

Marital Patterns, Hostility and Personal Illness

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In an investigation of dermatological out-patient attenders, psychometric tests measuring marital patterns, hostility and personal illness were administered to 49 married patients aged under 60. Scores on these tests did not differ significantly between groups of cases classified according to the likelihood that psychosomatic factors were operative.

Predictions about the relationship between scores on the three tests were tested and are reported here.

METHOD

The tests used were the Hostility and the Direction of Hostility Questionnaire (H.D.H.Q.) (Caine *et al.*, 1967), part of the Symptom-Sign Inventory (S.S.I.) (Foulds 1965) and the Marital Patterns Test (M.P.T.) (Ryle 1966).

1. The Hostility and Direction of Hostility Questionnaire (H.D.H.Q.) provides two measures, as follows:

(a) General Hostility—higher scores are found in psychiatric patients, and this score is sensitive to clinical change.

(b) Direction of Hostility. Positive scores indicate intropunitiveness, negative scores indicate extrapunitiveness. These scores reflect relatively stable personality factors.

2. The Symptom-Sign Inventory. A shortened 36-item version of this test was administered verbally as described by Foulds (1965). The test provides a measure of Personal Illness (P.I.). High scores on this distinguish sufferers from any psychiatric disorder from normals.

3. The Marital Patterns Test is a questionnaire which provides four scores as follows:

Affection given (AG) is a measure of the affection given to the spouse.

Affection received (AR) is a measure of affection received from the spouse.

Domination (D) is a measure of domination scored, so that a score of 10 indicates an equal relationship, higher scores indicate male domination, and lower scores female domination.

Domination discrepancy (Dd) is defined as the difference in either direction of D from 10, and provides an

indication of egalitarian versus domination/submission tendency.

These tests were administered by students to whom the patients were referred by one of the authors (P.H.-S.) or his assistant.

HYPOTHESES

1. Marriages between stable individuals will be characterized by high affection scores (AG and AR) and by absence of domination by either partner shown by low (Dd) scores. Hence it was predicted that (AG) and (AR) would correlate negatively, and (Dd) positively, with the Personal Illness and General Hostility scores.

2. Individuals who are intropunitive will tend to accept domination from their spouses. Hence (D) will correlate with the Direction of Hostility score positively for women and negatively for men.

RESULTS

The mean scores of all the patients on all the tests are given in Table I. Table II records the correlations

TABLE I
Mean scores on MPT, HDHQ and PI scale

	Men (n = 9)		Women (n = 40)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
M.P.T.				
Age.. ..	37.1	11.98	38.85	10.14
AG	9.56	3.64	9.92	3.12
AR	10.56	3.54	10.57	3.03
D	11.67	3.24	11.45	3.32
Dd	2.56	2.51	2.65	2.45
General hostility				
	17.11	9.99	14.75	5.53
Direction of hostility				
	-0.44	6.40	3.07	6.09
Personal illness				
	3.67	3.77	4.22	2.46

TABLE II

Correlation between scores on the Marital Patterns Test and on the Personal Illness Scale and the Hostility and Direction of Hostility Questionnaires ($n = 9$ men, 40 women)

M.P.T. scales	AG	AR	D	Dd
	P.I.			
Men ..	.. -·385	-·770 ³	-·460	-·189*
Women ..	.. -·237	-·509 ³	·188	·388
	General hostility			
Men ..	.. -·493	-·196	·244	·511
Women ..	.. -·346 [†]	-·258	·079	·248
	Direction of hostility			
Men ..	.. ·393	-·368	-·550	-·621 [†]
Women ..	.. ·074	-·119	·257	·191

Significance levels— $p < .05^1$

$p < .02^2$

$p < .01^3$

[†]contrary to prediction.

between scores on the M.P.T. with scores on the other two instruments.

Hypothesis 1. With one exception, all correlations are in the direction predicted. Significant correlations are found as follows:

(a) between General Hostility and Affection Given in the case of women.

(b) between Personal Illness score and Affection Received in the case of men and women.

(c) between Personal Illness score and the (Dd) score in the case of women.

Hypothesis 2. The association of D scores with the Direction of Hostility score is in the direction predicted, but does not reach significance.

DISCUSSION

There is good reason to suppose that current interpersonal relationships are of significance in many psychiatric and psychosomatic disorders. The demonstration that measures of marital patterns obtained from a brief, simply administered questionnaire show many of the predicted associations with measures of personality and of illness should be replicated. Meanwhile, the association reported here, and the association of M.P.T. scores with scores on the Cornell Medical Index reported in a previous paper (Ryle 1966), suggest that the use of this and similar tests of interpersonal factors in studies of psychiatric and psychosomatic disorders is practicable, and likely to prove of interest.

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