

CORRELATION OF THE SCORES ON
BARRON'S EGO STRENGTH SCALE
WITH THE SCORES ON THE
CONFORMITY SCALE OF THE JACKSON
PERSONALITY INVENTORY

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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
Lou Ann Morrissey
May, 1981

ABSTRACT

The present project was undertaken in order to determine the degree of relationship between ego strength, as determined by Barron's Ego Strength Scale and conformity, as determined by the conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory. The sample used in this study consisted of students enrolled during the fall quarter, 1980, at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee. The sample consisted of 45 undergraduate students, of which 33 were female and 12 were male.

A negative correlation of $-.63$ was attained, which was significant at the $.01$ level.

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Lou Ann Morrissey entitled "Correlation of the scores on Barron's Ego Strength Scale with the scores on the conformity scale of 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 D. Martin
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Linda Rudolph
Minor Professor
or
Second Committee Member

Garland E. Blair
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	8
The Sample	8
Description of the Instruments	8
Administration and Scoring	9
III. RESULTS	10
IV. DISCUSSION	11
REFERENCES	12
APPENDIX	15

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Various negative connotations arise when the word conformity is mentioned. Conforming behavior that is excessive tends to be perceived as something undesirable that other people do (Wolosin, Sherman and Cann, 1975). Yet, we all conform to a reference group that has a powerful influence on our lives as experiments by Solomon Asch (1951) have shown.

Asch studied the way an individual reacts to unanimous, yet incorrect, judgments. After successive experiments of this type Asch (1956) concluded that: "Granting the great power of groups, may we simply conclude that they can induce persons to shift their decisions and convictions in almost any desired direction, that they can prompt us to call true what we yesterday deemed false, that they can make us invest the identical action with the aura of rightness or with the stigma of grotesqueness and malice?" (p. 2).

Asch's experiments triggered subsequent research of the factors involved in conformity, the personality traits inherent in the avid conformer, and the ways to measure their presence. Crutchfield (1955) made a distinction between the independent person and the conformer. He found the independent to exhibit more self-control, ego

strength, leadership ability and maturity. Those individuals high in conforming behavior displayed submissive and compliant attitudes. Stang (1972), using a set of visual judgments, found that individuals who measured high in self-esteem conformed the least. This was corroborated by an experiment by Duval (1976), who measured the effects of such variables as self-esteem and competence on conforming behavior. His subjects were told their responses on ten attitudinal dimensions were like those of 95 percent, 50 percent, or 5 percent of a normative group of 10,000 individuals. Later, the subjects took part in a conformity experiment during which half of the subjects were exposed to the live image of themselves on a television monitor. Those subjects previously told they agreed with only 5 percent of a normative group conformed more than those possessing more usual attitudes. Thus, it seems possible that lowered self-esteem could account for conforming behavior.

Darley, Moriarty, Darley and Berscheid (1974) conducted a two-part experiment on the experience of being deviant in a conformity study. They found that if the individual did not conform the first time, he was more likely to conform afterward than were control subjects. Reisman (1961) believes the conformer to be "other directed," changing his goals so as to fit with that of

his contemporaries.

Smith (1967) devised a questionnaire to measure conformity and administered it to 162 male college students. By using the scale, he was able to divide the subjects into three distinct groups which he labeled "rebels," "conformers," and "independents." The conformers, he found, accepted socially approved behavior routinely and without question.

Mann (1959) hypothesized a positive correlation between conservatism and conformity. He believed that conventional, authoritarian subjects are more likely to yield to group pressure than unconventional subjects. Moreover, there was also a slight indication in the literature reviewed by Mann that dominance is negatively related to conformity.

As demonstrated, there is ample evidence to suggest that group pressure can influence a person to conform. One of the theories that explains the conformity aspect of behavior is the social comparison theory proposed by Leon Festinger (1954). He assumes that there is a basic drive within each of us to evaluate our own opinions and abilities. For some things, the evidence is readily available in the physical world. Our opinions, perceptions, and abilities, however, can only be evaluated by turning to others. We depend on others to show us the

correct response. This creates a "social reality" which, according to Festinger, becomes as important as the physical reality.

Ross, Bierbrauer, and Hoffman (1976) have explained Asch's experiments according to the social comparison theory. They point out that the subject is faced with a situation which cannot be concretely evaluated in the physical reality. The subjects, therefore, turn to their social reality and exhibit conforming behavior.

According to Festinger, then, conformity is a biological inevitability. Is this desirable or destructive to mankind? Total conformity would result in a society that controlled the behavior and thoughts of its members.

Hollander (1975) points out that few studies stress the value of independent thinking. He believes independence to be not simply nonconformity, but the freedom to be different. This independence is difficult to achieve as one must first overcome the barriers: the fear of disruption, the absence of communication, no feeling of responsibility, and the sense of powerlessness. Hollander proposes that those who act independently be rewarded for such behavior as it is important that they serve as models for others. Interestingly, Morris and Miller, (1975) have found that those who dissent are described as more dynamic, confident and alert than those who conform

with the incorrect majority.

There are assessment tools that measure variables related to conforming personality characteristics. One such test is Barron's Ego Strength Scale (ES) (Barron 1963), which consists of 68 true-false statements extracted from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (Hathaway and McKinley 1942-1967). The items were selected on the basis of their significant correlations with rated improvement in psychoneurotic patients. The Ego Strength Scale was initially used to predict success in psychotherapy. Barron, however, indicated that consideration of the score content and its correlates suggests a psychological interpretation. It is, therefore, useful as an assessment device when an estimate of adaptability and personal resourcefulness is desired.

The reliability of the test was determined by using a sample of 33 patients, who were evaluated by two skilled judges for degree of improvement. The correlation of .91 between the ratings and scores on the ES was significant beyond the .01 level. The odd-even reliability of the scale in a clinical population was estimated at .76. Test-retest reliability was estimated at .72 after a three-month interval. Thus, according to Barron, the scale measures various aspects of effective

personal functioning which are descriptive of ego strength (Barron, 1953).

The Jackson Personality Inventory (JPI) (Jackson, 1976) consists of 320 true-false statements comprising 16 scales. The JPI was developed as a personality assessment device to reflect a variety of interpersonal, cognitive and value orientations into one convenient set of measures. The conformity scale is one of the 16 scales. Multidimensional Scaling Studies show validity correlations up to .99 between scale values of personality items derived from different sets of judges with respect to the trait being measured (Jackson, 1970). A carefully prepared set of definitions was also written as an added measure of validity. With regard to the conformity scale, the defining personality traits of the high scorer were compliant, agreeing, acquiescent, accommodating, and cooperative. The traits used to describe the low scorer were self-reliant, unyielding, and nonconforming.

The present study was undertaken to determine the degree of relationship between Barron's Ego Strength Scale and the conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory. A negative correlation was hypothesized in that low scores on the JPI are indicative of self-reliance and nonconformity whereas high scores on the

ES are indicative of ego strength.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

The Sample

The sample used in the present study consisted of undergraduate students enrolled during the fall quarter, 1980, at Austin Peay State University. All the participants volunteered to serve as subjects, some receiving extra credit for their participation. The sample consisted of 45 subjects, of which 33 were females and 12 were males. The ages of the female subjects ranged from 18 to 49 with a mean age of 22.76. The males ranged from 19 to 40 in age with a mean of 24.17. The cumulative mean age for the entire sample was 23.13.

Description of the Instruments

Barron's Ego Strength Scale contains 68 items selected from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. They were selected on the basis of a significant correlation with rated improvement of 33 psychoneurotic patients. These 68 items are judged to be true or false descriptions of the subject. A copy of the scale can be found in the appendix.

The conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory consists of 20 true-false statements. These 20 statements are judged to be true or false descriptions of the subject.

Administration and Scoring

Barron's Ego Strength Scale and the Jackson Personality Inventory were administered by the present researcher to each group of students. The total testing period was approximately 65 minutes.

The conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory was scored by using a single template according to the directions in the manual. The scoring of Barron's Ego Strength Scale was in accordance with the directions in the Basic Readings on the MMPI in Psychology and Medicine (Welsh and Dahlstrom, 1963, pp. 227-228). The raw score was obtained by adding the number of correct responses.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The Pearson product-moment correlational technique was employed to compare the scores on Barron's Ego Strength Scale with the scores on the Conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory. The mean of the scores on the conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory was 10.47 with a standard deviation of 6.86. The mean of the scores on the Ego Strength Scale was 40.07 with a standard deviation of 7.92. The resulting coefficient of $-.63$ was significant beyond the .01 level.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

A review of the relevant research and literature made it seem patently plausible to assume a significant negative correlation between scores on Barron's Ego Strength Scale and scores on the conformity scale of the Jackson Personality Inventory. The derived data of the present study confirmed that assumption.

A high score on the conformity scale of the JPI describes a person who is compliant, agreeing, acquiescent, and accommodating--in short, conforming. Such a person is susceptible to social influence and so modifies one's behavior as to be consistent with other's standards. A low score on the conformity scale indicates someone who is self-reliant, unyielding, and nonconforming. A high score on Barron's Ego Strength Scale is indicative of ego strength. A person possessing a high level of ego strength is to that extent independent, individualistic, and self-directed. It follows that one scoring low on the conformity scale would score high on the ego strength and vice versa.

The results of the present study are supported by the research of Crutchfield (1955), Smith (1967), and Mann (1959).

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APPENDIX

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 left margin. If a statement is TRUE, as applied to you, put a T before the statement. If a statement is FALSE or NOT USUALLY TRUE, as applied to you, put an F before the statement. 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 OPEN THE BOOKLET AND GO AHEAD.

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 could 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.