

"ACQUIESCENCE" RESPONSE SET IN PERSONALITY INVENTORY ITEMS

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Summary.—Extraversion and neuroticism questionnaires were studied from the point of view of the existence of response sets, by correlating scores on congruent and incongruent sets of questions. It was found that congruent sets correlated higher than incongruent sets, but the differences were slight on the whole and suggested that response set is not a powerful determinant of personality questionnaire responses. Validation studies with the MPI (S. B. G. Eysenck, 1962) seem to be in line with this conclusion.

Following Keehn's (1961) suggestion that response set might play some part in the results obtained with the MPI (Eysenck, 1959), two studies (Eysenck, 1962; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1963) have indicated that response sets in personality questionnaires have much less influence than they appear to have in relation to social attitudes. This conclusion is strongly reinforced by the extensive work of Wilde (1962). The present study was carried out to extend the Eysenck and Eysenck (1963) study to a much larger group of Ss. The questions and scales used were taken from a newly developed questionnaire, the Eysenck Personality Inventory, which is in process of being published, and which constitutes a development of the MPI.

Two scales of 24 items each (N_A and N_N) were constructed as parallel measures of neuroticism; in these scales the "Yes" response is always the neurotic response. Four eight-item extraversion scales were also constructed; these will be referred to as A, B, C, and D. In Scales A and C a "Yes" answer was indicative of extraversion, while in Scales B and D a "No" answer was indicative of extraversion. The correctness of the system of scoring was checked by means of a factor analysis. Each of the four scales was scored for extraversion, irrespective of the type of answer.

The questions in all six sets, printed in random order on a questionnaire together with 28 buffer items, were administered to 1,655 normal Ss of both sexes, and 210 neurotics under treatment in various hospitals, also of both sexes. Both middle-class and working-class groups were equally represented, and although it could not be claimed that the sample was a truly random one, nevertheless, it was probably not too unrepresentative of the British population.

The intercorrelations between the four extraversion questionnaires may be subdivided into *congruent*, i.e., between scales in which both were keyed in the same direction, and *incongruent*, i.e., between scales in which both scales were keyed in opposite directions. Response sets should give higher correlations for congruent than for incongruent pairs of scales, and to the extent that this expect-

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TABLE 1
 INTERCORRELATIONS BETWEEN EXTRAVERSION SCALES CONGRUENT AND
 INCONGRUENT, RESPECTIVELY, FOR DIRECTION OF SCORING ($N_S = 1,655$ NORMAL
 AND 210 NEUROTIC Ss)

	Congruent Correlations		Incongruent Correlations	
	Normals	Neurotics	Normals	Neurotics
A C	.539	.591	A B	.499
B D	.468	.448	A D	.345
			B C	.481
			C D	.352
Average	.504	.523		.422

tation is verified will it be possible to postulate response sets as affecting answers to this particular questionnaire. The results are given in Table 1; product-moment correlations have been averaged via the inverse hyperbolic tangent transformation. It will be seen that for both neurotics and normals the congruent values (.52 and .50) are larger than the incongruent ones (.42 and .42). The results suggest that acquiescence response set does indeed influence responses, although only to a mild degree, and that it does so for normals and neurotics alike.

Correlations between the neuroticism questionnaires and the four extraversion scales would be expected to be higher for A and C than for B and D, because of congruence and incongruence of "Yes" responses, respectively; "higher" in this connection means either "greater in absolute amount if with positive sign," or "less in absolute amount if with negative sign." Correlations between N ($N_A + N_B$) and the four E scales are: .023, —.097, —.035, and —.094 for the normals, and .039, —.109, —.121, and —.140 for the neurotics. Of the differences, only those involving E_A are statistically significant (at the 1% level), and only for the very large normal group. There is slight support here for the postulation of a response set, but this set is clearly not very powerful.

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