

*The Nature and Function of Self-Disclosure
as the Basis of an Integrated Model of Intimacy*

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Abstract

This study utilized a self-disclosure model of intimacy developed from a review of the literature to analyze and evaluate four scales currently in use by researchers to generate and assess intimacy. Clear conceptual definitions of self-disclosure and intimacy were developed from the literature review and used to determine if a correlation could be established between what the instrument(s) purported to measure, or generate, and intimacy as defined by the literature review. The purpose of this study was to determine the nature and function of self-disclosure and develop a cogent model of intimacy that might point researchers to an understanding of its function. Each instrument was analyzed in the same manner using a set of questions developed from the stated objectives of the instruments. Without a cogent model of intimacy each instrument appeared to assess, measure, or generate a different phenomenon. When the analyses of the four instruments, was combined with the results of the literature review, an integrated model of intimacy became apparent. This integrated model proposed that intimacy is a multidimensional phenomenon of human communication, best conceptualized as having three (3) levels. Objectively, it is experienced as honesty. Subjectivity, it is experienced as interpersonal closeness, or a feeling of interconnectedness. At the *inter-subjective* level, it is reserved for those individuals with the courage and skill to dialogue. This integrated model suggests that the function of intimacy is to correct the distortions individuals develop about their true needs, abilities, and capacities due to the complexities of human communication, limitations of human reason, and self-deception.