Desire for Control and Interpersonal Interaction Style

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Three studies were conducted to examine the relationship between individual differences in desire for control and interpersonal interaction style. In Experiment 1, high desire for control subjects disclosed less intimate information about themselves in a laboratory task than lows. An examination of daily reports in Experiment 2 found that low desire for control subjects initiated more of their daily conversations and enjoyed those interactions more than did highs. However, the high desire for control subjects ended more conversations than did lows. In Experiment 3, "get-acquainted" conversations between two high desire for control subjects were characterized by an increase in interruptions and more episodes of simultaneous talking than when one high and one low desire for control subject interacted. Contrary to expectation, a large number of interruptions and simultaneous talking episodes also characterized the conversations between two low desire for control subjects. A picture of a high desire for control interpersonal style emerges from this research—one of exercising restraint in interacting with others as well as utilizing several control-maintaining strategies. © 1990 Academic Press, Inc.

During the past few decades, the concept of personal control has become one of the most ubiquitous in social psychological research (cf. Burger, 1989; Langer, 1983; Lefcourt, 1981–1984). Research finds the extent to which a person feels in control or is motivated to control events plays a significant role in such varied phenomena as depression, health, voting behavior, education, and gambling. One natural extension of this research is the examination of individual differences in the extent to which people generally prefer to see themselves in control of events. Burger and Cooper (1979) introduced the concept of *desire for control* and developed a scale for its assessment. People identified as high in

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desire for control are highly motivated to control the events in their lives—to make their own decisions, take on leadership roles in group settings, and react strongly when their perception of personal control is threatened. Low desire for control people are less interested in exercising control over events and are more willing to allow others to make decisions and take on responsibility for group tasks.

A growing body of research on this individual difference variable finds that desire for control level often interacts with our perception of personal control to determine cognitive, behavioral, and affective reactions to a given situation (cf. Burger, 1990). For example, high desire for control subjects distort their perceived ability to control chance-determined events in gambling situations (Burger, 1986; Burger & Smith, 1985). Desire for control levels also are related to persistence, goal setting, and effort in achievement situations (Burger, 1985), and to amount of resistance to conformity pressures (Burger, 1987). Finally, desire for control influences affective responses, such as depression (Burger, 1984; Burger & Arkin, 1980) and the perception of crowding (Burger, Oakman, & Bullard, 1983).

The present set of studies represent an initial investigation into how desire for control affects the way people interact with one another. Because daily interactions necessarily involve at least one other person, and because people enter into interactions with goals and influence strategies (even if it is just to have a pleasant conversation), the perception of personal control may play an important role in daily conversations. Many control-related issues arise during a conversation, such as who will control the choice of topics, the speed of the conversation, and the initiation, duration, and conclusion of the conversation. Does this person want something from me or expect me to react a certain way? Who will control the intimacy level of the conversation? Can I influence this person or create the impression of myself that I desire? Therefore, the extent to which people generally are motivated to control events may have an impact on the way they act when interacting with others.

But how might desire for control translate into interpersonal style? Only two studies to date report data relevant to this question. First, Dembroski, MacDougall, and Musante (1984) examined undergraduates high and low in desire for control in a structured interview. High desire for control subjects in this study "exhibited more loud and explosive voice intonation, more rapid and accelerated speech, faster response latencies to interviewer's questions, and a greater degree of verbal competitiveness (e.g., interruptions, verbal duets)" (pp. 19–20). This general style, particularly the tendency to interrupt and talk at the same time as the interviewer, suggests an effort to control the flow of the interaction not found among the low desire for control subjects.

In the only other known research on this issue to date, Solano (1987) reported consistently negative relationships between desire for control and measures of loneliness. For whatever reasons (e.g., ability to develop and maintain friendships, low interest in having more social contacts), people high in desire for control do not seem to suffer from a lack of satisfying relationships as much as those low in desire for control.

Assuming that high desire for control people want to control important aspects of the conversation, we can speculate on two general strategies they might employ to achieve this goal. First, as suggested by the findings of Dembroski et al. (1984), people high in desire for control may take very active steps to control the flow of the interaction. For example, they might introduce or change the topic of the conversation to satisfy their own needs and hidden agendas. High desire for control people probably become proficient at developing and utilizing personal influence strategies that allow them to get what they want out of their interactions with others.

However, a second possible strategy for control might be to play a more reserved role in the interaction. That is, conversations can also be a threat to one's sense of personal control. Revealing information about oneself might be seen as a risky action, whereas finding out about this other person first (e.g., Where does he or she stand on this issue? Can I trust this person with intimate information about me?) might put the high desire for control person in a more powerful and controlling position.

Three experiments were conducted to explore the extent to which people high and low in desire for control differ in their use of either of these two general strategies. More specifically, interpersonal behavior was examined in three ways. First, we looked at the extent to which subjects revealed intimate information about themselves and reciprocated their partner's self-disclosing behavior in an interaction with a stranger. Next, we examined how often people initiated and ended daily conversations and their reactions to these conversations. Finally, we looked at the use of some specific control-related tactics when engaging in a short conversation with a stranger. We expected that the high desire for control style would consist of active efforts to exert control over a conversation and/or reserved behavior designed to avoid feeling vulnerable.

EXPERIMENT 1

An extensive amount of research in the area of self-disclosure finds that strangers typically reciprocate their partner's level of intimacy when exchanging information about themselves as the conversation and the relationship develop. For example, Davis (1976) had undergraduates engage in a structured conversation in which each took turns selecting topics to speak on from a list provided by the experimenter. An ex-

amination of the previously judged intimacy level of the topics found that subjects tended to select topics for discussion that matched the intimacy level of the topics discussed by their partners. Davis also found that one of the partners usually took the role of setting the intimacy level for the conversation, with the other partner typically matching that level on his or her turn.

If individual differences in desire for control play a role in interpersonal interaction style, then it is reasonable to predict that people high in desire for control are more likely than lows to try to control the pace of self-disclosure during a conversation. They are more likely to take on the pace-setting role, selecting topics with an intimacy level they are comfortable with and allowing their partner to match their self-disclosure level.

Experiment 1 was designed to test these predictions. High and low desire for control subjects were paired with those scoring toward the middle of the desire for control distribution and instructed to engage in a structured conversation similar to that used by Davis (1976). It was predicted that high desire for control subjects would disclose less intimate information in this exercise than lows. This would be consistent with the reserved interaction style that forces the partner to reveal something about himself or herself first. However, because they prefer to control the pace of the conversation from the start, we also expected high desire for control subjects to opt to start the exercise when given a choice.

Methods

Subjects. Sixty male and female undergraduates served as subjects in exchange for class credit. All had taken the Desirability of Control (DC) Scale (Burger & Cooper, 1979) a few weeks earlier as part of a larger test battery.

Procedure. All subjects who participated in the original testing (approximately 200) were divided into three groups based on their DC Scale scores. Subjects with scores at the 75th percentile or higher were placed into the high-DC group. Those with scores between the 75th and 25th percentile were classified as middle-DC subjects, and those with scores at the 25th percentile or lower were placed into the low-DC group. Subjects were recruited via a telephone call to participate in the study. The experimenter randomly selected pairs of subjects from the appropriate lists to form thirty dyads. The dyads were arranged so that 30 consisted of one high-DC and one middle-DC subject, and 30 consisted of one low-DC and one middle-DC subject. In all cases subjects' scores were at least 10 points different from their dyad partner's score and were an average of 14.8 points apart. In addition, all dyads consisted of same-sex pairs.

Upon arrival at the experimental room, the experimenter verified that the two subjects did not know each other well. The experimenter explained that the experiment was concerned with the get-acquainted process and that subjects would participate in a short, structured conversation. Each subject was given a topic sheet containing a list of 65 potential discussion topics. These were taken from the list used by Altman and Taylor (1973), and were selected to provide topics with a wide variety of intimacy levels (e.g., "The kinds of movies I like to see," "My worst experience in school"). The experimenter explained that subjects would begin their conversation with one of them talking about one of the topics for one minute. Then the other subject was to talk about another topic from

the list for one minute, and so on until both had discussed 12 different topics. The listening partner was given the job of keeping time while the other person spoke. Subjects also were instructed to identify the topics each chose to speak on, and the order of the topics, by indicating the sequence of topics in the appropriate space on the topic sheet.

The experimenter told the subjects they were to decide who was to speak first. The experimenter then left the room so that the conversation could take place in private. When the conversation was completed, subjects were taken to separate rooms to provide additional information on the topic sheet. They were asked to rate each of the 24 topics that had been discussed for the level of intimacy of each person's 1-minute discussion of that topic. Subjects were told to place a rating of 1 to 5 next to each of the topics on the sheet, with a 1 indicating "not at all personally revealing" and a 5 indicating "very personally revealing." This was done to improve upon the procedures typically employed in this paradigm (e.g., Davis, 1976). That is, instead of relying on an average assessment of the intimacy of a given topic by outside judges, we sought to obtain the subject's subjective impression of the intimacy of the topic as discussed in the experiment. Subjects then were debriefed and dismissed.

Results and Discussion

The first question of interest was the relationship between desire for control and the amount of self-disclosure engaged in during the interaction. The 12 intimacy ratings each subject gave for the 12 topics he or she spoke on were summed to form an overall self-disclosure score. Analyses of variance revealed that low-DC subjects ($M = 34.87$) had significantly higher scores than high-DC subjects ($M = 28.20$), $F(1, 28) = 8.93$, $p < .006$. Interestingly, when the total intimacy ratings for the partners of the high-DC ($M = 34.20$) and low-DC ($M = 33.40$) subjects were examined, no significant difference was found.

Subjects were asked to indicate on their topic sheets who had gone first in selecting a topic for the conversation. In the dyads with a high-DC member, the high-DC person had started the conversation in 10 of 15 cases. In contrast, the low-DC person in the remaining dyads started the conversation in only 5 of the 15 cases. The difference falls just short of statistical significance, χ^2 (_1_, $N = 30$) $= 3.33$, $p < .08$.

The research design also allows us to look at disclosure reciprocity, i.e., the extent to which high- and low-DC subjects matched the intimacy level of their partners. A correlation coefficient was calculated for each subject between the intimacy rating the subject gave his or her chosen topic and the intimacy rating given to the partner's topic that immediately preceded it. That is, if a subject were to match his or her partner's perceived intimacy level on each turn (e.g., partner selects a "4" topic and the subject then selects a "4" topic), a perfect 1.0 correlation would be found. Thus, a positive correlation indicates a tendency to reciprocate the partner's intimacy level. Eleven or 12 pairs of scores were used to calculate the correlation for each subject, depending on whether the subject went first or second. When the reciprocity correlations for high- and low-DC subjects were compared, only a nonsignificannt difference

was found, $F(1, 28) = 2.34$, $p < .14$, with low-DC subjects ($M = .22$) reciprocating their partners' intimacy levels slightly more than high-DC subjects ($M = .06$).[1]

The results of Experiment 1 begin to paint a picture of the interaction style of high-DC and low-DC people. High-DC people appear less willing than lows to reveal intimate information about themselves to strangers. This finding lends support to the notion that high desire for control people sometimes adopt a reserved interpersonal style. Because revealing intimate information might make them feel vulnerable, high-DC people may limit their self-disclosure, at least during the first few minutes of a conversation with a stranger. However, this does not mean that high desire for control people always adopt a passive, reserved approach to their interpersonal interactions. For example, although this effect fell just short of significance, when it was clear that they were going to have to engage in the conversation exercise, high-DC subjects were more likely to go first and thereby set the pace of disclosure.

EXPERIMENT 2

The findings from Experiment 1 indicate that high desire for control people sometimes utilize a reserved interacting style, at least within the situation created in the laboratory exercise. In Experiment 2 we wanted to determine if this reserved style also would be found in the high desire for control person's daily interactions with friends. Undergraduates were asked to record one conversation a day for 7 days. Given the results of Experiment 1, we expected that high desire for control subjects would be more likely than lows to initiate conversations. In addition, we expected them to end most of these conversations. Deciding the point at which the conversation ends allows a person to control the course and impact of the conversation.

Two other aspects of the conversations were examined. If high desire for control people engage in a reserved style because they want to make the proper impression on the other person, then we would expect them to pay more attention to their partners' response than do lows. Second, if high desire for control people see interactions in terms of control, then they enter conversations with some specific goal in mind (other than for the pleasure of social interaction) more often than lows.

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[1] In effect, there was very little evidence for disclosure reciprocity in this study, contrary to what is typically found in this type of research. When the data were reanalyzed using the Altman and Taylor (1973) intimacy ratings, the average correlations for low-DC and high-DC subjects did not change appreciably, .20 and .09, respectively. No clear differences in the procedures used here and those used in earlier studies are apparent. Thus, these findings represent a failure to replicate the Davis (1976) results.

Method

Subjects. Thirty-three male and female undergraduates served as subjects in exchange for class credit. All had taken the Desirability of Control Scale a few weeks earlier as part of a larger test battery.

Procedure. Subjects met with the experimenter on two occasions. At the first meeting the experimenter explained that the experiment was concerned with better understanding how people interact in their everyday lives. Each subject was given a booklet. The cover page of the booklet contained the instructions for the experiment, which were read aloud by the experimenter as the subjects followed along. The instructions explained that subjects were to describe one conversation per day for each of the next 7 days on the seven pages provided in the booklet. Subjects were instructed to select at the end of the day the longest conversation they had engaged in that day. Subjects were reminded to select a conversation with only one other person and not to be concerned about how important or interesting the conversation was. They were told that telephone conversations could be included and that they need not describe a conversation if they felt uncomfortable doing so, but instead should write about another conversation that day. Subjects returned 1 week later to turn in their completed booklets.

Each of the seven booklet pages asked subjects first to indicate the first name of the person they spoke with and the gender of that person. Next, subjects were asked to indicate who had initiated the conversation, who had ended the conversation, and how long the conversation had lasted. Next subjects were asked, "In a sentence or two, describe the reason(s) for engaging in this conversation." Finally, subjects were asked, "In a paragraph or two, describe your reactions to the conversation."

Results and Discussion

Coding system. A coding system was developed to analyze the open-ended responses. Two judges independently coded the responses for each of the reported conversations. First, if the subject was the one who had initiated the conversation, the judges coded the reason for initiating the conversation as either (a) to have a pleasant conversation or (b) to obtain some specific information or some specific goal. Judges were instructed to assume that subjects engaged in the conversation for the sake of having a pleasant interaction unless some other goal was specifically mentioned. Judges agreed in 94% of the cases. In the case of disagreement, the author made the coding judgment. In a few cases (3%) subject responses were so vague that no judgment was possible.

Next, judges indicated as "present" or "not present" any indication that subjects were monitoring their partner's reactions to their statements (e.g., "I sensed that she didn't agree with what I was saying," "I got the feeling he thought I was stupid"). Judges agreed on 91% of these codings. Finally, the judges coded the subject's overall reaction to the conversation as "pleasant," "unpleasant," or "no information." Judges were instructed to code the conversation as "no information" unless the subject made a specific statement indicating the conversation was pleasant or unpleasant. The judges agreed on 91% of these judgments.

Dependent variables. Subjects were divided via a median split of their

DC Scale scores into high-DC and low-DC halves. Next, the number of conversations initiated and the number of conversation ended (out of seven) were calculated for each subject. Each of these measures was then examined within a 2 (high-low DC) by 2 (male-female) ANOVA. Two significant main effects were found for the number of initiated conversations. Low-DC subjects (M = 3.38) were more likely to initiate conversations than were high-DC subjects (M = 2.71), $F(1, 29)$ = 5.81, $p < .02$. In addition, males (M = 3.57) reported initiating more conversations than females (M = 2.63), $F(1, 29)$ = 8.84, $p < .006$. No significant interaction was found. One significant main effect was found for the number of conversations ended. High-DC subjects (M = 4.12) reported ending more conversations than low-DC subjects (M = 3.13), $F(1, 29)$ = 6.13, $p < .02$.

Next, we looked at the content of the conversations. The following measures were examined within 2 (high-low DC) by 2 (gender) ANOVAs: the percentage of conversations entered into for reasons other than having a pleasant interaction, the number of times the subject specifically noted his or her partner's responses, the total number of pleasant and unpleasant conversations, the percentage of pleasant to unpleasant conversations, and the number of and percentage of pleasant and unpleasant conversations that the subject had initiated. Unfortunately, the information gleaned from these content measures was minimal. Only one significant effect emerged in these analyses. A significant main effect for desire for control was found for the total number of pleasant interactions, $F(1, 29)$ = 4.53, $p < .04$. Low-DC subjects (M = 4.81) more often described their conversations as pleasant than high-DC subjects (M = 3.94).

Nonetheless, the findings from Experiment 2 provide some additional insight into the relationship between desire for control and interpersonal interaction style. As in the first experiment, we found evidence for a reserved interaction style among high desire for control subjects. Specifically, they were less likely than lows to initiate interactions with others. In addition, the high desire for control subjects did not enjoy their interactions as much as lows. This is consistent with the notion that interpersonal interactions may represent a threat of sorts to high desire for control people.

At first glance, this finding may seem inconsistent with the findings from Experiment 1. A near significant tendency was found in the first study for high-DC subjects to initiate conversations more often than lows, whereas in the second study they were less likely to do so. A likely explanation for this is that subjects in the laboratory situation faced a certain interaction. When they know they must talk to someone, perhaps their high need to control the conversation motivates high desire for

control people to take the initiative to set the tone for the interaction. However, if not interacting is an option, as it typically is in our daily lives, then the high desire for control individual may be less likely than others to seek out a conversation.

Once again, we also found evidence for an active control-enhancing strategy once high desire for control subjects were involved in a conversation. These subjects were more likely than the lows to decide when the interaction would come to an end. This action can help ensure that the conversation does not get out of hand or venture into areas where the high desire for control person feels uncomfortable. However, another explanation for this effect might be that high desire for control people have many things they would rather be doing than talking to friends. Thus, their different interaction style may stem from a relative disinterest in nonproductive conversation rather than a fear of it.

EXPERIMENT 3

The findings from the first two experiments suggest that people high in desire for control are more likely than lows to engage in a reserved style of interpersonal interaction. They limit their amount of self-disclosure and initiate relatively few conversations. However, as some of the data collected to this point indicate, these findings are not necessarily inconsistent with the notion that people high in desire for control also will actively utilize strategies to control the direction of the conversation once it has started. Recall that Dembroski et al. (1984) found that high-DC subjects were more likely than lows to interrupt and talk at the same time as an interviewer. This suggests that high desire for control people may be both reserved about what they say in an interaction, but also active controllers of the interaction. In Experiment 3 some specific interaction behaviors were examined for high and low desire for control people engaged in a conversation with a stranger. We predicted that high desire for control subjects would be more likely to interrupt their partners, ask questions, introduce new topics, and talk at the same time as their partner. In addition, the use of these controlling behaviors was examined as a function of the partner's desire for control level. We expected that high desire for control people would be more likely to utilize these strategies when interacting with someone who also was interested in controlling the conversation (i.e., another high desire for control person).

Method

Subjects. Forty-eight male undergraduates served as subjects in exchange for class credit. All had taken the Desirability of Control Scale a few weeks earlier as part of a larger test battery. Half the subjects were randomly selected from a list of students with scores in

the top 40% of the DC distribution from the entire group tested (approximately 120 males). The other half were randomly selected from a list of those scoring in the bottom 40% of the distribution.

Procedure. Subjects were contacted by phone to report two at a time to the experimental room. The recruiter confirmed at the time that the subjects did not know each other. The combination of high and low subjects allowed for three different types of pairings, with the following number of dyads each: high DC–high DC (12 dyads); high DC–low DC (24 dyads); low DC–low DC (12 dyads). The experimenter was kept blind to the subjects' DC scores.

When the two subjects arrived they were seated in a small room with a tape recorder in plain view. The experimenter explained that he was interested in how people got to know one another. Subjects were told their task was to engage in a 10-min conversation. They were encouraged to discuss whatever they pleased, whatever they might normally discuss when first getting to know someone. The experimenter then turned on the tape recorder and asked subjects to identify themselves by first name. This was done to allow judges who would listen to the tapes later to identify by voice the two people in each conversation. The experimenter then left the room and returned 10 min later to interrupt the conversation. At this point subjects were taken to separate rooms to complete a questionnaire. The important item on this questionnaire asked subjects to indicate on a 9-point scale the extent to which they had enjoyed the conversation.

Dependent measures. Two judges, unfamiliar with the experimental hypotheses or procedure, were trained to code the following elements from the taped conversations: (a) interrupting one's partner, (b) asking a question, (c) introducing a new topic, and (d) simultaneous talking. Lengthy operational definitions with examples were provided. Judges listened to and coded the tapes independently. Intercoder correlations for the four measures were interruptions, .73; questions, .76; new topic, .52; and simultaneous talking, .66. Where the judges disagreed, the mean for the two scores was used. The coders also noted which of the two subjects had gone first in the high DC–low DC conversations. They agreed in each of these cases.

Results and Discussion

To meet the assumption of independence of data points, one subject's data was selected from each of the dyads for the analysis. The selection was done at random except in the high DC–low DC dyads, in which care was taken to select data from 12 high-DC and 12 low-DC subjects.

The means for each of the dependent variables by condition are reported in Table 1. Each of the dependent measures coded by the judges, with the exception of simultaneous talking, was first examined within a one-way ANOVA. A significant main effect was found for the number

TABLE 1
DEPENDENT MEASURE MEANS

	High Sub/ High Part	High Sub/ Low Part	Low Sub/ High Part	Low Sub/ Low Part
Interrupted partner	5.67	3.58	2.25	8.25
Introduced new topic	2.50	2.50	3.83	4.17
Enjoyed conversation	6.67	7.00	5.17	7.50

of interruptions variable, $F(3, 20) = 3.47$, $p < .04$. Newman–Keuls comparisons found that only the low DC–low DC and low DC–high DC cells differed significantly, $p < .05$. No significant effects were found for the number of questions, new topics, or enjoyment of conversation measures.

Each of these measures was then examined in a 2 (high-low DC subject) by 2 (high-low DC partner) ANOVA. Several significant effects were uncovered. A significant interaction was found for the interruptions measure, $F(1, 20) = 8.19$, $p < .001$, such that more interruptions occurred when two high-DC or two low-DC subjects interacted than when subjects were paired with a dissimilar partner. A significant main effect for the new topics measure was found, $F(1, 20) = 8.02$, $p < .01$, with lows surprisingly introducing more new topics than highs, regardless of type of partner. Finally, a significant main effect was found for the enjoyment measure, $F(1, 20) = 4.13$, $p < .05$. Subjects reported enjoying the conversation more when they had a low-DC partner than when paired with a high-DC partner.

Next, the high DC–low DC and low DC–high DC dyads were collapsed into one condition to compare the number of instances of simultaneous talking for the three types of dyads (high DC–high DC, high DC–low DC, low DC–low DC). A significant main effect was found for this variable, $F(2, 21) = 3.64$, $p < .04$. Subsequent Newman–Keuls comparisons found that both the high DC–high DC dyads ($M = 7.50$) and the low DC–low DC dyads ($M = 9.33$) tended to have more simultaneous talking incidents than did the high DC–low DC dyads ($M = 4.38$), $p < .10$ and $.05$, respectively. Finally, consistent with the Experiment 1 findings, high DC subjects went first in 9 of the 12 high DC–low DC dyads, $p < .07$, binomial test.

The results of Experiment 3 thus provide some interesting information about the effect of desire for control on interaction style. Although there are some unexpected patterns in these data, there is some evidence for the use of control-enhancing behaviors by high desire for control subjects. For example, high desire for control subjects tended to interrupt their partners often, but only when they were talking with another high desire for control person. Presumably this occurs because both people in this conversation were attempting to control the flow of the interaction, thus causing both to use interruption as a tactic for exercising control. Not surprisingly, there also were more instances of both high desire for control partners talking at the same time than there were when talking with a low desire for control partner. Perhaps because of this controlling style, neither high nor low desire for control subjects seemed to enjoy their conversations with a high desire for control person very much.

Several unexpected results also were found. For example, the con-

dition generating the highest number of interruptions and the most simultaneous talking was the dyad containing two low desire for control subjects. In addition, low desire for control subjects were the ones who seemed to bring up new topics, regardless of type of partner. One post hoc explanation for these findings is that, because neither person seemed willing to take control of the conversation, the two low desire for control participants found themselves awkwardly interrupting one another in an effort to keep the conversation going. Similarly, low desire for control subjects might be less skilled at moving the conversation into topics they wish to discuss, and thus may resort to abrupt changes in topics. Admittedly, this interpretation is highly speculative at this point.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The three experiments reported here represent an initial attempt to examine differences in interpersonal styles for people high and low in desire for control. Although the data were not entirely consistent throughout the three investigations, a general picture of a high desire for control interpersonal style has begun to emerge. This style appears to consist of two components. First, people high in desire for control may be reluctant to enter into a conversation. It is as if they wait for the other person to make himself or herself vulnerable first. For example, by discovering how this other person feels on a given topic before revealing their own views, high desire for control people may be able to exercise more control over the course and outcome of the discussion than if they were to express their views at the beginning.

However, the second component of this style consists of using control-enhancing strategies once the conversation has begun. Several of these were uncovered in the present set of studies. For example, high desire for control people are more likely than lows to decide when a conversation will end. High desire for control people also frequently interrupt their partners, or even talk at the same time, perhaps in an effort to control the flow of the discussion.

Given the complexity of human interaction, it is clear that teasing out the influence of individual differences in desire for control remains a challenging task. Nonetheless, this research may shed light on what role, if any, a need for control plays in the many areas of interpersonal difficulties, such as loneliness, ineffective communication skills, and problems with romantic relationships.

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