Pearson Coefficient, between these two sets of scores for all the group would show their degree of relationship. The greater the correlation for the group, then, the greater their degree of relationship, and consequently the better the group's degree of self-insight on the trait considered.

For example, if the correlation between the guessed and actual score for the group is .90 for scale B2-S, a measure of self-sufficiency, then it could be said that the group has very high insight in reference to their degree of self-sufficiency. (e) The reason for administering the test first, and giving the instructions later was because that if the reverse order were used the subjects might have extra cues in answering questions so as to cause a spuriously high correlation. If the subject knew that his degree of insight on his trait of dominance was being tested, he might guess himself to be low on dominance, and answer the questions which he thinks reflect dominance in accordance with his guess. The construction itself
of the Bernreuter Inventory should reduce a response set because some scales, such as B2-S, require a higher score for a "well-appearing" position since most persons would rather think themselves more self-sufficient than dependent on others for advice and encouragement. Scale F1-C, on the other hand, requires a low score for a "well-appearing" position since the ideal of our society is one who is "wholesomely self-confident," rather than any one who feels inferior. (f) The foregoing procedure was followed to find the degree of self-insight of the group on the other three traits of dominance-submission (scale B4-D), confidence in oneself (scale F1-C) and sociability (scale F2-S).

The second facet of the problem on self-insight was to measure it in terms of sex differences. Both Gordon Allport and Summer and John, previously mentioned, had agreed that the females are somewhat more astute in their social discernments, and self-insight than the males. This study will note which group, males or females, best rate themselves, and will note whether there is present a significant difference between them. This was accomplished by taking the difference between the two correlations and then applying the T-test, a measure of level of significance.

The third part of the problem is to ascertain whether insight on the given traits increases with age, or whether the younger subjects know themselves in these areas as well as the older, more experienced subjects. The problem here is narrowed.
It is more or less taken for granted that a normal man of thirty-five will have more self-insight than a normal child of seven or eight years. The problem here answers the question of will persons between eighteen and twenty-one years of age have more self-insight than persons between twenty-one and forty. This division was made when the group was split in the exact middle with fifty persons in the older group, and fifty in the younger. The older group and younger group were compared according to the procedure used for comparing the males with the females.

The fourth and last question of this investigation concerns itself with whether people who say they know themselves well actually do or do not, and whether people who say they have little self-insight actually do or do not. The group between these extremes will also be considered. Allport\textsuperscript{34} states that in one large group only four per cent of the students in courses in psychology admitted possible deficiency in self-insight. In the present investigation five per cent admitted this.

To investigate whether students can correctly estimate their degree of insight, they were directed to mark down the letter A, or B or C according to the following directions: I feel that I know myself A, hardly at all or very little, B, about average,

\textsuperscript{34} Allport, \textit{Personality}, 220.
or C, very well. The students were then divided into the A, B, or C group. For each of these three, the following calculations were made:

First, a standard deviation and a mean for the actual and for the guessed scores of each group was computed. This gives each group two standard deviations (needed to compute the level of significance of difference between means) and two means. Secondly, for each group the difference between the two means was computed. Thirdly, the significances of the differences thus obtained for each one of the three groups were compared with each other by using the formula for the level of the significance of difference between means. Group A was compared with group B, group B with group C, and group A with group C. In other words, the difference between the means for the actual and guessed scores was calculated for each group. This difference between one group and the other was tested for its significance.

If the subjects can correctly estimate their degree of self-insight, then the following relationships should be present:
(a) The mean differences between the actual and guessed scores in group C should be smallest because the people here claim to have much insight, and their guessed scores should be very close to their actual scores. The A group should accordingly show the largest difference between means, and the B group should take a middle position. (b) The level of significance of difference be-
between the means of group A and group C should show the most significant difference, and in this respect the levels of significance of difference between groups A and B, and groups B and C should be somewhat close.
CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS

The procedure for presenting the results will be to discuss each of the four traits one at a time showing the degree of correlation between the actual and guessed percentile scores for the entire group, for the males, and for the females. Then to show whether a real or significant difference between the correlations of the males and females is present. In this way the degree of self-insight for the group as a whole will be seen. The degree of self-insight of the males and females will be seen, and whether they differ significantly in their respective degree of self-insight on the given trait will be shown.

With the same trait, the difference between the older and younger group will be seen by presenting their respective correlations, and showing whether the difference between them is significant. In this way it is possible to see whether insight into a certain trait depends on the absolute number of years a person has lived.

With still the same trait, the means of group A, B, and C for actual and guessed percentiles will be shown. The differ-
ence between these two means will be compared among groups A, B, and C in order to show whether there is present: (1) A significant difference between the persons who claim little insight and those who claim about average insight. (2) A significant difference between those who claim average insight, and those who claim above average insight. (3) A significant difference between those who claim little insight, and those who claim above average insight. In other words, groups A and B, B and C, and A and C will be compared.

The values of the means themselves will show whether the guesses of self-insight tended to be higher, the same, or lower than they should have been.

This foregoing procedure will be employed for a systematic discussion of all the traits.

The first trait to be discussed is self-sufficiency. Bernreuter defines it thusly:

Person's scoring high on this scale prefer to be alone, rarely ask for sympathy or encouragement, and tend to ignore the advice of others. Those scoring low dislike solitude, and often seek advice and encouragement.35

The entire group shows a substantial degree of self-insight here (r = .57). The males show somewhat less self-insight.

35 Bernreuter, Manual For Personality Inventory, 1.
with reference to this trait (.45) than the females (.58) but no real difference exists between them (12 per cent level).\textsuperscript{36}

The older group shows a somewhat low degree of self-insight with reference to this trait (.39). The younger group shows a substantial degree, (.60), but no significant difference exists between them (11 per cent level).\textsuperscript{37}

In reference to each group in itself, it should be noted that only one significant difference is present between actual and guessed mean values. This indicates that in every other case the subjects' guessed self-ratings were close, more or less, to their actual standings in reference to a given trait.\textsuperscript{38}

The subjects who say that they know themselves little (group A) show the largest difference between their mean guessed scores and their mean actual scores (4.6 percentile points). The subjects who claim about average insight (group B) show the next largest difference (2.8 percentile points). The subjects who claim above average insight (group C) show the smallest difference between means (2.2 percentile points). There is not present a significant difference in self-insight between those who say they know themselves little, and those who say they know themselves

\textsuperscript{36} See Table I, Page 31.

\textsuperscript{37} See Table II, Page 32.

\textsuperscript{38} See Table III, Page 33.
about average (.4 per cent level). There is present a significant
difference in insight between those who say they know themselves
little, and those who claim above average insight (.01 per cent
level). The difference in self-insight is greatest here as might
be expected. The results show a greater difference in insight be-
tween those who claim above average self-insight, and those who
claim average insight, than between those who say they they have
little insight, and those that say they know themselves about aver-
age. 39

The results also show that those who have the smallest
degree of insight with reference to their self-sufficiency thought
themselves to be somewhat more self-sufficient than they actually
are. The same is true for the other groups as seen by the magni-
tude of their estimated means. 40

The second trait to be discussed is dominance-submission.
Bernreuter's definition is that "Persons scoring high on this scale
tend to dominate others in face-to-face situations. Those scoring
low tend to be submissive." 41

The whole group shows a high degree of self-insight

39 See Table IV, Page 34.
40 See Table III, Page 33.
41 Bernreuter, Manual for Personality Inventory, 1.
### TABLE I

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ACTUAL AND GUESSED SCORES**  
**FOR THE GROUP AND FOR EACH SEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Correlation of whole group</th>
<th>Correlation of males</th>
<th>Correlation of females</th>
<th>Significance of the difference between the males and females. (per cent level)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-sufficiency</td>
<td>.57 ± .09*</td>
<td>.45 ± .11</td>
<td>.58 ± .08</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance-submission</td>
<td>.71 ± .07</td>
<td>.38 ± .12</td>
<td>.60 ± .09</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>.46 ± .11</td>
<td>.72 ± .07</td>
<td>.48 ± .10</td>
<td>.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>.23 ± .07</td>
<td>.53 ± .10</td>
<td>.08 ± .09</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Standard error of coefficient
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Correlation of older group</th>
<th>Correlation of younger group</th>
<th>Significance of difference between the older and younger group (per cent level)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-sufficiency</td>
<td>0.39 ± 0.12</td>
<td>0.60 ± 0.01</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance-submission</td>
<td>0.33 ± 0.12</td>
<td>0.65 ± 0.08</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>0.54 ± 0.10</td>
<td>0.25 ± 0.05</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>0.58 ± 0.08</td>
<td>0.06 ± 0.006</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE III

**Ratings from Groups Claiming from Little to Above Average Degrees of Insight**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Group A&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Group C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual score mean</td>
<td>Guessed score mean</td>
<td>Actual score mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-sufficiency</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance-submission</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Groups A, B, and C represent those who claimed little, average, and high self-insight respectively.
TABLE IV
LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEANS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Difference between means</th>
<th>Significance of the difference (per cent level)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>Group B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-sufficiency</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance-submission</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>27.8*</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The value in this case gave the only significant difference (.02). The others fell far below the .05 Level. See page 24.
with reference to their degree of dominance (.71). The males show less insight here (.38) than the females (.60). A significant difference is not present (.4 per cent level).

The older group shows a somewhat low degree of self-insight with reference to this trait (.33), while the younger group has a substantial degree of insight with reference to their tendency to be dominant (.65). A high significant difference is present (.01 per cent level).

The subjects who claim little insight show the largest difference between their estimated and actual scores (10.2 per centile points). The subjects who claim average insight show the lowest difference (.5 percentile points). Those who claimed above average insight rated themselves second best in relation to the other groups. There is no substantial difference in their degree of insight for any of the groups with reference to dominance.

The subjects in all the groups (A, B, and C) estimated themselves to be less dominant than the test shows.

The third trait here presented is self-confidence.

Bernreuter defines this trait in the following manner:

Persons scoring high on this scale tend to be hamperingly self-conscious and to have feelings of inferiority ... Those scoring low tend to be wholesomely self-confident and to be very well adjusted to their environment.42

42 Ibid.
The group in general shows a substantial degree of insight in relation to their self-confidence (.46). The males show a high degree of insight with reference to their self-confidence (.72), while the females show a smaller degree (.48). A real difference is not present (.1 per cent level).

The older group shows a substantial degree of insight in relation to their self-confidence (.54) while the younger group shows a low degree (.25). Difference is significant (.01 per cent level).

Group A shows the largest difference between actual and estimated means. Group B showed the second highest difference. Group C showed the smallest mean difference. There is present no significant difference in degree of insight between group A and group B (.4 per cent), and no significant difference between group B and group C. There exists the highest significant difference between group A and group C (.01 per cent level). This reveals a good estimation of degree of self-insight in relation to self-confidence for the groups.

The results show that all the subjects rated themselves to have more self-confidence than they actually have according to the Bernreuter. Those who claimed little self-insight tended toward this the most.

The last trait to be discussed is sociability. Bernreuter defines this trait as follows: "Persons scoring high
on this scale tend to be non-social, solitary or independent. Those scoring low tend to be sociable and gregarious.\textsuperscript{43}

The group shows only a slight degree of self-insight in relation to their degree of sociability (.23). The males show substantial insight, (.53) while the females surprisingly enough show almost no self-insight with reference to this trait (.08). The difference is significant at the .01 per cent level.

The older group shows a marked degree of insight in relation to their degree of sociability (.53) while the younger group shows very little insight (.06). A significant difference is present (.01 per cent level).

Group A rated themselves closest to their actual scores thus showing the highest degree of self-insight with reference to sociability. Group C rated themselves second best, while group B rated themselves the poorest. There is no real difference in degree of self-insight among the groups.

Group A and group B both tended to think they are less sociable than they are according to the test. Group C tended to estimate themselves more sociable and gregarious.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The issue of self-insight is important in determining what type of counseling is best for various individuals. The issue of self-insight is important for the field of vocational selection since little self-insight will result in the choice of a poor job which in itself causes maladjustment. Since the investigator himself was in doubt about the self-insight of college students because of their sometimes unreasonable behavior, on one hand, and their high intelligence on the other, he decided to investigate this question for himself.

Studies have been presented which reveal the mechanisms of self-deception, or the symptoms of inadequate self-insight. These were: "distortion into the opposite", "omission", "justification", and "shift of order". The various ways that self-insight has been investigated were seen. Every way from the degree of disagreement with test results to self-ratings on interests have been used to study self-insight. Generally these studies show women to be better self-appraisers than men. The general correlations range between .13 and .70 with an average of about .48.
These simulate the correlations of the present investigation.

The fact that the Bernreuter is considered an objective, valid, and reliable quantitative research instrument, and that it measures traits which are real psychological entities that are already more or less familiar to most persons are reasons for the use of the Bernreuter Personality Inventory as the tool here, and for the general method used.

The results of this investigation of insight in relation to self-sufficiency show the following: (1) There is a substantial degree of self-insight with reference to self-sufficiency for college students, with no significant difference between males and females. (2) Younger college students between eighteen and twenty-one years of age have somewhat more insight with reference to self-sufficiency than older college students between twenty-one and forty years. (3) Students can very well judge their degree of self-insight with reference to the trait of self-sufficiency. (4) Students think themselves to be somewhat more self-sufficient than they actually are.

Concerning the trait of dominance, the following is true according to the present investigation: (1) There is a high degree of self-insight in relation to the trait of dominance for college students in general, with males having less self-insight than females. (2) The older students have significantly more self-insight in relation to their dominance than the younger groups.
(3) There is no significant difference in the degree of self-insight among those who claim to know themselves little, average, or well. (4) Generally the subjects tended to think themselves less dominant than they are.

The investigation into self-confidence shows the following: (1) There is a substantial degree of self-insight for college students with reference to their self-confidence, with a high degree of self-insight for the males, and much lower degree for the females. A significant difference is not present. (2) The younger students show a significantly lower degree of self-insight with reference to their self-confidence than the older students. Apparently insight with reference to this trait depends a good deal upon age and experience. (3) The students who claim little, average, and above average general self-insight rated themselves third, second, and first best respectively on their degree of self-confidence. (4) Most students studied here tended to think they have more self-confidence than they actually do according to the Bernreuter Test.

The results for sociability reveal the following: (1) The group in general shows a slight degree of self-insight with reference to their sociability. The males show a significantly higher degree of self-insight in relation to the trait of sociability than do the females. (2) Older students show a significantly higher degree of self-insight in relation to the trait of
sociability than the younger ones. The younger female group is sadly lacking in self-insight with respect to this trait. (3) There is generally no significant difference in the degree of self-insight among those who claim low, average, or high general self-insight. (4) There is a tendency to rate oneself less sociable than is shown by the Bernreuter Test.

In conclusion it must be said that the degree of self-insight of college students in reference to certain aspects of their personalities varies from a slight degree of self-insight to a high degree depending on the trait in question. There is seen no consistent superiority of self-insight between the sexes, but again the trait itself must be considered before it can be said who has the better degree of insight. The older group in general tends to have a somewhat more significant degree of insight into more aspects of their personality than the younger group, especially with respect to the trait of sociability. Apparently insight into oneself much depends on age and experience. The students can estimate well their degree of insight concerning the traits of self-sufficiency, and self-confidence, but not so well on the others studied; namely, sociability and dominance. Finally from the data of this experiment it must be concluded that insight into one's personality is not an all-or-none affair, but that persons can know themselves well in certain respects, while their self knowledge in other respects is quite limited.
Future studies of self-appraisal should use projective methods because they come closer to analyzing personality as it is actually i.e. a dynamic unity. Here self-insight with reference to certain relationships among traits could be studied. Completeness of such an investigation is assured since the Rorschach, for example, tests everything from intelligence to sensuality. Some big difficulties to be overcome are first, to establish criteria by which one could scientifically compare these tests results with his subjects' appraisals, and secondly, to reconcile in some way, the relationships which exist between one's self-appraisal which is conscious and his test results which may reflect his subconscious personality.
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C. UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Jerome Frankel has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Psychology.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

May 20, 1952
Date

Edmund P. Marx
Signature of Adviser