

Letter to the Editor

Empirical Evidence for a State Personality Group

JAMES REICH, MD

To the Editor:

Personality is generally considered to be stable, or at the very least, something that changes slowly over time. DSM-IV takes this stance for the personality disorders (1). However, there is no question that measures of personality characteristics can be elevated if measured when the patient is acutely ill with an Axis I disorder. These measures then return to baseline after resolution of the Axis I disorder (2,3).

Researchers have speculated about the possibility of personality being defined as both state and trait. State personality characteristics would vary over relatively short periods of time while Trait characteristics would be enduring. It is beyond the scope of this letter to mention all who have written in this area, but it ranges from 1968 (4) to a recent longitudinal study (5).

A key question is whether State PD can be distinguished from Trait PD and No PD. In two previous reports I did so in two different populations (6,7). In both of these cases the State group could be statistically separated from the Trait group. However, if a State group could be separated from the other groups by a personality variable, this is even more persuasive. I did this in the second report (7), but the first (6) did not. This letter reports a differentiation of the State and Trait groups in the first population (6) using a measure not included in the report at that time.

Not used in that report was the MCMI version 1, a validated personality instrument. One scale felt most likely to be relevant

was chosen for the comparison. Using the scale which measured cluster B personality pathology the results were Trait PD (75.4, SD=11.7), State PD (70.6, SD=6.4) and No PD (55.6, SD=13.8). Even given the relatively small sample sizes (10, 3 and 5 respectively) Fisher's Exact test indicates a significant difference, $p=.025$. This finding of a second population where State PD can be distinguished from No PD and Trait PD by personality measures increases the chances that State PD is a valid personality subgrouping worthy of further study.

REFERENCES

1. American Psychiatric Association: *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, (4th ed) (DSM-IV). Washington, DC: APA, 1994
2. Reich J, Noyes R, Hirschfeld RP, Coryell W, O'Gorman T: State effects on personality measures in depressed and panic patients. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 1987; 144:181-187
3. Hirschfeld RMA, Klerman GL, Clayton PJ, Keller MB, McDonald-Scott P, Larkin BH: Assessing personality effects of the depressive state on trait measurement. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 1983; 140:695-699
4. Leonhard K: *Akzentuierte Persönlichkeiten*. Berlin: Verlag Volk und Gesundheit, 1968
5. Lenzenweger MF, Johnson MD, Willett JB: Individual growth curve analysis illuminates stability and change in personality disorder features. *Archives of General Psychiatry* 2004; 61:1015-1024
6. Reich J: Empirical evidence for "Stress Induced" Personality Disorders. *Psychiatric Annals*, 1999; 29:701-706
7. Reich J, Hofmann S: State personality disorder in social phobia. *Annals of Clinical Psychiatry* 2004; 16:130-144

Address correspondence to James Reich, MD, 2406 Clay Street, San Francisco, CA 94115, USA. E-mail: jhreich@ix.netcom.com

