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ABSTRACT

The Starkweather Social Conformity Test is a research instrument designed to measure conforming and nonconforming behavior by providing the young child with opportunities to make choices in a situation in which he can follow a model or respond freely according to his own preferences. The test discriminates between compulsive conformists or nonconformists and children who are free to use either conforming or nonconforming behavior. The test is based on color preferences and is adjusted to the actual preferences of individual children. A pretest provides an opportunity for each child to indicate his color preferences. In the test proper, each child is given opportunities to conform as he constructs a picture booklet, identical to or different from booklets constructed by other persons (parents, peers, etc.). Scoring consists of a numerical count of the conforming and nonconforming responses made by the child. Scores range from -20 (complete nonconformity) to +20 (complete conformity). Statistical data resulting from administering the test to 200 children are discussed and include reliability of the test, age differences, and sex differences. (RC)

STARKWEATHER SOCIAL CONFORMITY TEST

FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN*

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The Starkweather Social Conformity Test is a research instrument designed to measure conforming and nonconforming behavior by providing the young child with opportunities to make choices in a situation in which he can follow a model or respond freely according to his own preferences. The test discriminates between children who are compulsive conformists or nonconformists and children who are free to use either conforming or nonconforming behavior.

The social conformity test was designed to meet the following criteria: (a) The compulsive quality and the conforming quality of a child's behavior must be measured independently. The child who is a compulsive nonconformist is just as rigid as the child who is a compulsive conformist. (b) The test must be adjustable in order that the opportunity to conform be of similar potency for all children. Conforming behavior is common when a child has an opportunity to conform to persons he likes, whereas the reverse is true in the case of persons he dislikes. Similarly, conforming behavior is to be expected when it involves the choice of a preferred object.

The social conformity test is based on color preferences and is adjusted to the actual preferences of individual children. A pretest provides an opportunity for each child to indicate his color preferences. Then in the test proper, each child is given opportunities to conform as he constructs a picture booklet, page by page, identical to or different from booklets constructed for other persons (e.g., parents or peers).

Color Preference Pretest

A color wheel, consisting of 13 different colored strips of paper attached to a cardboard disc, is presented to the child. He ranks these colors by first tearing off the one he likes best, and then continuing, one color at a time, until he has torn all colors from the disc. The five colors ranked as 1, 4, 7, 10 and 13, are then used in

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the testing of that particular child. In this way for each child the social conformity test includes colors which he prefers and colors which he does not prefer. This adjustment is made to assure that the opportunity to conform will be of similar potency for all children tested.

The reliability of this method of determining color preferences was tested by administering the color wheel twice to a group of 29 children and analyzing their responses for consistency of color preferences. In this analysis, a color was accepted as retaining its relative position if its rank changed no more than three places from the first to the second session. The colors which were high-ranking (#1 and #4) and low-ranking (#10 and #13) during the first session did retain their relative positions during the second session. (X^2 = 29.217; $p < .001$).

Construction of Picture Booklets

The social conformity test gives each child opportunities to conform to other persons while constructing a small picture booklet of colored pages (2" x 3"). When the focus is on conformity to peers, the child is asked to name three friends; then three identical pages (e.g., the picture of a cow on a red page) are placed before the child and he is told that these are for his friends. He is then given his choice between a page identical to those for his friends and a page of a different color (e.g., the picture of a cow on a blue page.) For these choices, the five colors selected in the pretest are arranged in pairs, each color being paired with every other color twice, making a total of 20 pairs. These are presented to the child in such a way that he has an opportunity to choose between red and blue, for example, when his friends receive red and again when his friends receive blue. The assumption underlying this design is that the child who really prefers one of the two colors will choose that color on both occasions if he is free to use conforming or nonconforming behavior, whereas the conformist will choose the preferred color only when his friends receive it, and the nonconformist will choose the preferred color only when his friends do not receive it.

The sequence in which the paired colors are presented to each child is shown on the attached score sheet. In this sequence no color appears in two consecutive pairs and each color appears on the right and on the left an equal number of times. The conforming color, i.e., the color given to the firends, is the color on the left during the first half of the sequence and on the right during the last half; thus the child who chooses all colors from one side, for whatever reason, would appear to be conforming half the time and nonconforming half the time, and the resulting test score of zero would accurately indicate that he had not been influenced by the opportunities to conform.

Scoring

The scoring of the social conformity test consists of a numerical count of the conforming and nonconforming responses made by the child. A D-score, or difference score, is then figured by subtracting the number of nonconforming responses from the number of conforming responses. The possible range of D-scores is from -20 (complete nonconformity) to +20 (complete conformity).

Evaluation

The Starkweather Social Conformity Test was administered to 200 children, ranging in age from two years six months to five years eleven months. The children were assigned to experimental and control groups, matched according to sex and age (within four months). For the children in the experimental group, the test was administered first with an opportunity for conformity to peers (three friends) and again with an opportunity for conformity to parents. For the children in the control group, the test situation provided no opportunity to conform. Data obtained from these three test situations were analyzed to determine whether the opportunity to conform did influence the responses of the children, and to determine whether the influence was greater in one situation than in another. If the social conformity test provided a valid measure of the influence (positive or negative) of the opportunity to conform, then the children in the experimental group should have larger D-scores than the children in the control group. (For the control group, the distribution of conforming and nonconforming responses would be the result of chance, and the D-scores for this group should approximate zero.)

An analysis of the frequency of large and small D-scores indicated that the children in the experimental group were influenced by the opportunity to conform to parents. ($X^2 = 8.219$; $p < .01$). A similar analysis of the responses of these children when given an opportunity to conform to peers showed no difference between their responses and those of the children in the control group. ($X^2 = 1.020$; n.s.). These results indicate that the social conformity test does measure the influence of the opportunity to conform, and to this extent it is a valid instrument. For the young children who participated in this study, the opportunity to conform to parents was a more potent influence than the opportunity to conform to peers.

The internal consistency of the social conformity test was determined by a split-half analysis of the responses of the children when they had an opportunity to conform to parents. The number of conforming responses made by each child during the first and last half of the test were used in this analysis. The Spearman-Brown formula yielded a correlation coefficient of +0.779 ($p < .01$). (For this and subsequent analyses, the experimental group was enlarged to include 20 boys and 20 girls in each of the three age groups: three-year-olds;

four-year-olds and five-year-olds.)

In the design of the social conformity test, the assumption was made that strong likes and dislikes would influence a child's conforming behavior. The validity of this assumption was demonstrated in an analysis of the number of times that the children accepted and rejected their favorite color and their least liked color. When conforming required that a child accept one or the other of these two colors, the favorite color was more frequently accepted. ($X^2 = 38.861$; $p < .001$). When conforming required that the child reject one of these two colors, the least liked color was the more frequently rejected. ($X^2 = 69.962$; $p < .001$).

The data were further analyzed for age and sex differences. No significant age differences in conforming behavior were apparent; however, there were marked sex differences. Of the 120 children in the group, 41 had large D-scores. Boys and girls were influenced by the opportunity to conform to parents; however, the girls were primarily conformists and the boys were both conformists and nonconformists. This difference between the boys and girls were statistically significant. ($X^2 = 7.351$; $p < .01$).

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STARKWEATHER SOCIAL CONFORMITY TEST

FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Name Child F-31 Sex F Number 31

Birthdate 4-17-59 Date 1-24-64 Age 4:9

Color Preferences: 1st-A Red 4th-B Black

7th-C DK. Blue 10th-D Lt. Blue 13th-E Tan

Testing Place Oklahoma City

	Conformity to c	nc		c	nc
1.	A	(B)	11.	C	(D)
2.	(C)	D	12.	A	(B)
3.	(E)	A	13.	(E)	C
4.	C	(B)	14.	(D)	A
5.	D	(E)	15.	(B)	E
6.	A	(C)	16.	A	(C)
7.	(B)	D	17.	(D)	E
8.	E	(C)	18	(C)	B
9.	D	(A)	19.	E	(A)
10.	B	(E)	20.	(B)	D

Conformity (c): 9

Nonconformity (nc): 11

D-Score: -2