

CORRELATION OF THE SCORES
ON THE BENDER - GESTALT TEST
WITH THE SCORES ON THE
SELF - ACTUALIZING VALUE SUBSCALE
ON THE PERSONAL ORIENTATION
INVENTORY

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CORRELATION OF THE SCORES ON THE BENDER-GESTALT TEST
WITH THE SCORES ON THE SELF-ACTUALIZING VALUE SUBSCALE
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An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

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

by
Santina A. Pfleeger

July, 1980

ABSTRACT

The present project was undertaken in order to determine the degree of relationship between self-actualization, as determined by the Self-Actualizing Value (SAV) subscale of the Personality Orientation Inventory and ego strength, as determined by the Bender-Gestalt. The sample used in the present study consisted of students enrolled during the Spring Quarter, 1980, at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee. The sample consisted of 51 students, of which 16 were males and 35 were females. The subjects included both undergraduate and graduate students. Their ages were not recorded.

The empirical data failed to attain significance.

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July, 1980

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Santina A. Pfleeger entitled "Correlation of the Bender-Gestalt Test with the scores on the Self-Actualizing Value subscale on the Personal Orientation Inventory." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.

John D. Martin
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Cyril J. Sadowski
Minor Professor
or
Second Committee Member

Harland E. Blair
Third Committee Member

Accepted for the
Graduate Council:

William H. Ellis
Dean of the Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ego strength has been defined in a variety of ways by a variety of individuals. A general consensus among psychologists appears to be that ego strength means a person's ability to adapt, or cope, effectively with his environment. The function of the ego is that of reality testing. Its strength or weakness directly affects adaptation, which, in turn, reflects upon an individual's capacity for personality integration.

The Bender-Gestalt (B-G) test consists of nine relatively simple geometric designs, which are individually presented to the subject for him to reproduce. Bender's (1938) monograph, A Visual Motor Gestalt Test and Its Clinical Use, contains the results of her studies using the nine designs. The B-G has become well known and widely used as a clinical instrument subsequent to the publication of her monograph. It has been used to estimate intelligence, maturation, school achievement, brain injury, mental retardation, and emotional disturbances.

There are two widely used and accepted scoring systems of the B-G. The Koppitz (1963) scoring system is used for children, ages 5 to 10 years. The Pascal and Suttell (1951) system is designed for adults, 15 to 50 years old, of normal intelligence who have the maturity and capacity to perceive and to reproduce the Bender test figures without error. Pascal and Suttell (1951) see the test situation as a piece of reality to which the subject brings and utilizes

an attitude--his attitude toward reality. The ability to reproduce the Bender designs is seen as a function of the individual's ego strength or integrative capacity.

Validity studies cited by Pascal and Suttell (1951) were based on patient versus nonpatient subjects. There were no validity studies relative to the Bender-Gestalt and ego strength. However, the fact that the test scores of the normative population discriminate significantly between neurotics adds impetus to the situation that the test may be measuring the subject's ability to cope with his environment. A test-retest reliability coefficient of .63 was obtained for the B-G by Pascal and Suttell (1951). Although the test-retest reliability coefficient was not high, Pascal and Suttell suggest that it is a remarkable consistency of individual adjustment.

Shostrom (1963) developed the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) as an objective measure of the values and behavior in the development of the self-actualizing individual. The POI was based upon Maslow's (1954) concept of the self-actualized person. According to Maslow, the self-actualized person is more fully functioning and lives a more enriched life, utilizing all of his unique capabilities, free of the inhibitions and emotional turmoil of persons less self-actualized. It has been stated by Shostrom (1972) that the concepts measured by the POI indicate an actualized model which is quickly replacing the medical model for many counselors and therapists. This model puts an emphasis on how "normal" individuals can be more self-fulfilled and effective.

In the construction of the POI, the items were chosen to reflect value orientations which are commonly held and considered

important to an individual's approach to life. The term "value orientation" has been defined as an "affectively loaded idea about life" by Ellis (1962, p. 41). Also, Buhler (1962, pp. 30-31) views it as a "generalized and organized conception that influences behavior." It is a conception of man, nature, and his relation to the world and the people around him.

The POI consists of two major scales, Time Competence (TC) and Inner-Directed (I), and the ten subscales: Self-Actualizing Value (SAV), Existentiality (Ex), Feeling Reactivity (Fr), Spontaneity (S), Self Regard (Sr), Self-Acceptance (Sa), Nature of Man - Constructive (Nc), Synergy (Sy), Acceptance of Aggression (A), and Capacity for Intimate Contact (C).

The initial evidence for the validity of the POI was demonstrated by Shostrom (1964), who significantly differentiated a sample of self-actualizing and non-self-actualizing individuals.

Fox (1965) and Fox, Knapp, and Michael (1968) used a sample of 100 hospitalized psychiatric patients who were found to be significantly lower on all POI scales than the normal adult samples reported by Shostrom (1964).

Shostrom and Knapp (1966) conducted a study with out-patients and found that all POI scales significantly differentiated a sample of out-patients just beginning therapy and those in advanced stages of psychotherapeutic progress.

Hekmat and Theiss (1971) further showed verification of the hypothesis generated from Maslow's theory of self-actualization studied through a social conditioning technique. The POI was administered to 60 subjects, who were assigned to one of the four

groups: high self-actualizing, moderate self-actualizing, low self-actualizing, and control. The results indicated that, prior to conditioning, the high self-actualizing individuals displayed a significantly higher rate of affective self-disclosure than did the moderate or low self-actualizing group. During the conditioning, however, the high self-actualizing individuals showed a significantly lower degree of responsiveness to social reinforcement when compared to the moderate and low self-actualizing groups. Results were interpreted as providing empirical support for Maslow's assertion that high self-actualizing individuals are resistant to enculturation.

Dandes (1966) empirically investigated the relationship between those constructs of psychological health measured by the POI and those values measured by the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (MTAI) (Cook, Leeds, & Callis, 1953). Correlations between the POI scale scores and measures from the MTAI were all positive and significant, ranging from .15 to .40. It was also found, in this sample of 120 teachers, that there was a negative correlation between POI scale scores and measures of authoritarianism and dogmatism.

Greely (1976) examined the American Catholic Priesthood to determine the degree of supportiveness of a major societal institution to self-actualizing. Among the major findings of this study of 917 priests were significant correlations between the POI Inner-Directed scale (primary overall measure of self-actualization) and the following variables that reflect the supportiveness of the Church on certain values: conflict between real and ideal distribution of power in the Church (.19); need to reform Church exercise of initiative

(.38); unfavorable reaction to birth control encyclical (.35); traditional values scale (-.43); plan to stay in priesthood (-.28). Thus, among American priests, there appears to be a conflict between the values of those on higher levels of self-actualization and the values of the Church. In addition, scores were higher among resigned priests on every POI measure of self-actualization.

In a study by Bloxom (1972) the reliability coefficients ranged from .55 to .85, with the three subscales of A, Nc, and Fr being regarded as substandard (less than .70).

A study of test-retest reliability by Klavetter and Mogar (1967) resulted in correlations ranging from .52 to .82. The two major scales, Time Competence and Inner-Directed, had generally high correlations of .71 and .77, respectively.

Wise and Davis (1975) reported test-retest coefficients of .75 and .88 for the Time Competence and Inner-Directed scales, respectively.

A correlational study of the scores on Barron's Ego Strength Scale with the scores on the Bender-Gestalt Test by Martin, Blair, Grah, and Shoaff (1979) using a sample of 60 college students, eventuated in a coefficient of -.26, which attained significance at the .05 level. The negative relationship was a function of the fact that a high score on Barron's Ego Strength Scale was interpreted as indicative of positive mental health and that a high score on the Bender was considered reflective of pathology.

Conceivably, a self-actualized person should possess adequate ego strength. It follows, then, that self-actualization and ego strength should be positively correlated.

The present project was undertaken in order to determine the degree of relationship between self-actualization as determined by the SAV subscale of the POI and ego strength as determined by the Bender-Gestalt. The SAV subscale purports to measure the affirmation of primary values of self-actualizing persons. A high score is indicative of an individual holding and living by the values which characterize a self-actualizing person. A low score is suggestive of rejection of these values. The SAV subscale apparently cuts across many characteristics included in the other nine subscales of the POI.

METHOD

The Sample

The sample used in the present study consisted of students enrolled during the Spring Quarter, 1980, at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee. All the participants volunteered to serve as subjects. Some of these volunteers received extra credit in their classes for their participation. The sample consisted of 51 students, of which 16 were males and 35 were females. The subjects included both undergraduate and graduate students. Their ages were not recorded.

Description of the Instruments

The Bender-Gestalt Test was first described in a monograph by Dr. Laretta Bender (1938). The test consists of nine relatively simple geometric designs, which are individually presented to the subject for him to copy on a plain sheet of paper. The Bender-Gestalt has been used as a clinical test for many years to estimate intelligence, school achievement, maturation, mental retardation, brain damage, and emotional disturbances (Pascal and Suttell, 1951). In addition, Pascal and Suttell suggest that the Bender-Gestalt can be used as a measure of ego strength.

The Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) was devised by Everett L. Shostrom (1963) and was based upon Maslow's concept of the self-actualizing person. The Inventory was to be an objective measure of values and behavior in the development of the self-actualizing individual. The POI consists of two major scales and ten

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subscales. The statements presented are marked either true or false.

Administration and Scoring

The POI was administered to the subjects first, individually and in small groups. The approximate time for testing was 40 minutes. The Bender-Gestalt was administered individually and required about 5 to 10 minutes for the testing of each subject.

The Self-Actualizing Value (SAV) subscale on the POI was scored according to the directions in the POI manual (Shostrom, 1966).

The Bender-Gestalt tests were scored according to the directions given in The Bender-Gestalt Test (Pascal & Suttell, 1951). All the designs were checked for scorable deviations, with the exception of design A, which was not scored. The deviations to be scored are given on the score sheet with their assigned weights. Scores that are accumulated by designs are added to scores which are related to the test as a whole (configuration scores) to provide a final raw score.

The scoring ranged from 38 (high ego strength) to 68 (low ego strength). The individual raw scores were converted into Z-scores for subjects with one year or more of college.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The total group consisted of 51 subjects, 16 were males and 35 were females. The mean for the Bender-Gestalt was 47.196 and the standard deviation was 7.181. The mean for the Personal Orientation Inventory, SAV subscale, was 21.098 and the standard deviation was 2.658.

The Pearson Product-Moment technique was employed to determine the correlation coefficient. The scores on the Bender-Gestalt Test were correlated with the scores on the Personal Orientation Inventory - SAV subscale. No other correlation coefficients were determined.

The scores derived from the Bender and the POI resulted in a correlation coefficient of $-.109$, which failed to achieve significance. As the sample standard deviation was lower than the reported norm group for the Bender-Gestalt (8.8), the correlation was corrected for attenuation. The correction for the restriction of range resulted in an r of $-.133$.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Since the study done by Martin, Blair, Grah, and Shoaff (1979) resulted in a significant correlation between Barron's Ego Strength Scale and the Bender-Gestalt, it seemed plausible to assume that a significant correlation would result by comparing measures on the Bender-Gestalt with those on the SAV subscale of the Personal Orientation Inventory. The empirical data, however, did not achieve significance.

There are two possibilities which may have led to the data not achieving significance. First, the derived data indicated a mean that was one standard deviation above the sample mean reported in the Personal Orientation Inventory manual. The present researcher does not know if the standard error of measurement is the same for the present sample, as it is for the norm group. A self-actualizing individual is purported to be one who is more fully functioning and lives a more enriched life, utilizing all of his unique capabilities, free of the inhibitions and turmoil of persons less self-actualized. Since the mean was higher for the present data of the POI, it possibly indicates that the subjects were highly self-actualizing individuals. This could have resulted in an increase in the standard error of measurement, which may result in an attenuating correlation. Second, as the sample standard deviation was lower for the Bender-Gestalt than the reported norm group, there was possibly a restriction of range which could have also resulted in attenuation.

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