The repression-sensitization dimension as related to deviant responses on content and contentless tasks

Arthur W. Lucky

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The Repression-Sensitization Dimension
as Related to Deviant Responses
on Content and Contentless Tasks

by
Arthur W. Lucky

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Psychology in the
Graduate School of the University of Richmond

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During recent years much experimentation has been concerned with the phenomenon of perceptual defense. Most of the investigators have operationally defined "perceptual defense" as the raising of recognition thresholds for anxiety-arousing stimuli over those for neutral stimuli (McCannioo, 1949; Postman, 1953; and others). Some have claimed that perceptual defense is a personality variable that is present in some individuals and absent in others (Eriksen, 1952; Nelson, 1955). Occasionally studies have investigated the effects of the type of stimulus material and the type of defense mechanisms typical of the perceiver (Carpenter, Wiener, and Carpenter, 1956; Wiener, Carpenter, and Carpenter, 1956; and others). As Byrne (1961) has pointed out, it is generally agreed that "perceptual defenders (who will hereafter be called "repressors") are those who characteristically utilize denial and repression as defense mechanisms when presented with emotionally-toned stimuli.

Only a few attempts have been made to explain repression (perceptual defense) at a theoretical level. Only two interpretations appear to be worthy of being presented here (Eriksen, 1954; Brown, 1961).

Eriksen (1954) has reported that experimental data have indicated that anxiety retards learning and increases rigidity in problem-solving. By claiming that the perceptual recognition task is in many ways a problem-solving situation, Eriksen has assumed that (1) fragmentary cues must be
perceived so that the entire stimulus may be reconstructed and (2) that anxiety interferes with the availability and flexibility of hypotheses by the perceiver about the stimulus. This author argues that it becomes apparent, then, that it would be necessary to receive more cues before the recognition of emotionally-toned stimuli can occur than for neutral stimuli. The inherent weakness of this hypothesis is that it assumes subconscious discrimination among stimuli.

Brown (1961) has presented a more thorough explanation of repression. His basic assumptions are that (1) an emotional response ($r_e$) either precedes the perceptual response ($R_v$) or has a longer latency than the perceptual response ($R_v$) and (2) drive level varies directly with the strength of $r_e$. Whether the development of $R_v$ is hindered or facilitated by the development of $r_e$ is dependent upon what properties have been assigned to $r_e$. Assuming that there is a detrimental effect of $r_e$ upon $R_v$, there are two interpretations presented by Brown to account for repression. The first is in terms of competing responses, the strength of the tendency to respond correctly to the stimulus presented being of constant strength while that of not responding varies directly with the degree of vulgarity of the stimulus word. The second explanation is dependent upon generalization. It must first be assumed that (1) the response strengths of the generalized tendencies to respond and not to respond are positively increasing functions of exposure time and (2) a critical difference between positive and negative response strengths must be reached before recognition can occur. While the slope of the curve representing the positive function (strength of the generalized tendency to respond as a function of exposure time) does not vary with the degree of vulgarity of the stimulus, it is necessary that the slope of the negative function increase directly with the degree of vul-
garity. This would mean that the more vulgar or unpleasant the stimulus, the longer would be the exposure time before the critical difference (threshold) could be reached.

One of the first attempts to demonstrate repression was that by Postman, Bruner, and McGinnies (1949). Upon comparing the tachistoscopic thresholds of words representing the six categories of the Allport-Vernon Study of Values with value rank, it was discovered that higher thresholds were associated with lower value ranks, the conclusion being that the less preferred (pleasant) the stimulus, the higher the threshold. These results, therefore, support the repression hypothesis.

By measuring tachistoscopic recognition thresholds for critical words and neutral words, similar results were obtained by McGinnies (1949). Greater GSR's were obtained before critical words, and higher thresholds were encountered for the critical words. McGinnies concluded that conditioned avoidance of unpleasant verbal stimuli had been demonstrated.

Howes and Solomon (1950) criticized McGinnies' conclusion, stating that the subjects were much more familiar with the neutral words than the critical words. Upon consulting the Thorndike-Lorge word count index (1944), Howes and Solomon had found that the critical words were not even listed. McGinnies (1950a) attempted to combat this criticism by reporting that critical words are more commonly encountered in speaking than in writing. McGinnies (1950b) again demonstrated repression by showing that longer association times were associated with less valued words representing categories of the Allport-Vernon Study of Values, but studies by Howes and Solomon (1951), Solomon and Howes (1951), and Solomon and Postman (1952) again emphasized the importance of frequency of word usage.
Despite the fact that Howes and Solomon overemphasized the familiarity variable, succeeding studies were very well controlled for frequency of usage.

Erikson (1951) obtained evidence for repression when psychiatric patients were required to tell stories about TAT drawings. Those who gave responses that were characterized by blocking as well as by incoherent and unelaborate stories were classified as repressers. These individuals had lower recognition thresholds for neutral than aggressive tachistoscopically-presented TAT pictures.

An investigation conducted by Lazarus, Erikson, and Fonda (1951) was concerned with the expression of sexual and aggressive needs on a sentence-completion test and the auditory recognition of sexual and aggressive material. Hysteria patients (repressers according to case history and psychiatric evaluations) were characterized by low perceptual accuracy, minimal verbalization, and blocking.

Lazarus and McCleary (1951) found no significant difference in the thresholds of tachistoscopically-presented words (shock vs. non-shock). However, differences in GSR's indicated that the subjects were discrimination shock from non-shock stimuli at a non-verbal level. The repression hypothesis would predict that higher thresholds would be obtained for shock than non-shock words.

Whittaker, Gilchrist, and Fischer (1952) obtained results favoring more suppression than repression when Negroes suppressed, or held back, responses that were derogatory to their race. However, McCannies and Adorno (1952) attempted to combat suppression with an informal setting and still obtained higher thresholds for taboo words than neutral words.
McGinnies and Sherman (1952) demonstrated the learning of an avoidance generalized from taboo to neutral words. Higher thresholds were found for neutral words following taboo words than for neutral words following other neutral words.

A word association test with aggressive, succorant, and homosexual words was administered to psychoneurotic patients and college students by Eriksen and Lazarus (1952). Evidence was obtained for defense specificity by comparing defenses used on the word association test with those used on the Rorschach. These results were interpreted to point to the need to show clearly that stimuli are anxiety-arousing for all subjects and that the subjects have avoidance defenses available (Eriksen, 1954).

Kurland (1954), in contrast with Lazarus, Eriksen and Fonda (1951), obtained no difference between recognition thresholds for hysterics and obsessive-compulsives for neutral and emotionally-toned words. Similarly, no difference was found between thresholds for emotionally-toned and neutral words.

More evidence for defense specificity was obtained by Blum (1955). Graduate students had poorer recall for the defense mechanisms measured by Blum pictures when the defenses were felt to be problems in themselves. This can be viewed as strong evidence for repression.

Freeman (1955) obtained higher recognition thresholds for taboo than neutral words, for ego-involved than non-ego-involved individuals when reacting to taboo words, and for females than males. The sex difference is based on only a total of 20 subjects and has rarely been reported in other papers.

Utilizing the Blum pictures, Nelson (1955) first determined the
defense preferences of subjects. Then the subjects were required to identify verbally which Blacky pictures were occupying various positions in the visual field, four being flashed simultaneously. Repressers (as determined by various Blacky techniques) significantly undercalled pictures relevant to their defenses.

From a Jung word-association test of 100 words, five taboo words, five neutral words, and five repressed words (longest reaction times) were taken by Worchel for each subject (1955). Five traumatic words were taken from subtests of an "intelligence test" on which each individual was intentionally failed. No differences in learning the 20 words in paired associates were encountered, but recall and relearning were significantly poorer for the affective than neutral material.

In studies by Carpenter, Wiener, and Carpenter (1956) and Wiener, Carpenter, and Carpenter (1956) subjects were categorized according to types of defenses utilized on a sentence-completion task designed to elicit sex and hostility or sex, hostility, feelings about self, and neutral endings. Repressers were characterized as those using "blocking; avoidance; denial of stimulus implication; use of cliches; psychological removal from personal involvement; very limited generalizations; minimization of involvement in the conflictual activity; obligation, duty, imposed acceptibility by authority; unelaborated definitions; and idealization moralization." Evidence was found in both studies for the specificity of defensiveness. It was concluded that there were "general defenders" and "specific defenders."

Eriksen and Kuethe (1956) had subjects learn a word-association list. Shock followed five of 15 words. Based on interview data the subjects were divided into high- and low-level-of-awareness groups. They found that
longer reaction times occurred for the shock words regardless of the level of awareness.

Kassin, Gottesfeld, and Dikes (1957) attempted to explain repression in terms of inhibition. After measuring inhibition in college women through the Rorschach and Machover Figure Drawings tests, differences in thresholds were measured for sexual and neutral words. The more inhibited subjects, as measured by the personality tests, demonstrated the most repression as measured by thresholds for sexual vs. neutral words. Characteristic styles of defenses were also indicated.

The autokinetic word technique was made use of by Mednick, Harwood, and Wertheim (1957), who asked the subjects to tell what words a light wrote. Fewer disturbing than neutral words were reported, and longer latencies were obtained for the emotionally-toned words.

Kleinman (1957) controlled auditory stimuli for psychogenically deaf and organically deaf individuals. Critical words were associated with dependency upon authority figures. Significantly higher auditory thresholds were found for the psychogenically deaf than organically deaf patients for the critical words. No difference was encountered between the two groups for the neutral words. Repression was interpreted as the cause of these results.

It is readily apparent that the evidence favoring the repression or perceptual defense hypothesis is voluminous. Despite criticism concerning word frequency or stimulus familiarity, suppression, and occasional negative results, the concept has continued to be regarded as useful.

During recent years evidence has been accumulating to indicate that
there is another group of individuals in addition to the repressers. These 
persons, who have been called "sensitizers," have operationally been defined 
as those who exhibit relatively-lowered thresholds for anxiety-arousing 
stimuli. It has been reported that the sensitizer is "more sensitive to 
threatening or inimical stimuli than to neutral ones" (Postman, 1953) and 
that he is the predominantly approaching (intellectualizing, obsessional) 
type and characteristically exhibits vigilance and facilitation when pre-

teated with threatening stimuli (Burger, 1961). An attempt has been made to 
view sensitization in terms of response set, stimulus preference or value 
acting as a sensitizer to lower the perceptual threshold (Postman, Bruner, 
and McGinnies, 1949). Another interpretation has been presented by Brown 
(1961) based upon heightened drive. If it can be assumed that drive varies 
directly with the strength of the emotional response (r^2), then if the asso-
ciative strengths of neutral and threatening stimuli are weakened by im-
poverishment rather than supplanted by other (incorrect) associative ten-
dencies, then all thresholds should be lowered by heightened drive.

The first evidence for sensitization was presented by Postman, Bruner, 
and McGinnies (1949). Value ranks as measured on the Allport-Vernon Study 
of Values and thresholds were found to be related, value acting as a sensi-
tizer. This led the authors to define sensitization in terms of response 
set, the subjects seeming to be more ready to respond to some stimuli over 
other stimuli, a process of stimulus selectivity operating.

Erikson (1951) predicted that needs producing sensitization will be 
expressed in the TAT in forms such as "recurrent themes relating to the 
need and identification with characters whose actions express the needs."
The results supported his prediction and suggested a high degree of specificity among the many ways of expressing aggression.

Lazarus, Eriksen, and Fonda (1951) produced data that lent support to their predictions that (1) needs associated with freely expressed sex and hostility on a sentence completion task will produce accurate recognition and (2) intellectualizing patients (sensitizers according to case history and psychiatric evaluations) would show greater accuracy for threatening verbal material than repressers. As predicted, obsessive-compulsives (sensitizers) attained greater accuracy than hysterics (repressers) at identifying emotionally-toned stimuli.

Kurland (1954) has presented the only important negative study. No difference was obtained between obsessive-compulsives (those using intellectualizing and similar defenses) and hysterics (those preferring repression and avoidance) for perception of emotional words. The sensitization hypothesis must predict that the obsessive-compulsives should perceive emotional words at lower thresholds.

Nelson (1955) showed four Blacky pictures simultaneously that represented a distribution of high and low conflicts and defense mechanism preferences to individuals. When only required to locate the position of the picture standing out the most (vigilance series) high-conflict subjects proved to be more vigilant than low conflict subjects. Similarly, when required to verbally identify which Blacky pictures were occupying various positions in the viewing field (perceptual defense series), there was a significant tendency for subjects preferring projection to defend by overcalling, or more often reporting, pictures relevant to their particular defenses.
Wiener (1955) demonstrated that individuals had lower thresholds for critical words embedded in a threat context than for critical words embedded in a neutral context. The conclusion was that, "with structural determinants held constant, word meaning and therefore motivational factors are important determinants in perceptual behavior and word frequency hypotheses alone cannot account for the results."

Two attempts have been made by Carpenter, Wiener, and Carpenter (Carpenter, Wiener, 1956; Wiener, Carpenter, and Carpenter, 1956) to determine whether perceptual behavior can be predicted from a knowledge of one's typical defenses for particular classes of stimuli (sex, hostility, and adequacy and also sex, hostility, feelings about the self, and neutral respectively). Sensitizers were defined as those completing sentences with "statements of inadequacy or failure, rationalization, intellectualization, displacement or projection to other people, preoccupation, projection, humor (in conflictual material), qualification, overreaction to the stimulus, and denial of importance." Other subjects were categorized as repressers. Evidence was obtained for sensitization as well as for the specificity of sensitization. Sex and hostility sensitizers had significantly lower thresholds than sex and hostility repressers for critical words.

Outside of the realm of perceptual defense research, more recently attempts have been made to differentiate sensitizers from repressers through the use of personality tests (Eriksen and Browne, 1956; Truax, 1957; Altrocchi, Parsons, and Dickoff, 1960; and Byrne, 1961). These attempts appear to be based upon the proposition that sensitization and repression are personality variables that can be measured on certain scales of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory.
The first repression-sensitization scale was that reported by Eriksen and Browne (1956). Having discovered that subjects scoring high on the psychasthenia scale of the M.M.P.I. seem to be especially prepared to "admit bad things about themselves" while the low-scoring subjects are reluctant to do so, it was concluded that self-devaluating thoughts and memories are less anxiety-arousing for the high-scoring individuals. A Repression-Sensitization scale was constructed that consisted of the Hysteria, Psychasthenia, Lie, and K scale items of the M.M.P.I. It was found that sensitizers, as defined by the scale, had significantly better recall for failed anagrams than did repressors.

Truax (1957) has used the Hy-Pt index of the M.M.P.I. as a R-S scale. The high group tended to show repression to anxiety produced by failure. The low-scoring group tended to demonstrate facilitation, or vigilance.

A more complex R-S scale was presented by Altrocchi, Parsons, and Dickoff (1960). The D total was added to the Welsh Anxiety score and Pt, and then this total was subtracted from the sum of L, K, and Hy. Using this M.M.P.I. scale as the criterion for repression, repressors were found to manifest smaller self-ideal discrepancies than sensitizers as measured by the Interpersonal Check List, on which subjects rated themselves and their ideal selves. This finding has again been supported (Altrocchi, 1961).

Byrne (1961) has criticized the Altrocchi, Parsons, and Dickoff scale on the grounds that the test items overlap, some of the items being included in several of the selected scales. Byrne constructed an M.M.P.I. scale with all overlap items eliminated. Using his test with college students of both sexes, Byrne's M.M.P.I. scale produced coefficients internal con-
sistency and stability of .88. Byrne's scale, which is measured in terms of the number of "sensitizer" responses, has produced a significant positive correlation with self-ideal discrepancies, a significant negative correlation with authoritarianism, a significant positive correlation with sexual responses on the TAT, a significant positive correlation with deviant responses on an adjective check list, and no difference for intelligence. The evidence is strong that sensitization and repression can adequately be measured through the use of the Byrne scale.

Another important test measure that has not yet been very extensively utilized in psychology is that of the deviant response. The concept was first introduced by Berg (1955) and has been termed "Berg's Deviation Hypothesis." Grigg and Thorpe (1960) have summarized this concept as stating that "Individuals when taking almost any type of non-achievement test make many responses which are similar to responses made by most others, but they also make responses which are unlike those of others in the general population and are more like responses made by members of some special subpopulation to which the individual belongs." Grigg and Thorpe have developed from the 300-item Gough Adjective Check List (Gough, 1955) a list of commonly-chosen and uncommonly-chosen self-descriptive adjectives without sex bias. The deviant response scores of college students who later sought personal counseling or psychiatric treatment were significantly greater than those for a non-client control group. It was noted by Grigg and Thorpe that individuals with high deviant response scores tended to check adjectives which give a negative, unfavorable self-image. This finding suggests that deviant responses on a self-description adjective check list are related to being sensitizers.
rather than repressers.

Bass (1956) has reported a correlation of .00 for 38 Louisiana State University night-school students between the Social Acquiescence Scale and the tendency to accept, agree, or react positively to 12 non-existent test items which the experimenter supposedly had in mind. This report suggests another method whereby deviant responses can be measured besides the adjective check list (content task). A contentless task (without ego-threat) with Bass' ESP set could be also measured in terms of deviant responses (circling uncommonly-circled numbers and failing to circle commonly-circled numbers).

The purpose of the study now being reported is to test whether sensitizers or repressers (as defined by Byrne's S-R scale) give more deviant responses on a self-description adjective check list (content task) and a non-self-description task (contentless). The predictions were that the sensitizers would give significantly more deviant responses than the repressers on the adjective check list where deviant responses are negative self descriptions and that there would be no difference between sensitizers and repressers for the contentless ESP task.
CHAPTER II
THE PROCEDURE

The subjects consisted of 173 undergraduate college students, 114 women from Westhampton College and 59 men from Richmond College. They were drawn at random from available psychology classes and assumed to be naive to the purpose of the experiment. The Byrne test was administered to all of the subjects. During the experiment proper, no grouping was made on the basis of the results of this test. However, later a statistical analysis of this test gave a ranking of subjects by scores along Byrne's Repression-Sensitization Scale. The instructions given for this test were simply the following: "Place a circle around the answer that best describes your reactions." As has previously been stated, high scorers on this test may be considered to be sensitizers, whereas low scorers are believed to be repressors.

The content task involved the administration of a Self-Description Adjective Check List (Grigg and Thorpe, 1960). This test consists of 33 commonly-selected and 39 uncommonly-selected adjectives from the 300-word Gough Adjective Check List (Gough, 1955). All sex-biased items had been removed by Grigg and Thorpe. The following instructions were given to all subjects: "The following is a list of 72 adjectives that may be used to describe yourself. Place checks beside all of those adjectives that best describe yourself."
The contentless task involved a simple ESP set suggested by Bass (1956). The following general set of instructions was given: "This is an experiment in extra sensory perception. A key has been made of correct answers. You are to place circles around all of the numbers on your answer sheet that you believe to be also circled on the key." After being advised that this was an ESP experiment, subjects attempted to decide for each item (a number in a 72-item sequence) whether the experimenter wanted them to mark that particular item, or number. In order to emphasize the ESP set, the investigator waited for all subjects to finish marking their answer sheets before continuing to another test.

All three tests were administered during a single testing session. Grouping of subjects was done only on the basis of class, each of the seven classes included being tested en toto. All of the subjects were given all three tests regardless of their Byrne test scores. Total testing time was approximately 40 minutes: 20 minutes for the Byrne test; 10 minutes for the Grigg-Thorpe Adjective Check List; and 10 minutes for the number task with the ESP set.

Since it was conceivable that the results would be influenced by the order of administration of the tests, two different orders were tried. Four classes (23 men and 96 women) received Order I and three classes received Order II. Order I consisted of (1) the Byrne test, (2) then the self-description task, and (3) the ESP task finally. Order II involved the sequence (1) ESP task, (2) then the self-description task, and (3) the Byrne test last. It seemed more likely that the results might be influenced by the self-description task vs. non-self-description (ESP) order than by the placement of the Byrne test in the sequence.
CHAPTER III

THE RESULTS

The deviant response served as the criterion for both content and contentless tasks. For the Self-Description Adjective Check List a deviant response was the same as that used by Grigg and Thorpe—failing to check an adjective that was checked by 84% or more of Grigg and Thorpe's standardization group or checking an adjective that was checked by fewer than 16% of that group. For the number sequence a deviant response was originally defined as not marking an item that was marked by 84% or more of the group tested in this experiment or marking as item that was marked by fewer than 16% of the group tested.

To test whether there is a relationship between deviant responding and sensitization scores, correlations were computed between scores on the Byrne Repression-Sensitization Scale and deviant response scores on the Grigg-Thorpe Adjective Check List for all subjects. Since no differences due to order or sex were found to be significant at the 5% level of confidence, men and women were combined disregarding order (see Table I on the next page). As predicted, a positive, linear relationship was found to exist between defense scores and deviant response scores. A Pearson r of .40 (p .01) was obtained for all subjects on the Self-Description test vs. the Byrne test, indicating that defensiveness influences the checking of self-description adjectives and, more specifically, that those having high sensitization scores tend to check more deviant adjectives.
TABLE I
Correlations and z Scores Between Defense Scores on the Byrne Repression-Sensitization Scale and Deviant Responses on the Grigg-Thorpe Adjective Check List for Men and Women and Two Orders of Administration*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>z</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Sexes</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Sexes</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Sexes</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All correlations are significant (p < .05).

It has been hypothesized that there would be no correlation between the contentless ESP deviant response scores and defensiveness, since the ESP task was not expected to cause repression-sensitization to be manifest. However, it is interesting to note that none of the 72 items in the number sequence attained the deviant response criteria. If the proposed criteria for the deviant response on the ESP task are to be
strictly followed, then no conclusions can be drawn concerning whether defensiveness influences the giving of deviant responses on this neutral, non-self-description task.

Another analysis of the ESP task data was attempted. Here each subject was scored on the number of items that he had circled. A frequency distribution of numbers of items circled by the subjects was made. A deviant response was defined as having a frequency score beyond one and one-half standard deviations of the mean number of items circled (23.99). A biserial correlation between deviant responders vs. nondeviant responders and the Byrne sensitizers score was computed. The biserial r was .069. This is not significantly different from zero correlation.

Tables of means and standard deviations of scores of men and women have been prepared for Order I and Order II on the Byrne Repression-Sensitization Scale (Table II), the Grigg-Thorpe Adjective Check List (Table III), and the number-circling task (Table IV). The tables are presented on the following pages, Table II on page 19, Table III on page 20, and Table IV on page 21.
TABLE II

Means and Standard Deviations of Deviant Responses of Men and Women on the Byrne Repression-Sensitization Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>56.17</td>
<td>13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>55.72</td>
<td>14.84</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Sexes</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>55.31</td>
<td>16.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>57.53</td>
<td>17.13</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>61.56</td>
<td>16.54</td>
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<td>Both Sexes</td>
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<td>58.37</td>
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<td>Women</td>
<td>114</td>
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<td>Women</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>Both Sexes</td>
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<td>6.81</td>
<td>5.27</td>
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<td>Men</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10.72</td>
<td>5.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>6.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Sexes</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>6.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>6.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Sexes</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>6.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE IV
Means and Standard Deviations of Men and Women on a Number-Circling Task with an ESP Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.39</td>
<td>13.45</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>21.32</td>
<td>11.72</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Both Sexes</td>
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<td>23.06</td>
<td>12.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27.11</td>
<td>11.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23.78</td>
<td>10.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Sexes</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>11.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28.39</td>
<td>12.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>21.71</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Sexes</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>23.99</td>
<td>12.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV

The Discussion

In view of the results of this experiment it is interesting to note that Byrne (1961), in an independent and simultaneous experiment has reported the existence of a similar positive linear relationship between Byrne test scores and deviant response scores on the Grigg-Thorpe Adjective Check List. Byrne obtained correlations of .42 (p .01) for a group of 50 males and .33 (p .01) for 40 males and 23 females. Byrne also reported that no differences due to sex were present. Similarly, there are no significant differences between the correlations obtained by Byrne (.42 and .33) and the present study (.40).

Defensiveness has been shown to influence the checking of self-description adjectives by Byrne (1961). This finding has been supported by the findings of the present investigation. The hypothesis that those who give deviant responses on a self-description task are more likely to be sensitizers than repressers has been confirmed.

The second hypothesis, that defensiveness would not influence the number of deviant responses on a non-self-description ESP task, was only partially confirmed. The original definition of the deviant response on this contentless task yielded no deviant responses. However, upon re-defining the deviant response as a response one and one-half standard deviations from the mean, a correlation of .079 was obtained between
deviant responses on the ESP task and scores on the Byrne Repression-Sensitization Scale. Although the correlation was as predicted not significantly different from zero, no conclusions can be drawn from the analysis because of the small number of deviant responses obtained (13).

Strong support has been secured for the assumption that defensiveness is manifest on a task involving self-description (content). Sensitizers tend to be self-critical and to describe themselves by uncomplimentary adjectives as compared with repressers, who tend to present better self-images (Altrocchi, 1961) and use repression when confronted with anxiety-producing tasks (Eriksen and Brown, 1956; Byrne, 1961; and others).

One other important aspect of these results has been that the deviant response concept has been successfully utilized in a self-description task as a measure of repression-sensitization. It has been shown that the deviant response is much more characteristic of the sensitizer than the repressor. Since Grigg and Thorpe (1960) have already demonstrated that the deviant response concept can be used in developing a measure of adjustment, it is possible that the repression-sensitization dimension, which can be measured in terms of deviant responses, may also be related to adjustment. The demonstration of such a relationship would certainly be an important step toward understanding completely the dynamics involved in human behavior.
CHAPTER V

The Summary

The major purpose of this experiment was to determine how the repression-sensitization dimension is related to the tendency to give deviant self-descriptive responses. The assumption tested here was that those who gave deviant responses on a self-description (content) task would more likely be sensitizers than repressors, whereas on a non-self-description and contentless task there would be no difference between sensitizers and repressors.

A survey of the literature led to the conclusion that despite criticisms which suggest suppression and stimulus familiarity as alternative phenomena considerable evidence has accumulated to suggest the existence of a repression-sensitization dimension.

Byrne's MMPI technique whereby sensitizers may be differentiated was employed in the present study. Those making high scores on his test were defined as sensitizers, and those making low scores were considered to be repressors.

In addition to the Byrne test, the Grigg-Thorpe Adjective Check List and a number-circling task involving an ESP set were administered to all subjects. The testing, then, included a measure of the repression-sensitization dimension, a content or self-description task, and a contentless or non-self-description task. Two different orders of adminis-
Both the self-description and non-self-description tasks were measured through the use of the deviant response criterion. There was no evidence for any sex or order differences, and so the data for all conditions were pooled.

A significant positive correlation was found between the deviant response scores on the Self-Description Test and the Byrne Test.

No relationship between the non-self-description test and the Byrne Test.

The following conclusions may be made from the results of this experiment:

1. Sensitization is significantly related to the giving of deviant responses on a self-description task. Sensitizers tend to be more critical of themselves than repressers.

2. There is some evidence, although unreliable, that defensiveness is not related to the giving of deviant responses on a non-self-description task. This phase of the study was limited by the small number of responses meeting the deviant response criteria. The results suggest that either a greater number of subjects or a measure other than the deviant response is needed for contentless tasks similar to the one presented here.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Arthur Wellington Lucky, the author, was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on December 9, 1937. Upon the receipt of his diploma from Mount Lebanon High School on June 6, 1955, he entered Randolph-Macon College, from which a B.A. degree with a major in psychology was obtained on June 6, 1959. The author then became a graduate student in psychology at the University of Richmond, where he was elected to psi chi (1960), held a Williams Fellowship (1960-1961), and taught courses in reading improvement (1960-1961). Additional positions have included being a child-care worker at Memorial Foundation (1960--), teaching reading improvement and serving as a psychometrician for Psychological Consultants, inc. (1961--), and teaching emotionally-disturbed children at the Day Care Center of Memorial Guidance Clinic (1962--). Future plans include securing a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and becoming a staff-member at a clinic or mental hospital.