

SOCIALITY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS SCALE FOR VERBALIZATIONS

LINDA L. VINEY

Macquarie University, Sydney

MARY T. WESTBROOK

Cumberland College of Health Sciences, Sydney

Conceptualizations of positive interpersonal relationships by Osgood (1970) and Danziger (1976) formed the basis of a content analysis scale for verbalizations. The resulting Sociality Scale score (SS) is the total of 7 subscales. The relationship types of solidarity, intimacy, influence, and undifferentiated shared experience form 1 subset of subscales, and the relationship roles of reactor, initiator and joint actor form the other. SS proved to have acceptable levels of interrater reliability and considerable consistency over time. Verbalizations collected from 540 people experiencing different events were used to establish its validity. As hypothesized, high scorers tended to relate more positively to others, to maintain relationships better with others, to exhibit more interpersonal skills, and to experience less anxiety and hostility than low scorers.

Keywords: sociality, interpersonal relationships, content analysis, verbalizations.

The Sociality Scale developed here is one of a series of attempts to make explicit the meaning of people's experience (Westbrook & Viney, 1977). Specifically, it was designed to assess the extent to which a person is currently experiencing satisfying interpersonal relationships. The Repertory Technique (Kelly, 1955) goes some way to achieving this goal but it seems to require intelligent, verbally fluent, and persistent respondents. A content analysis applicable to verbalizations of varying length and obtained with a wider variety of instructions was considered to be of more general use for this purpose.

Such a content analysis scale interferes little with people's ongoing experience. It can provide information about this experience which permits comparisons of events and of people across and within events. It is as useful for retrospective studies as it is for concurrent inquiries. To date, effective aspects of experience have been tapped in this way (Gottschalk & Gleser, 1969), but interpersonal aspects and the more positive types of experience have received less attention. Both of these areas of human functioning are at present assessed inadequately, if at all, in children (Savage, 1968) and adults (Gathercole, 1968). This is true even in clinical assessment (Mittler, 1970), although it is known that characteristic interpersonal relationships are associated with various psychological disorders (Lowe, 1969).

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Correspondence and reprint requests should be addressed to: Dr Linda Viney, School of Behavioural Science, Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW 2113, Australia.

There is already available in the literature a content analysis for verbalizations relating to interpersonal relationships (Gottschalk & Gleser, 1969) but little work has been done with it to date. Like other interpersonal indices e.g., the measure of loneliness developed by Russell et al. (1978) accentuate the negative aspects of relationships rather than the positive. Further, its authors do not clearly articulate different types of interactions to be scored. What we considered necessary for a more viable content analysis of references to positive interpersonal relationships was a conceptual analysis of these types. Danziger (1976) has provided a threefold classification of interpersonal communications based on relationships of solidarity, intimacy, and influence. Solidarity involves interpersonal integration, a common commitment between people and the sharing of resources. Intimacy involves people relating to one another as sources of personal satisfaction and being close for the sake of being close. Influence recognizes the relevance of social status and associated power to a third group of positive interactions.

Each of these types of interpersonal relationships has already been observed and delineated by a number of psychologists. Schaefer (1959), working with mothers and children, used love-hostility (intimacy) and control-autonomy (influence) dimensions in his model of interaction. Straus (1964) derived a similar 2-factor solution from his study of family interactions: support (solidarity) and power (influence). Leary's (1975) analysis of more general interpersonal behavior led him to a classification similar to that of Schaefer's – affection-hostility (intimacy) and dominance-submission (influence) – while Bales' (1956) work with small groups led him to distinguish between intimacy and power. Solidarity, intimacy, and influence all seem to be necessary for a comparison account of interactions, as Longabaugh's (1966) cross-cultural studies of children and Schutz's (1958) work with FIRO have shown.

Osgood's (1970) analysis of the structure of interpersonal intentions also supports this view. His factor analysis of the attributes of a sample of interpersonal verbs isolated the three dimensions familiar from other semantic differential work: evaluation, potency and activity. It also revealed three factors representing Danziger's types, which in this case were labeled alter-oriented vs. self-oriented (solidarity), associative vs. dissociative (intimacy), and super-ordinate vs. subordinate (influence). Osgood also derived another dimension – initiating vs. reacting – which it seemed appropriate to take into account in this content analysis. The Sociality Scale, then, recognizes three main categories of positive interpersonal interactions (coded as a, b, and c) as well as a fourth category of interpersonally shared experience (d) which is scored when the type of relationship referred to is not clear. It further recognizes the initiating-reacting dimension by allowing for scoring which represents the speaker's role as sole reactor (1), sole initiator (2), or as jointly reacting or initiating communications with others (3).

METHOD

The verbalizations to which this content analysis (Table 1) can be applied might have been obtained with the open-ended instructions described by Gottschalk et al. (1969) or in a variety of other ways (Westbrook & Viney, 1977). The method is

potentially applicable to any sample of speech. A score of 1 is given for each clause in which the speaker refers to any of the positive interpersonal relationships delineated in Table 1. Each clause may be coded only once.

The content of the references to be coded can be specified in more detail than in Table 1. References are coded only if the speaker is involved in the relationship. This usually means that only first person references are coded, although not always; e.g., “She is very nice” is coded as Sb2. Second and third person references are sometimes used to refer to the self, e.g., when employed for the hero of a story. “We”, “our”, and “us” usually require the number coding of 3 when they occur (e.g., “We enjoyed ourselves greatly”) except when they are used to include the researcher or as the royal plural. References are also coded only if they relate to two or more people in interaction; i.e., “This was my attitude to my wife” would not be coded since no interaction has been described. Both people must be mentioned in the clause unless the verb used implies such an object (e.g., “said”, “told”, “suggest”, “marry”) or unless an adjacent reference to the subject has not been scored (e.g., “As the clown came nearer/I laughed”). References to groups of people with whom the speaker is involved are also coded (e.g., a team, a class, a road repair gang, a business company).

TABLE 1
SCHEDULE FOR THE SOCIALITY SCALE

Sa Solidarity

In this type of relationship people are construed as *resources*. References to one person (people) in a supportive or nurturant relationship with another (others) are scored. They may imply that they are working towards a common commitment or goal or aiding in a mutual attainment, or merely inclusion and integration.

- Speaker as sole reactor (Sa1)
- Speaker as sole initiator (Sa2)
- Solidarity relationships which the speaker experiences with others as either reactor or initiator (Sa3)

Examples:

Sa1 They gave me painkillers.

The group does help me.

The children make my life worthwhile.

I thought my ankle was broken. The ambulance man rubbed it for a while.

Sa2 I stayed with my mother/when my father died.

I can work well with these people.

(But do *not* score “I made a lot of good friends”, which is coded Sb2).

Sa3 It is up to us/whether we get better. (Both clauses are scored.)

We called a taxi driver to take us into the city.

My parents took us for a holiday. (But do *not* score “We went with my parents for a holiday”, which is scored as Sd3).

Sb Intimacy

In this type of relationship people are construed as sources of *personal satisfaction*. References to one person (people) attracting another (others) are scored. They may imply intimacy, empathy, fellowship, affection, friendliness, sociability, or efforts to maintain a close interpersonal relationship.

- Speaker as sole reactor (Sb1)
- Speaker as sole initiator (Sb2)
- Intimate relationships which the speaker experiences with others as either reactor or initiator (Sb3).

Examples:

Sb1 Someone did want me after all.

I appreciate the love of my family.

People were very friendly towards me.

Sb2 I was going with this boy.

They are very entertaining people.

Those children really interest me. (But do *not* score “The problems those children have interest me,” which is coded as Sd2 because of its ambiguity.)

Sb3 We like Joe.

My parents can't wait to see us when we go home. (The latter clause would be scored as Sd3).

Their attitude made us feel good

Sc Influence

In this type of relationship people are considered as sources of *power*. References to one person (people) influencing another (others) are scored. They may imply status differences or asymmetrical acts of control or assertion.

— Speaker as sole reactor (Sc 1)

— Speaker as sole initiator (Sc2)

— Influential relationships which the speaker experiences with others as either reactor or initiator (Sc3)

Examples:

Sc1 He told me to go back to work.

She asked me to move over.

How long will the doctor keep me here?

Sc2 I asked them/would they not cook day and night.

I had some trouble getting a removalist to come.

I pushed her into the car. (This clause would not be scored if its context suggested that it represented a negative or dissociative interaction.)

Sc3 We had to come home/when we were told. (Both clauses would be scored.)

We were able to get the committee to pass the motion.

My boss has us clock in.

Sd Shared Experience

References to one person (people) relating to another (others) but the nature of their shared experience is not clear; i.e., it cannot be coded unambiguously in only one of the three categories above.

— Speaker as sole reactor (Sd1)

— Speaker as sole initiator (Sd2)

— Shared relationships which the speaker experiences with others as either reactor or initiator (Sd3)

Examples:

Sd1 He could have married me. (Unelaborated.)

She looked up at me.

I was brought up in a church-centered family. (Sa2 or Sc2 only if elaborated.)

Sd2 I was going to take my friend along. (Sa2 or Sb2 only if elaborated.)

I belong to AA.

I teach handicapped children. (Sa2 or Sc2 only if elaborated.)

Sd3 We had very limited musical knowledge.

.../then it happened to us.

All of us were sleepy, even me. (References to “everybody” are scored if they appear to include the self.)

Both my friend and I like to play bowls. (“Friend” is a difficult word to code in this context.

We have adopted the policy of coding such a reference as Sd, unless it is qualified, e.g., “old friend”, “good friend”, or as “girlfriend” by a male speaker or as “boyfriend” by a female speaker, when it is coded as Sb1.)

Some comment on references to interpersonal relationships involving the speaker which are *not* coded could provide further rules for scoring. They may be negative or dissociative, e.g., “He yelled at me for doing what I did”, “We drifted apart”. The only negative experiences which are scored are the shared experiences coded as Sd3; e.g., “Our troubles did not come singly” would be scored, because the description of sharing indicates a satisfying interpersonal relationship. They may also be negations of experience; e.g., “We didn’t go to work that day” would not be coded, but “We couldn’t go to work that day” would be coded as Sd3 to represent a shared experience. Nor are relationships with supernatural or fantasy figures scored, e.g., “God told me what to do”, since they do not represent interacting with people. Nor are generalizations, e.g., “There is always someone around to help”, which do not acknowledge personal involvement in the interaction. References only to the researcher or the collector of verbalizations are also not scored.

TABLE 2
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE SOCIALITY SCALE FROM EIGHT SAMPLES OF PARTICIPANTS

	<i>S_a</i>	<i>S_b</i>	<i>S_c</i>	<i>S_d</i>	<i>S₁</i>	<i>S₂</i>	<i>S₃</i>	<i>S_S</i>
Street youth	0.15*	0.21	0.15	0.37	0.18	0.24	0.33	0.49
	0.14†	0.18	0.13	0.21	0.15	0.17	0.25	0.24
Successful university students	0.14	0.11	0.07	0.32	0.09	0.15	0.34	0.43
	0.10	0.11	0.05	0.24	0.08	0.12	0.25	0.23
Transitional students	0.13	0.11	0.09	0.36	0.12	0.14	0.34	0.44
	0.11	0.08	0.08	0.21	0.10	0.13	0.23	0.20
External university students	0.14	0.07	0.08	0.33	0.10	0.13	0.33	0.42
	0.10	0.07	0.07	0.21	0.08	0.11	0.21	0.19
Relocated women	0.21	0.14	0.11	0.54	0.18	0.25	0.48	0.61
	0.12	0.08	0.06	0.17	0.13	0.15	0.21	0.15
Child-bearing women	0.40	0.24	0.12	0.19	0.29	0.37	0.20	0.54
	0.16	0.14	0.09	0.12	0.15	0.17	0.13	0.17
Relatives of medical emergency patients	0.34	0.10	0.10	0.27	0.22	0.25	0.26	0.49
	0.20	0.06	0.07	0.20	0.13	0.17	0.18	0.20
Hospitalized psychiatric patients	0.24	0.16	0.12	0.26	0.23	0.23	0.21	0.47
	0.13	0.15	0.10	0.18	0.15	0.15	0.17	0.18

Note: * = Mean; † = Standard deviation.

Scores are summed and related to a correction factor (CF 100 number of words) which takes into account relative opportunities for sociality scoring. Half of this factor is also added to the treated sum in order to avoid the effects of zero scores. This score proved to have a positively skewed distribution so that square root, tan, and log transformations were tested for normality by the Shapiro-Wilkes method. The log transformation was the only one found to be satisfactory for this purpose, with a constant of 1 added to ensure positive scores. The formula for the total score of the Sociality Scale or for any of its subscales is, therefore:

$$55 = \log [(Total\ score \times CF) + \frac{1}{2} CF + 1]$$

To date this content analysis has been applied to verbalizations from a variety of samples of participants, in total 540 people experiencing eight different kinds of events. The means and standard deviations of their distributions of scores on the subscales and total sociality score are presented in Table 2. The first sample listed is of young people ($n = 97$) approached on the streets of Sydney, Australia. Sixty-three were men and 34 were women and their ages ranged from 15 to 22 years (Viney, 1978). The second is a group of 32 successful full-time university students, of whom 16 were men and 16 women. They were aged from 18 to 47 years (Viney & Manton, 1973). There are also two other student samples, one of 47 first-year students (22 male and 25 female) making the transition from school to university (Viney, 1977), and one of 48 externally enrolled students (28 men and 20 women) who were older than the first-year students. The fifth and sixth samples are samples of women. There were 52 who had recently been relocated in a new community (Viney & Bazeley, 1977) and 200 who had given birth to a child (Westbrook, 1978). Another sample consists of 30 relatives of medical patients who were being admitted to the emergency ward of a

metropolitan hospital, 16 men and 14 women who ranged in age from 16 to 67 years (Bunn & Clarke, in press). The last sample has also been reported by Viney and Manton (1973) and is made up of 35 hospitalized psychiatric patients, 19 men and 16 women aged from 17 to 64 years. Data from these groups were used to assess the reliability and validity of the Sociality Scale.

RESULTS

RELIABILITY

Of the various forms of reliability, interrater reliability is the most important for a content analysis measure. Correlations between the scores of the two authors working independently from the schedule in Table 1 varied from 0.85 to 0.97 for the subscales with 0.96 for the total score (SS). (For all correlation coefficients reported in this paper $p < 0.05$.) Correlations between a panel of four independent judges (two experienced psychologists and two psychology graduate students working purely from the schedule with the comments made above) varied a little more; but intercorrelations for SS varied only from 0.95 to 0.97. There was no discernible pattern in the few disagreements that occurred. The interrater reliability of the scale is, then, acceptable. Reliability over time was also demonstrated. The correlation between two sets of scoring made by one judge four months apart was high for SS (0.97). It ranged somewhat more for the subscales, which will not be treated in any detail in this paper.

Yet another form of reliability concerns variation in scores over time. Cronbach et al. (1972) recommend that the relative importance of stability variance be examined using a generalizability model. Data collected from the incoming students over five occasions at two-week intervals revealed little variation over time. From Time 1 through Time 5 the mean scores were 0.44, 0.48, 0.40, 0.39, and 0.44. The spread of scores from Time 1 through Time 5 was even more stable: from 0.20, 0.21, 0.22, 0.24, to 0.21. The nonsignificant F ratio for the five factors ($F = 0.50$, $df = 4,227$, $p > 0.10$) supported this observation. The generalizability of a single observation as a measure of the typical level of SS was only 0.285, while that of five observations rose to 0.667. The pattern for the subscales was similar. The average score from five verbalizations, then, yields a better estimate of people's typical experience of sociality than does a single observation.

Yet another source of information about the Sociality Scale is the correlation matrix between subscales and the total score which reflects on the internal consistency of the Scale. In the eight matrices available the subscores usually correlated significantly and substantially with the total score. Of course there was an artifactual component in these relationships. Yet intercorrelations varied according to the type of sample. Two examples suffice to make this point. The child-bearing women, whom Table 1 shows to score highly on supporting relationships (Sa), had their highest correlation with the total score for this subscale. In contrast, the external students, who scored highly in the realm of undifferentiated but shared experiences (Sd and S3), had their highest correlations with SS for those subscales. In other words, most subscales contribute to SS, but their relative contribution depends on the dominant types of relationships for any sample. Sc seems to be making less of a contribution, because

these power relationships are only a very small proportion of the experience of positive interpersonal relationships for the people we so far have sampled.

There is also the question of intercorrelation between subscales to be considered. Inspection of the matrices revealed that the majority of significant intercorrelations were between any of Sa, Sb, Sc, or Sd, on the one hand, and of S1, S2, or S3 on the other. Significant correlations within these two subsets were rare (they were, of course, artifactually low) and showed no consistent pattern. It seems, then, that the subscales reflecting type of interrelationship (Sa, Sb, Sc, Sd) might eventually be employed together, as might those reflecting relationship roles (S1, S2, S3); but the two subsets of scales should not be applied together as if they were independent scores.

VALIDITY

Initial attempts to determine validity were chiefly concerned with the total Sociality Scale. We have tried to draw up a nomological net to amplify its meaning. Sex was not found to be differentially associated with SS in any of the six samples that contained both men and women, nor was age a significant factor in any sample. Nor did socioeconomic status appear to have any effect. For the incoming students, scores on the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) were available and were found not to be significantly associated with the Sociality scores. This kind of response bias, then, seems not to unduly influence it. Having inspected S3 relationships with this set of generally relevant variables, we then moved on to test specific hypotheses.

Its associations with content analysis scales of affect were investigated. These included the Gottschalk and Gleser (1969) Total Anxiety score and its subscores of death anxiety, mutilation anxiety, separation anxiety, guilt, shame, and diffuse anxiety, and also their aggression scales of hostility in, hostility out and ambivalent hostility. Cognitive anxiety (Viney & Westbrook, 1976) and positive affect (Westbrook, 1976) were also included in the analysis. It was hypothesized that experiencing positive interpersonal relationships would be associated with relatively little negative affect; that is, that SS would correlate negatively with scores representing anxiety and hostility. Relationships were considered consistent enough to report if they appeared as significant in the majority of the eight samples (five or more). General anxiety (mean $r = -0.22$), especially diffuse anxiety (mean $r = -0.39$) and anxiety about death (mean $r = -0.40$) proved to be low in high sociality scores. Cognitive anxiety, a reaction to inability to interpret experience meaningfully, was also lower in these people than in low sociality scorers (mean $r = -0.35$), as was the outward expression of hostility (mean $r = -0.32$). Sociality was, as expected, inversely related to anxiety and aggression.

Other specific hypotheses were tested with certain samples of participants. For the mothers, for example, unobtrusive measures were taken from their verbalizations of their relationship with both husband and baby (Westbrook, 1978). High SS scoring mothers were predicted to have more positive relationships with both of these important people in their lives. For the relationship with baby the association between scores was significant ($r = 0.25$). For that with spouse, which was assessed differently, $\chi^2 = 3.86$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$. For each prediction the expected positive relationship was established.

For the sample of transitional students, data were also available on whether they were able to rely on a close friend during the transition. It was expected that higher scorers would be more likely to report doing so than low scorers. This reliance on a single, close friend during changes in life style did indeed prove to be associated with higher sociality scores ($r = 0.24$). We also tested a similar hypothesis with these students, using Kelly's (1955) dependency grid. It was predicted that their total scores and total role scores on the grid would be significantly associated with the 55 score, and they were. Students who referred to more enjoyable interpersonal experiences tended to limit the satisfaction of their dependency needs to a small number of highly salient people ($r = -0.34$).

This pattern of associations supports the validity of the Sociality Scale as an index of more positive interpersonal experiencing. What of comparisons of samples of people using its total score? The first sample listed in Table 1 comprised young people who were later to interact with a group of 10 facilitators. They were to help them develop interpersonal skills which they were judged to need. The facilitators were selected by an experienced team of helping professionals as having good insight and being able to relate to others in an open and caring way. They were also trained together in a workshop which focused on developing greater self-esteem and self-awareness and better communication (Viney, 1978). They were expected, therefore, to have higher sociality scores. A comparison of the small group of facilitators with the sample of young people with whom they were to work did successfully distinguish between them ($Z = 2.26$, $p < 0.05$), and facilitators' scores were higher ($M = 0.59$, $SD = 0.14$).

Another comparison was made between the groups listed in Table 1 using analysis of variance. The three student samples were considered to contain people of similar interests and current experiencing so that they were combined and compared with two other groups of people experiencing essentially interpersonal transitions: mothers and relocated women. As predicted, these two groups combined proved to have higher scores than the students ($F = 39.78$, $df = 1,378$, $p < 0.001$). SS, then, can be an effective discriminator.

DISCUSSION

Our aim was to construct a scale of sociality. The resulting tool should be useful in assessing people's experience of events, transitions, and crises (Viney, 1976). The focus of this content analysis has been on positive rather than negative interpersonal relationships of which no satisfactory measure has been available. It can be used in agreement by independent raters with standardized instructions for coding, who can apply it consistently over periods of time. The scores from it, too, appear to be relatively stable. The total sociality score is usually contributed to by all of its subscales and so is not independent of them. Nor are its subscales independent of each other except as they are used in the clusters of Sa, Sb, Sc, and Sd on the one hand and S1, S2, and S3 on the other. It may be possible to use these subscales to determine what type of relationships people have – solidarity, intimacy, or influence. It may be possible to gauge the roles they most often see, themselves as playing – reactor, initiator, or sharing experience with others. Further research is

needed to indicate if this is so. Our chief concern here, however, is with the total sociality score (SS).

That score does not vary as a function of demographic characteristics such as sex, age, or sociometric status. Positive interpersonal relationships undoubtedly occur irrespective of these characteristics. People who have high SS scores have been shown to experience less anxiety and anger than low scorers, which fits with the notion that people who are relatively free of anxiety and anger have more positive interpersonal relationships. Of the samples examined here, the highest scoring groups are those who had to relate to others as an intrinsic part of their current transition, new mothers and women relocating with their families. Mothers who had good relationships with their husbands and babies scored high, and enrolling students who scored high proved to be more likely to be successfully maintaining single, intimate friendships. Further, young people who had been selected for their interpersonal skills were also high scorers. The sociality score appears to tap successfully the experiencing of positive interpersonal relationships.

Such a content analysis scale can be applied in many areas of research, if only because it provides a quantitative assessment of freely given, qualitative verbalizations (Lowenthal, 1976). It seems that, given encouragement, people do recall and talk about what has emotional significance for them (Bryant & Trockell, 1976; Casey et al., 1967). There is some question, however, about the range of data collecting relationships and whether such a scale can be applied. The verbalizations from the eight samples of people reported here were collected by different people, in different situations and, sometimes, even with different instructions. The viability of comparing them may therefore be questioned. We consider, however, that each person (participant or client) brings to any relationship, situation or instructions his or her own experienced world (Kelly, 1955; Keen, 1975). It is the interpersonal aspect of this world which we have tried to represent.

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