

The Correlational Relationship between Extroversion and the Characteristics of Self-Esteem

By: Alyssa Farney

Research has shown that extroverts tend to possess higher self-esteem than introverts. The purpose of this study is to find the characteristics of self-esteem that introverts and extroverts possess. This study will look at the hypothesis that there are certain characteristics of self-esteem that introverts score just as highly in as do extroverts.

I was motivated to do this project because I noticed that very intelligent people were being overlooked because they didn't draw attention to themselves and tended to be introverted. They are the kind of people that you end up talking to and discover they are brilliant, but never would have known it if you hadn't spoken to them. Upon researching the topic, I found that this is common - introverts get overlooked frequently. Many studies link this to the tendency for introverts to lack self-esteem. The logic is circular: if a person doesn't have confidence in their abilities, they aren't going to draw attention to themselves, and because they don't like to draw attention to themselves, they aren't going to show off their abilities, even if it might improve their confidence. So I wondered, do introverts actually believe they aren't competent? Are there certain areas of self-esteem that introverts might possess? It isn't that introverts tend to be smarter; I just couldn't believe that being introverted would correlate so repeatedly with having low self-esteem – with not having faith in your own abilities.

To test this, I combined a test for self-esteem (the self-description questionnaire – SDQ, 13 statements) and I took the extroversion questions from the Big Five Inventory (BFI) personality test (eight statements). This made a 21 statement questionnaire. Participants took the questionnaire in classes, mostly general psychology. There were 185 participants, the average age was 21 years.

My data followed previous research. There were no areas in which introverts had high self-esteem. This is not only disappointing for my study; it shows that introverts really don't

The Correlational Relationship between Extroversion and the Characteristics of Self-Esteem

By: Alyssa Farney

have faith in their abilities. Research showed that being introverted was correlated to depression. For some people, depression is a lifelong battle that feels like a heavy burden, keeping them from what they feel is a full life. Some research went as far as to say that having high self-esteem even staved off depression.

So if introverts are more likely to have depression and lower self-esteem, what does this mean for how we can help people? It means caring. It means bothering with the quiet person or the awkward person, and making that person feel worthwhile. It might be uncomfortable to talk to them, but if they really are struggling, then you just gave them a huge gift. As a psychologist, it means seeing signs of low self-esteem and discouraging it. It means making sure that the quiet person also has confidence in the things they are good at.

I know this sounds like everybody is special in their own way, or that it goes with the idea of everyone receiving a participation medal. But that's not the take away message. American society encourages extroversion and as a result, it makes introverts feel less worthy. Introverts are just as smart and just as useful as extroverts; it's just a different skillset. And it pains me that even introverts don't see that.