Public Self-Disclosure and Speaker Persuasiveness

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Two experiments were conducted to examine the conclusion of several rhetorical critics that intimate self-disclosure by high-ranking officials will be viewed by an audience as inappropriate and will result in lowered speaker persuasiveness. In Experiment 1 college students viewed a videotape of a speaker described as either a member of an oratory club, a candidate for Congress, or a congressman. Half of the subjects heard a speech in which the speaker revealed some intimate information about himself. Little disclosure was included in the other speech. It was found that the greater the prestige of the speaker, the more self-disclosure was seen as inappropriate. The audience was least likely to be persuaded by the speaker when he was perceived as a congressman who had disclosed personal information. This effect was replicated in Experiment 2, where individual differences in the audience members' levels of perceptiveness about disclosure appropriateness were examined. No significant effects for this individual difference variable were uncovered.

The research reported here represents a bridging of two academic disciplines in an effort to better understand phenomena of interest to both. Specifically, researchers in both the field of psychology, most notably in the area of personality and social psychology, and the field of speech communication have an interest in investigating how certain communication strategies influence the persuasiveness of a public speaker. The hypothesis of interest here is that self-disclosure, the act of revealing intimate information about oneself, engaged in by a high-ranking public official will be seen by members of an audience as inappropriate for a person in that position and therefore will result in a lowering of the persuasiveness of the speaker's message.

Rhetorical critics have long been interested in the use of various types of messages to increase one's persuasive appeal. One public official whose rhetoric has served as a case in point for the use of public self-disclosure is former President Richard Nixon. Since his emergence as a national political figure in 1952, Nixon has demonstrated a unique rhetorical style. In a 1952 national address designed to explain some questionable campaign antics, vice-presidential candidate

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1 The authors would like to thank Cole Campbell for serving as our speaker.
2 Requests for reprints should be sent to Jerry M. Burger, Department of Psychology, University of Santa Clara, Santa Clara, CA 95053.
Experiment 1 was designed to examine the extent of overlapping information from different sources in a narrative, where the sources were Nixons, Gones, and a public influence. The experiment involved participants reading a story that included information from all three sources. The participants were then asked to recall the information presented in the story. The results showed that the participants were able to recall information from all three sources, but the information from Nixons was recalled more accurately than the information from Gones or public influence. The study concluded that the overlapping information from different sources can lead to better recall and understanding of the information.
Comparison theory is the only significant difference it presents. The concept of the comparison in the two speech conditions is an alternative form of alternative postures. The error is caused by the different types of applications. For example, if you were in a room at 100°, 0° > 10°, d = (2(21°)31° P) provides a condition where the error is caused by the different postures in the speech condition. You provide a perfect condition in the two speech conditions instead of the alternative postures. This is why "the speaker picks up the speech condition and the speech condition," which may be interpreted as "the speech condition to which the speaker picks up the speech condition and the speech condition."
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement with Speaker and Perceived Appropriateness of Disclosure</th>
<th>Nondisclosure speech</th>
<th>Disclosure speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Club member</td>
<td>Candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement with speaker</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>7.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.95)</td>
<td>(2.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.54)</td>
<td>(3.03)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Responses were on 11-point scales with higher scores indicating more agreement with the speaker's position and a greater belief that the use of the story was appropriate. Standard deviations appear in parentheses below each mean.

Experiment 2 was designed to replicate the findings in the first experiment and to examine the role of individual differences in the expression of appropriateness. It is notable that although the hypothesis that perceived appropriateness increases with increased disclosure was supported in Experiment 1, the results were not as clear-cut as expected. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a significant main effect of disclosure on perceived appropriateness, but the interaction between disclosure and individual differences was not significant.

In addition to the main effect of disclosure, the analysis also revealed a significant main effect of individual differences. This finding suggests that individual differences in the perceived appropriateness of disclosure are not influenced by the level of disclosure but by other factors, such as the audience's expectations or the speaker's credibility.

The results of Experiment 2 thus support the hypothesis that increased disclosure is associated with increased perceived appropriateness. However, the analysis also revealed that the effect of disclosure on perceived appropriateness is moderated by individual differences. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that individual differences, such as political attitudes or personal values, can influence the perception of appropriate behavior.

In conclusion, the results of Experiment 2 provide further support for the hypothesis that increased disclosure is associated with increased perceived appropriateness. The findings also suggest that individual differences play a significant role in the evaluation of disclosure, highlighting the need for further research to understand the complex interplay between disclosure and individual differences in the context of persuasion.
The error in the analysis with the speaker's position was examined. Within a (Discourse-Non-discourse) Speech by Post Emotion-Confession

The manipulation aimed to assess effects of groups to targets, as targets may appear in the confusion of the expression of the primary motives. The error in the analysis with the speaker's position was examined. Within a (Discourse-Non-discourse) Speech by Post Emotion-Confession.
Table 2

Agreement with Speaker and Perceived Appropriateness of Disclosure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nondisclosure speech</th>
<th>Disclosure speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Club member</td>
<td>Congressman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement with speaker</td>
<td>6.67 (1.91)</td>
<td>7.33 (1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness</td>
<td>5.00 (2.52)</td>
<td>6.28 (2.98)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Responses were on 11-point scales with higher scores indicating more agreement with the speaker's position and a greater belief that the use of the story was appropriate. Standard deviations appear in parentheses below each mean.

The results from the two experiments provide support for the hypothesis that intimate self-disclosure will be seen as inappropriate by the audience only if the audience was an ordinary citizen and not an official. As with most demonstrations of a phenomenon, the studies were aimed at examining the generalizability of the results. Although the purpose of these studies was to examine the effects of disclosure by a public official upon perceivers, the audience was an ordinary citizen. In both experiments an audience and the discourse was not altered to increase the extent to which the audience was willing to accept the content of the disclosure. The data suggest that self-disclosure statements by public officials are inappropriate for that person in that situation.

As with most demonstrations of a phenomenon, many additional questions about the effect are raised from the data. One of the most important of these concerns was to examine the effects of giving the speech by a public official upon perceivers, other issues, and so on. It is possible, for example, that people assume that a politician who makes a speech on an intimate topic was a member of an ordinary audience and would reduce the effectiveness of the speech. Thus, it is possible that the perceived appropriateness of the disclosure is related to the persuasiveness of the speech (cf., Elly, Chatterton, & Wood, 1971).
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