FAMILIAL FACTORS IN PSYCHIC ADJUSTMENT

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ABSTRACT: **To investigate the influence of environment upon the psychic (emotional) state, 150 adult subjects were studied, in three groups. One-third consisted of married women; one-third consisted of their husbands; and one-third consisted of unrelated females (randomly drawn) age-paired to the wives. Psychic state was determined by a simple self-administered controlled association test (Cornell Word Form-2).**

In the two male-female comparisons, the psychic responses were related only in the husband-wife group, and in this group the correlation increased with advancing age. Since the husbands and their wives presumably lived under similar conditions, this may constitute evidence for the role of environment in the psychic state, without in any way minimizing other causative factors.

The controlled association test has long been used as an instrument for the rapid psychiatric assessment of large numbers of persons under various conditions. It generally provides a crude but quantitative analysis of an individual's adaptive and adjustive mechanisms in a manner which is not readily apparent to the subject. The purpose of this report is to investigate the influence of environment upon the emotional state by means of a simple, self-administered controlled association test (1). Specifically, this report is intended to cast additional light on the effect of environment upon the emotional state, through a study of two groups of women: 1) those related by marriage to a male group, and 2) those of a similar age, randomly drawn, not related to the male group.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Emotional state was determined by means of the Cornell Word Form-2 (1) in 150 dental practitioners and their wives (members of the Southern Academy of

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TABLE 1
Statistical Significance of Psychologic Test Correlations in Male and Female Groups

Groups	Sample Size (pairs)	*r*	P
Wives versus unrelated females*	50	+0.231	>0.05
Husbands versus unrelated females*	50	—0.097	>0.05
Husbands versus wives	50	+0.286	<0.05**

* Drawn at random.
** Statistically significant.

Clinical Nutrition). One-third of the sample (50 subjects) consisted of married women; one-third (50 subjects) consisted of their husbands; and one-third (50 subjects) consisted of unrelated females, randomly drawn, and age-paired against the married women.

RESULTS

Table 1 is a summary of the correlation coefficients for the three groups. The Cornell form scores for the two groups of women showed a statistically insignificant relationship ($r = +0.231$, $P > 0.05$). For the males and the unrelated females, the correlation was also statistically not significant ($r = -0.097$, $P > 0.05$). For the husband and wife group, there was a statistically significant parallelism ($r = +0.286$, $P < 0.05$). Thus, husbands with higher (more pathologic) scores were living with women with higher (more pathologic) scores.

In Table 2, the test score data on the three groups are analyzed in terms of age. In the younger age category, there was a statistically significant correlation only in the female groups ($r = +0.651$, $P < 0.05$). The data on the husband and unrelated female groups were not significantly correlated, irrespective of age. It is particularly noteworthy that the data on the husband and wife group only became statistically significant in the older age category ($r = +0.502$, $P < 0.05$). The similarity of psychic response in the older husband-wife group underscores the possible function of environmental factors as individuals tend to live together longer.

TABLE 2
Statistical Significance of the Correlation of Psychologic Scores in Male and Female Groups—in Terms of Age

Group	Age (years)	
	28-38 (n = 25 pairs)	39-52 (n = 25 pairs)
Wives versus unrelated females*	+0.651 P <0.05**	—0.297 P >0.05
Husbands versus unrelated females*	+0.017 P >0.05	—0.268 P >0.05
Husbands versus wives	+0.124 P >0.05	+0.502 P <0.05**

* Drawn at random.
** Statistically significant.

Parenthetically, the familial patterns observed here with the emotional state are much like those previously reported with blood glucose concentration. In an earlier report (2), the influence of environment on the level of blood glucose was studied in 639 adult subjects in three groups. One-third consisted of married women; one-third consisted of their husbands; and one-third consisted of unrelated females (randomly drawn) age-paired to the wives. Blood glucose concentration was measured by the Dextrostix method. In the two male-female comparisons, the blood glucose levels were alike only in the husband-wife group, and in this group the correlation became more marked with advancing age. Since the husbands and their wives presumably lived under similar conditions, this may constitute evidence for the role of environment in the regulation of blood glucose, without in any way minimizing the role of genetic factors.

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