

INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG THE
WHITE SPACE RESPONSES (S) ON THE
RORSCHACH, BARRON'S EGO STRENGTH
SCALE SCORES, AND CONFORMITY
SCALE SCORES AND SELF-ESTEEM
SCALE SCORES ON THE JACKSON
PERSONALITY INVENTORY

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INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG THE WHITE SPACE RESPONSES (S) ON
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JACKSON PERSONALITY INVENTORY

An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in Psychology

By
Judith Gregg MaKinster
May, 1983

ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to determine the degree of relationship between the white space responses (S) on the Rorschach and ego strength, as determined by Barron's Ego Strength Scale. Additionally, correlations between the white space response (S) and conformity, as measured by the conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory, and S and self-esteem, as measured by the self-esteem scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory, were also investigated. The sample used in the present study was composed of undergraduate students enrolled during the fall quarter, 1982, at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee. The sample consisted of 56 students (44 females and 12 males).

The correlation between white space responses and ego strength failed to achieve significance. Correlations between white space responses and the variables of ego strength, conformity, and self-esteem also failed to achieve significance. Intercorrelations among ego strength, conformity, and self-esteem all attained significance at the .05 level or less. In addition, it was determined that the white space responses (S) and the total number of responses (R) were significantly correlated, $P < .01$.

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Judith Gregg MaKinster entitled "Intercorrelations Among the White Space Responses (S) on the Rorschach, Barron's Ego Strength Scale Scores, and Conformity Scale Scores and Self-Esteem Scores on the Jackson Personality Inventory." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.

John A. Martin
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Linda B. Rudolph
Minor Professor

or

Second Committee Member

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Third Committee Member

Accepted for the
Graduate Council:

William H. Ellis
Dean of the Graduate School

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter | Page |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| I. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| II. METHOD..... | 10 |
| The Sample..... | 10 |
| Description of the Instruments..... | 10 |
| Administration and Scoring..... | 11 |
| III. RESULTS..... | 13 |
| IV. DISCUSSION..... | 15 |
| REFERENCES..... | 17 |
| APPENDIX..... | 20 |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Rorschach is one of the most widely used personality tools today. Scoring and interpretation of the Rorschach is very complex and diversified. The white space response (S) was established as an important test variable by Rorschach (1942). Many studies subsequent to Rorschach's original studies have attempted to validate his original interpretation of the white space response (S) "as indicating some sort of tendency to opposition" (1942, p. 39). There are, however, other interpretations of white space response (S). For example, Klopfer, Ainsworth, Klopfer, and Holt (1954) and Fonda (1960) have hypothesized that white space responses reflect a positive aspect of ego strength.

Rorschach's Psychodiagnostics, published in 1921, was based on the testing and clinical observation of 405 German adults, of whom 117 were classified as normal and 288 as abnormal (Rorschach, 1942). Following the lead of Rorschach, Beck, Beck, Levitt, and Molish (1961) have broadened Rorschach's interpretations or created their own scoring methods and interpretations based on their testing and clinical observations.

Hertz cites a 1933 study performed by Vernon investigating the split-half reliability of the Rorschach on 90 Yale University students and reported a correlation of .91 for the total number of responses (R) and correlations of .60 to .74 for whole responses (W), movement (M), color (C), and

form (F) (Hertz, 1962, p. 297-298). Ford (1946) reported test-retest reliabilities of Rorschach determinants ranging from .38 to .86. Palmer (1962) cites a 1935 study by Vernon which reported a criterion validity coefficient of $.833 \pm .047$ (Palmer, 1962, p. 235). Vernon (1936) reported a criterion validity coefficient of $.434 \pm .078$ for the Rorschach.

The white space response (S) was originally defined by Rorschach (1942) as "those answers in which the white spaces are interpreted rather than the black or colored parts of the figure which surround them" (p. 39). Although Rorschach made no reference to the idea of reversal of figure and ground, Fonda (1960) believes this is what Rorschach had in mind when he defined the white space response (S). Fonda refers to Rorschach's white space responses as primary space responses as opposed to the secondary space responses in which white space plays a more minor role and the black or colored portions of the figure serve as the primary stimulus.

Fonda (1960) stated that "any significant relationship between S and a non-Rorschach variable are usually paralleled by similar relationships between R and the same variable, and parsimony requires that any apparent relationship with S be shown to be more than a mere artifact of the inclusion of S in R" (p. 123). Bandura (1954) found a correlation of .51 between white space responses (S) and the number of other responses in the record (R - S), which indicated that an estimated 25 per cent of the variance in S of his sample was

shared by R - S.

Many researchers have demonstrated full or partial support of Rorschach's original hypothesis that white space response (S) indicates some sort of oppositional trend (Beck et al, 1961; DeKoninck & Crabbe-Decleve, 1971; Fonda, 1951; Fox & Blatt, 1969; Klopfer et al, 1954; Ray, 1963; Rosen, 1952).

Klopfer et al (1954) hypothesized that white space responses (S) are related to oppositional tendencies, but called it an intellectual kind of opposition or the competitive or self assertive aspect of intellectuality. Those researchers stated, "the ability to use white space is considered an indication of ego-strength, the implication being that the personality has resources to resist inundation by environmental forces or motivational confusion" (p. 309-310). Fonda (1960) hypothesized that the white space response (S) often seems to indicate a positive aspect of ego strength based on Hendrick's (1943) "mastery instinct" and Angyal's (1965) "trend to autonomy."

Hendrick (1943) considers the mastery impulse to be an ego instinct and states, "its aim is to control or alter a piece of the environment, an ego-alien situation, by the skillful use of perceptual, intellectual, and motor techniques in order to control or alter a piece of the environment" (p. 314).

Angyal (1965) believes mastery strivings are indications of the basic endogenous process of advancement of the organism's autonomy. He defines the trend to autonomy as "the

drive to act, to make things happen for the mere joy of action and for the sake of experiencing oneself as the cause of changes" (p. 9).

Weltman and Wolfson (1964) conducted a study to determine whether a relationship existed between undifferentiated, primary, and secondary space responses (S) and oppositional and/or mastery tendencies. Rorschach records of 210 nursing school applicants were evaluated in a four group design. Behavioral and ideational characteristics were created as hypotheses derived from the definitions of oppositional tendencies and mastery strivings. An oppositional tendency was defined as "an attitude of hostility which results in an attempt to assert oneself against an external demand or condition" (p. 821). Mastery striving was defined as "an act of seeking answers in an attempt to handle or resolve the external condition in an optimally open-minded fashion" (p. 821). The results supported the hypothesis that undifferentiated space response, as well as primary space response alone, are related to oppositional tendencies (Chi-square values of 17.7535 and 29.5364, $p < .001$ respectively). The results did not support the hypothesis that undifferentiated space responses (S) are related to mastery striving according to their definition.

Last and Weiss (1976) tested their hypothesis that ego strength, as measured by Barron's Ego Strength Scale (Es), could be assessed through the use of certain Rorschach variables obtained from the use of Klopfer's Rorschach

Prognostic Rating Scale (RPRS). They hypothesized that Sum E, a set of Rorschach variables to be defined, is a valid measure of ego strength in that Sum E symbolizes the sum of controlled energy accessible to the ego from various sources. They used the following definition of ego strength, credited as a combination of Fenichel's and Nunberg's definitions of the same: "Ego strength is usually defined as the measure of adequacy and efficiency with which the ego performs in different areas of ego functioning, and the synthetic function in particular" (p. 57). They defined Sum E, drawn from Klopfer's RPRS, as the combination of the following Rorschach variables: (1) number of controlled color responses (FC+, CF+); (2) number of human movement responses (M+); (3) number of animal movement responses (FM+); and (4) number of controlled space responses (S+). They tested 30 Israeli, first-year, female psychology students, who had a mean age of 21.5, intelligence ranging from 120 to 140, 12 years of education, and parents of European origin. The Rorschach Sum E and ego strength as measured by Barron's Es scale were correlated .52 ($p < .05$). The correlation of controlled white space responses (S+) on the Rorschach and ego strength as measured by Barron's Ego Strength Scale (Es) failed to achieve significance.

Ego strength has been called will power, character, general normality, self-consistency, radix, biosphere, regnancy, and self-actualization, but the view that a person's stability over time and across situations stems from a single organizing process appears in most psychological

theories. A general definition of ego strength that is accepted by most psychologists is that it is the capacity of the individual to cope effectively with the environment.

Barron developed his Ego Strength Scale (Es) in 1950 to predict the response of psychoneurotic patients to psychotherapy, but further consideration of the scale indicated that it measures various aspects of effective personal functioning described as ego strength (Barron, 1956). Barron's Ego Strength Scale (Es) consists of 68 true-false statements extracted from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) developed by Hathaway and McKinley in 1942. These items were selected on the basis of their significant correlation with rated improvement in 33 psychoneurotic patients who had been treated for six months in a psychiatric clinic.

The reliability of this scale was determined by dividing the 33 patients into two groups, unimproved and improved, on the basis of two skilled judges' opinions and comparing the means of these two groups' scores. Inner judge reliability of the two group classifications was found to be .91. The mean of the improved group was 52.7 and the mean of the unimproved group was 29.1, giving a difference or t of 10.3 which is significant well past the .01 level. The odd-even reliability of this scale in a clinical population was .76. Test-retest reliability proved to be .72 after three months of psychotherapy in a sample of 30 cases (Barron, 1956).

Morrissey's (1981) research showed ego strength as

measured by Barron's Ego Strength Scale (Es) to be negatively correlated with the conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory. She found a correlation coefficient of $-.63$ which was significant at the $.01$ level. Her sample consisted of 45 undergraduate students enrolled at Austin Peay State University.

The Jackson Personality Inventory (JPI) (Jackson, 1976) was created as a personality measurement tool reflecting a variety of interpersonal, cognitive, and value orientations having important implications for an individual's functioning. The JPI consists of 320 true-false statements contained in 16 scales with 20 statements in each scale. The conformity scale is one of the 16 scales. On the conformity scale, a high scorer is described as compliant, agreeing, acquiescent, adapting, accommodating, cooperative, concurring, and emulating. The traits of a low scorer on this scale are individualistic, self-directed, self-reliant, unyielding, nonconforming, unrestrained, contradicting, and disagreeing. The norms for the JPI are based on the scores of 2000 males and 2000 females extracted from a total of 43 American colleges and universities. Multidimensional scaling studies show validity correlations up to $.99$ between scale values of personality items originated from different sets of judges with regard to the trait being measured (Jackson, 1970). In addition to the above, these studies produced a carefully prepared set of definitions written for each scale as an added measure of validity (Jackson, 1976).

Current research based on evidence gathered from self-descriptive questionnaires concerning relationship between white space response of the Rorschach and self-esteem have proven to be inconsistent.

Fonda (1951) found no significant relationship between white space responses (S) and such personality factors as agreeableness, cooperativeness, or inferiority feelings as defined by scores on the Guilford-Martin inventories.

Murray (1954) found no significant relationship between white space responses (S) on the Rorschach and seven self-report measures of oppositional tendencies for his population sample of 101 Northwestern University students of both sexes.

In 1952 Bandura found no significant correlations between white space responses (S) on the Rorschach, holding R - S constant, and three overlapping "self-esteem" scales: "self-assertiveness," "self-distrust," and "feelings of inadequacy" (cited in Fonda, 1960, p. 137).

The Jackson Personality Inventory (JPI) (Jackson, 1976) also has a self-esteem scale as one of its 16 scales. High scorers on this scale are described as self-assured, composed, egotistical, self-possessed, poised, and self-sufficient. Low scorers on this scale have the defining traits of being self-depreciating, timid, unassuming, modest, shy, humble, and self-conscious.

The main purpose of the present project was to determine the degree of relationship between the white space response

(S) on the Rorschach and ego strength (or trend to autonomy) as measured by Barron's Ego Strength Scale. A positive correlation was hypothesized based on Fonda's (1960) hypothesis that white space response (S) often seems to indicate a positive appearance of ego strength. As a check, since Morrissey's (1981) research demonstrated a negative correlation between the scores on Barron's Ego Strength Scale (Es) and the scores on the conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory (JPI), a secondary purpose of the study was to determine whether there was a relationship between the white space response (S) of the Rorschach and the conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory (JPI). A negative correlation was anticipated based on Fonda's hypothesis about white space response (S) and ego strength and on Morrissey's findings.

A third purpose was to determine whether there was a relationship between the white space response (S) of the Rorschach and self-esteem as measured by the self-esteem scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory (JPI). A positive correlation was hypothesized based on the main hypothesis of a positive correlation between the white space response (S) and ego strength and on the relationship of ego strength to self-esteem.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

The Sample

The sample used in the present study was comprised of undergraduate students enrolled during the fall quarter, 1982 at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee. All the participants volunteered to serve as subjects, some receiving extra credit for their participation. The sample of 56 subjects consisted of 44 females and 12 males. The females ranged in age from 18 to 35 with a mean age of 21.66. The males ranged in age from 18 to 50 with a mean of 25.17. The cumulative mean age was 22.41 years.

Description of the Instruments

Hermann Rorschach devised the test that bears his name in 1921 and used it as a diagnostic instrument in the investigation of personality as a whole (Rorschach, 1942). The Rorschach consists of 10 cards with a bilaterally symmetrical inkblot on each card. These cards are presented to each subject individually and the examinee is requested by the examiner to tell what the designs look like or of what they remind him on the free association phase of the testing. An inquiry follows the free association phase in order to determine pertinent and needed information relative to the responses which have been recorded verbatim. There is no time limit on this test. The Rorschach can be interpreted according to scores or content. Its complex scoring and interpretation involve such variables as form (F),

movement (M), total number of responses (R), and white space responses (S).

The Ego Strength Scale (Es) was developed by Frank Barron in 1950 (Barron, 1956). It consists of 68 true-false items selected from the MMPI on the basis of their significant correlation with the rated improvement of 33 neurotic patients in psychotherapy. On this basis the 68 statements are judged to be true or false descriptions of the subject. A copy of this scale has been included in the appendix.

The conformity and self-esteem scales of the Jackson Personality Inventory (1976) consist of 20 true-false statements. These statements are judged to be true or false descriptions of the subject. The JPI is a self-administered personality assessment tool. It has no time limit and can be administered individually or to a group.

Administration and Scoring

The Rorschach was administered to subjects individually. Forty of the subjects were tested by the present researcher and 16 of the subjects were tested by another graduate student conducting similar thesis research. Average testing time was approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The Rorschach records were scored by the two researchers according to the basic instructions in Rorschach's Test: I. Basic Processes (Beck, et al., 1961) and Fonda's (1960) scoring of white space responses (S) as primary space responses only. Inter-scoring reliability was 100 per cent.

Barron's Ego Strength Scale (Es) and the Jackson Personality Inventory were administered consecutively by the present researcher to all 56 subjects individually or in groups. These were administered in a second testing session. The testing time was unlimited with an average testing time of approximately 45 to 65 minutes. The Ego Strength Scale was scored according to the directions obtained from Basic Readings on the MMPI in Psychology and Medicine (Welsh & Dahlstrom, 1956). The raw score was obtained by adding the number of correct responses.

The conformity and self-esteem scales of the Jackson Personality Inventory were scored by using a single template according to the directions in the Jackson Personality Manual (Jackson, 1976).

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The Pearson product-moment correlation technique was employed to determine the intercorrelations among the white space responses (S) on the Rorschach, Barron's Ego Strength Scale scores, and conformity and self-esteem scale scores on the Jackson Personality Inventory. The mean of the white space responses (S) on the Rorschach was .96 with a standard deviation of 1.81. The mean of the total number of responses (R) score on the Rorschach was 23.36 with a standard deviation of 12.70. The mean of the scores on Barron's Ego Strength Scale was 42.27 with a standard deviation of 5.95. The mean of the scores on the conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory was 10.93 with a standard deviation of 4.89. The mean of the scores on the self-esteem scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory was 10.98 with a standard deviation of 4.52.

The resulting coefficient of .14 between the white space responses (S) on the Rorschach and the scores on Barron's Ego Strength Scale was not significant. In addition, the resulting coefficient of .11 between the white space responses (S) and the scores on the conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory was not significant. The resulting coefficient of $-.005$ between the white space responses (S) and the scores on the self-esteem scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory was not significant.

The total number of responses (R) and the white space

responses (S) were correlated .44, which was significant at the .01 level. The scores on Barron's Ego Strength Scale and those on the conformity scale were correlated -.28, which was significant at the .05 level. The scores on Barron's Ego Strength Scale and the scores on the self-esteem scale were correlated .34, which achieved significance at the .01 level. A coefficient of -.42 ($p < .01$) resulted from the correlation of the scores on the self-esteem and conformity scales.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Based on a review of relevant research and literature, the hypothesis that a significant positive relationship existed between the white space response (S) of the Rorschach and ego strength as determined by Barron's Ego Strength Scale seemed feasible. The derived data, however, failed to support this assumption.

It is entirely possible that no relationship exists between the white space response (S) of the Rorschach and ego strength. However, further analysis of the present data suggests that this hypothesis is still plausible and needs further research. Analysis of the data shows a large positive skewness of 3.625 for the white space responses (S) on the Rorschach. Also, variability of the white space responses (S) was relatively small, with a range of 11, a mean of .964, and a standard deviation of 1.792. In addition, consideration should be given to the small size of the sample and to the fact that white space responses (S) were only present in 26 of the 56 Rorschach records.

The correlation of .44 ($p < .01$) between S and R on the Rorschach supports Bandura's (1954) research in which he found a significant correlation of .51 between those same variables. Morrissey's (1981) research, in which she obtained a significant correlation of $-.63$ between the conformity scale scores of the JPI and Barron's Ego Strength Scale scores, was supported by the correlation of $-.28$

($p < .05$) on those same variables in this study. The significant relationships between self-esteem and ego strength, and self-esteem and conformity were expected in light of the literature.

Perhaps a better model of research would be to obtain an equal number of adequate size Rorschach records of two groups: one designated as low white space response (S) scorers and the other designated as high white space response (S) scorers. After obtaining the two equivalent size groups with Rorschach white space response (S) scores of adequate variability, one could administer to these groups the Jackson Personality Inventory and Barron's Ego Strength Scale. The scores of the two groups could be analyzed for differences.

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BARRON'S EGO STRENGTH SCALE

This inventory consists of numbered statements. Read each statement and decide whether it is true as applied to you or false as applied to you.

Mark each statement in the corresponding blank on the answer sheet. If a statement is TRUE, as applied to you, put a T in the appropriate blank. If a statement is FALSE or NOT USUALLY TRUE, as applied to you, put an F in the appropriate blank. If a statement does not apply to you or if it is something that you don't know about, make no mark.

Remember to give YOUR OWN opinion of yourself. Do not leave any blank spaces if you can avoid it. Erase completely any answer you wish to change.

Remember, try to make some answer to every statement.

NOW YOU MAY BEGIN.

1. I have a good appetite.
2. I have diarrhea once a month or more.
3. At times I have fits of laughing and crying that I cannot control.
4. I find it hard to keep my mind on a task or job.
5. I have had very peculiar and strange experiences.
6. I have a cough most of the time.
7. I seldom worry about my health.
8. My sleep is fitful and disturbed.
9. When I am with people I am bothered by hearing very queer things.
10. I am in just as good physical health as most of my friends.
11. Everything is turning out just like the prophets of the Bible said it would.
12. Parts of my body often have feelings like burning, tingling, crawling, or like "going to sleep."
13. I am easily downed in an argument.
14. I do many things which I regret afterwards (I regret things more or more often than others seem to).
15. I go to church almost every week.
16. I have met problems so full of possibilities that I have been unable to make up my mind about them.
17. Some people are so bossy that I feel like doing the opposite of what they request, even though I know they are right.
18. I like collecting flowers or growing house plants.
19. I like to cook.
20. During the past few years I have been well most of the time.
21. I have never had a fainting spell.
22. When I get bored I like to stir up some excitement.

23. My hands have not become clumsy or awkward.
24. I feel weak all over much of the time.
25. I have had no difficulty in keeping my balance in walking.
26. I like to flirt.
27. I believe my sins are unpardonable.
28. I frequently find myself worrying about something.
29. I like science.
30. I like to talk about sex.
31. I get mad easily and then get over it soon.
32. I brood a great deal.
33. I dream frequently about things that are best kept to myself.
34. My way of doing things is apt to be misunderstood by others.
35. I have had blank spells in which my activities were interrupted and I did not know what was going on around me.
36. I can be friendly with people who do things which I consider wrong.
37. If I were an artist I would like to draw flowers.
38. When I leave home I do not worry about whether the door is locked and the windows closed.
39. At times I hear so well it bothers me.
40. Often I cross the street in order not to meet someone I see.
41. I have strange and peculiar thoughts.
42. Sometimes I enjoy hurting persons I love.
43. Sometimes some unimportant thought will run through my mind and bother me for days.
44. I am not afraid of fire.
45. I do not like to see women smoke.

46. When someone says silly or ignorant things about something I know about, I try to set them straight.
47. I feel unable to tell anyone all about myself.
48. My plans have frequently seemed so full of difficulties that I have had to give them up.
49. I would certainly enjoy beating a crook at his own game.
50. I have had some very unusual religious experiences.
51. One or more members of my family is very nervous.
52. I am attracted by members of the opposite sex.
53. The man who had most to do with me when I was a child (such as my father, stepfather, etc.) was very strict with me.
54. Christ performed miracles such as changing water into wine.
55. I pray several times every week.
56. I feel sympathetic towards people who tend to hang onto their griefs and troubles.
57. I am afraid of finding myself in a closet or small closed space.
58. Dirt frightens or disgusts me.
59. I think Lincoln was greater than Washington.
60. In my home we have always had the ordinary necessities (such as enough food, clothing, etc.).
61. I am made nervous by certain animals.
62. My skin seems to be unusually sensitive to touch.
63. I feel tired a good deal of the time.
64. I never attend a sexy show if I can avoid it.
65. If I were an artist I would like to draw children.
66. I sometimes feel that I am about to go to pieces.
67. I have often been frightened in the middle of the night.
68. I very much like horseback riding.