The exchange of self-disclosures among people getting acquainted in a laboratory setting followed a norm of reciprocity. The intimacy level of the initial disclosure was based on a first impression of degree of liking for the other person. The level of subsequent disclosures made depended on the intimacy level of disclosures received from the other person. (The SC78 and SSCT indicate that this paper has been cited in over 135 publications.)

The research was done in collaboration with two undergraduate students, Al Gary and Gay Kahn, who wanted laboratory experience. Each went on to earn a doctorate in psychology. Our study dealt with a behavior, self-disclosure, that is a central component of human communication and a core concern of psychotherapists: it is not surprising that interest in this topic has been sustained.3 What was equally important, though, was that this study used a laboratory methodology that was “tight” in its controls, quantitative analyses, and ease of integration into a larger theoretical context (i.e., exchange theory).

Both of my mentors, Jourard and Wright, died as young men long before their own research careers were completed. I consider the influence of this study, whatever it may be, as a continuing legacy from them to those of us who are still trying to create a science of psychology.


©1987 by ISI® CURRENT CONTENTS®