

A CHILDREN'S SOCIAL DESIRABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE¹

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A Children's Social Desirability (CSD) questionnaire was constructed and administered to 956 Ss in Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, and 12. A direct question ("yes-no") form of the scale was presented to children in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades in individual testing sessions, and a true-false form was given older Ss in group sessions. For both forms of the questionnaire, split-half reliabilities and test-retest (1-month interval) reliabilities were high. Socially desirable responses were more frequently given by younger children than by older children, by dull Ss than by bright Ss, by girls than by boys, and by Negro children than by white children. Social class, size of family, and ordinal position were not associated with CSD responses. Questions were raised pertaining to the generality of this response and pertaining to the premises on which this measure of social desirability, as well as that of Crowne and Marlowe, is based.

Recent research has demonstrated clearly that responses to questionnaires and other subjective report measures are often influenced by factors other than the manifest content of the stimuli presented to the subject (e.g., Cronbach, 1946, 1950; Edwards, 1957; Fordyce, 1956; Taylor, 1961). Awareness of this phenomenon resulted in the more careful construction of self-report instruments in an attempt to control for such "irrelevant" influences as acquiescence and social desirability. Social Desirability scales (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Edwards, 1957; Hanley, 1956; Wiggins & Rumrill, 1959) have also been created to directly assess the differing tendencies of subjects to give socially desirable responses. The use of these scales now

makes it possible to investigate the extent to which the social desirability factor is operative on a specific self-report instrument, and also to test whether the propensity to appear socially desirable influences behavior in other, non-test-taking situations. In the main, research on social desirability has been limited to studies of adult subjects with few reports on the social desirability factor among children.² The present study is addressed to the investigation of this response in children.

A major portion of current research in personality development using children as subjects relies on self-report techniques for the measurement of attitudes, motivations, expectations, and beliefs. Thus, the investigator of child behavior is also plagued with the problem of social desirability response distortion and the resultant reduction in the predictive utility of self-report instruments.

Edwards (1957) has suggested two methods of eliminating this unwanted source of variance: (a) One strategy is to word items in personality inventories in a subtle or neutral fashion as to their social desirability so that the subject has difficulty in deciding which answer he should give if he wishes to appear socially acceptable. His response must, then,

²After this study was done, Lunneborg and Lunneborg (1963) reported the construction of another SD measure for children and the correlation of scores on this measure to certain "lie" and defensiveness scales.

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be based on the content of the item. However, Edwards (1957, p. 47) cites data collected by Fordyce and Rozytko indicating that MMPI items stated in a "subtle" fashion are still affected by social desirability factors. (b) The amount of social desirability "pull" may be equated in the alternate choices of items in a forced-choice questionnaire, and Edwards used this latter approach in his Personal Preference Schedule. Nevertheless, a number of other researchers have pointed out that this method, too, does not completely control for social desirability (Corah, Feldman, Cohen, Gruen, Meadow, & Ringwall, 1958; Dicken, 1959; Feldman & Corah, 1960; Heilbrun & Goodstein, 1961). In addition, this second, "equating" method limits the test constructor to a forced-choice format which may be inappropriate for his specific purpose.

In the final analysis, after controlling for social desirability "pull" as well as possible, it would seem best to measure directly subjects' tendencies to give socially desirable responses. The relationship of their social desirability scale scores to their scores on the personality instrument in question might then be examined. If a significant degree of the variance on the personality inventory were shown to be accounted for by social desirability tendencies, then "correction" factors might be worked out to remove the remainder of this influence on the inventory scores. This is the approach taken by McKinley, Hathaway, and Meehl in using the *K* score as a correction factor for selected MMPI scales (McKinley, Hathaway, & Meehl, 1948; Meehl & Hathaway, 1946). In order to accomplish this goal in research with children, however, a social desirability scale had to be developed which was appropriate to childhood experience.

It may be, however, that the desire to appear socially acceptable is not merely a test-taking response but reflects a more pervasive determinant of individual behavior in many situations. This likelihood has been suggested by Heilbrun and Goodstein (1961), Jackson and Messick (1958), Marlowe and Crowne (1961), and Allison and Hunt (1959). If this phenomenon is demonstrated with children, then scores from a social de-

sirability scale might be related to their behavior in various other experimental and natural situations to determine the generality of the social desirability response. For both these reasons the Children's Social Desirability (CSD) scale was constructed.

The basic aims of this particular study were two: First, it was necessary to determine the strengths and limitations of the Children's Social Desirability scale for the kinds of subjects for whom it was intended. This required investigation of group versus individual administration at various ages, the internal consistency of responses to the measure, test-retest reliability, etc. A second aim had substantive considerations, i.e., to determine the correlates of social desirability. An initial attempt was made here by examining a variety of common demographic variables such as age, sex, IQ, socioeconomic background, ethnic origin, ordinal position in the family, and size of family, as these might be associated with the number of socially desirable responses given.

METHOD

Questionnaire and Administration Procedures

The Children's Social Desirability (CSD) Questionnaire was patterned after the technique developed by Crowne and Marlowe in their adult scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). The CSD presents a child with 48 true-false items stated so that the subject can only answer them in a socially desirable manner by dissembling. That is, some of the items ask a child if he *always* behaves in some particular fashion which is prescribed by middle-class American mores or *always* holds such attitudes and beliefs, e.g., "I am always respectful of older people." Other items ask him if he *never* does, or thinks of doing, those things which are disapproved in his culture. "I have never felt like saying unkind things to a person" is representative of this kind of item. Still other items pose an unacceptable behavior or attitude and ask whether he *sometimes* acts or thinks in this fashion, e.g., "I sometimes feel angry when I don't get my way." If the subject wishes to appear socially acceptable on this latter kind of item, he must maintain that he *never* acts in this unacceptable manner. Examples of other items are: "Sometimes I don't like to share my things with my friends"; "When I make a mistake, I always admit I am wrong"; "I never forget to say 'please' and 'thank you'"; "I always wash my hands before every meal." The operation to determine the amount of social desirability is the number of items on which the child maintains that he has

such an undeviating socially desirable attitude or behavior.

Twenty *CSD* items from the Crowne-Marlowe scale for adults were rephrased in simpler language for children. The remaining items were especially constructed to sample a wide range of social experiences common to school-age children. The possibility of acquiescence response sets was minimized by keying 26 of the 48 items so that the subject must respond "true" and 22 so that he must respond "false" to appear socially acceptable.³

The *CSD* was administered to sixth-, eighth-, tenth-, and twelfth-grade students in group sessions. The following instructions were printed at the beginning of the questionnaire: "This questionnaire lists a number of experiences that most children have at one time or another. Read each of these carefully. After you have read one, decide whether it does or does not fit you. If it does, put a T (for true) in front of the statement; if it doesn't, put an F (for false) in front of the statement. If you have any questions at any time, raise your hand and one of the persons who passed out these questionnaires will come and explain it to you." The children were reassured that their responses would not be shown to, or discussed with, anyone at their schools.

Before the study was undertaken, individual interviews with a younger pretest sample indicated that children below the sixth grade often have difficulty dealing with the true-false form of the *CSD* questionnaire, probably due to their lack of familiarity with tests using a true-false format. Some of these younger children also did not know the meaning of several words appearing in the items and some were unable to read well. As a result, a special form of the *CSD* was devised for individual oral administration to children below the sixth-grade level. In this questionnaire, true-false items were changed to direct question form so that they could be answered "yes" or "no," and simpler words were substituted, e.g., "Have you ever felt like saying unkind things to a person?"; "Are you always polite to older people?" (see Footnote 3). However, in converting the true-false items to direct questions, it was impossible to retain a near-equal division of items keyed "yes" and "no" without awkward sentence constructions, double negatives, etc. Thus, the direct question form of the *CSD* contains 13 items keyed "yes" and 34 "no." (One item, Number 12, appearing on the true-false form was dropped from this form because some schools do not give homework in the earlier grades.) There is, therefore, some possibility that high *CSD* scores on this form

may be positively associated with a dissent or "naysaying" response set. Wiggins and Rumrill (1959) and Jackson and Messick (1958) maintain that they are related in the Edwards *SD* scale, although Couch and Keniston (1961) and Edwards and Walker (1962) find acquiescence set to be independent of social desirability in the Edwards scale. Whether a dissent response set and social desirability are orthogonal or related in children's responses on the *CSD* scale is as yet undetermined.

Pretesting also showed that it was inadvisable to administer even the direct question form to children below the third grade. The scale was inappropriate because of the short memory span common to young children. For example, a small child could say with honesty that he "never gets angry" because he can only remember what he has done during the past few days or so. In such cases, the items would fail to "pit" his honesty against his desire to appear socially acceptable over a broad enough time span to make it necessary for him to dissemble in order to answer in the socially desirable direction.

The direct question form of the *CSD* was administered to third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade children by using audograph recordings of the questions. The record was played individually to each subject in the presence of an examiner who checked the child's responses on a test form. The questionnaire items were recorded in order to standardize tone, inflection, and rate of presentation. Individual oral administration was found necessary because some children in the third, fourth, and fifth grades still do not read well enough to take the written form of the *CSD*. The following instructions were given these younger children: "Here are some questions about things that happen to all children your age. All the questions have been put on the record (experimenter points). When the person on the record asks you a question, you tell me your answer. If you can't hear a question or if you don't understand any of them, be sure to tell me and I'll have the record say it again." As with the older subjects, the children were reassured that their responses would not be disclosed to anyone at their school.

Sample

The sample was composed of 956 students. Sub-samples in various grades were: Grade 3, $N = 115$; Grade 4, $N = 115$; Grade 5, $N = 106$; Grade 6, $N = 166$; Grade 8, $N = 162$; Grade 10, $N = 183$; and Grade 12, $N = 109$. All children who were in their respective schools at the time of testing were used. The sample was drawn from five different schools in order to make it as representative as possible. The children who participated as subjects came from a consolidated country school, a village school, a small-city school, a medium-city school, and a college-lab school, all located in southern Ohio. None came from a large, metropolitan school system, however.

The socioeconomic status (SES) of the children in Grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 was determined by Hollingshead's Two Factor Index of Social Position

³ A full list of the items for this form of the *CSD* scale, as well as the direct question form of the scale to be described later, and a full table of split-half (odd-even) reliability coefficients have been deposited with the American Documentation Institute. Order Document No. 8232, remitting \$1.25 for microfilm or \$1.25 for photocopies, and make checks payable to: Chief, Photoduplication Service, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. 20540.

(Hollingshead, 1957), an index based on the type of occupation and amount of education of the head of the household. Scores on these two factors are differentially weighted and summed. The normative sample of Hollingshead and Redlich (1958) obtained in New Haven, and those studied by many other sociologists, indicate that all measures of SES find lower social class families much more prevalent than those of higher status. The present sixth-, eighth-, tenth-, and twelfth-grade sample is comparable to that of Hollingshead and Redlich's normative sample, except that this sample is not as heavily skewed (as determined by nonsignificant Fisher g_s). Thus, the distribution of older children in this study is relatively "top heavy" with middle and high SES scores as compared with the general American population. (Complete SES information was available for all tenth-grade subjects used in the study, but could be obtained for only parts of the sixth, eighth, and twelfth grades. However, subjects in these latter grades all came from the same schools as those in the tenth grade, and there was no reason to believe that the SES distribution of the remaining sixth, eighth, and twelfth graders would be dissimilar to that of the tenth grade.)

For Grades 3, 4, and 5, an estimate of the children's SES was obtained from their fathers' occupations only since information was not available concerning fathers' educations. However, father's occupation has been shown by Hollingshead and Redlich (1958) to be the more predictive of the two indexes of SES. Because the fathers' occupations could not be combined with their education for this sample, the occupational scores were used in unweighted raw score form. The mean father's occupation score for this younger sample was 4.3 in the range of 1 to 7. The distribution showed a significant skewness (Fisher g_1 , significant at the .05 level) with scores piling up at the lower end of the range. However, again, this distribution is still not as skewed as the SES of the general American population and indicates that higher status families were also somewhat overrepresented in our younger sample.

The California Test of Mental Maturity, the intelligence test used by all schools for Grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 yielded a mean of 103.4 and an SD

of 14.15. The intelligence test which all but one of the schools had used for Grades 3, 4, and 5 was the Lorge-Thorndike. The mean Lorge-Thorndike score for the subjects who had had the test was 103.0 with an SD of 12.51.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analyses

Distribution characteristics of all variables were tested with Fisher g statistics, then nonnormal distributions were normalized by McCall T score transformations. Product-moment correlations were used for measures of association, and tests of difference were t tests. Two-tailed tests were used to determine all p values.

Characteristics of the CSD Scale

Uncorrected split-half (odd-even) reliability coefficients range from .69 to .90 for subsamples of boys and girls at various grade levels. Corrected by the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula, correlations are .82 to .95 (see Footnote 3).

Test-retest reliability was examined in only part of the total sample. The direct question form of the *CSD* was readministered after a 1-month interval to 63 of the younger children. The correlation between first and second administration was .90. The true-false form of the questionnaire was readministered to 98 tenth graders after a similar 1-month interval and produced a correlation of .85. Thus, children's social desirability response tendencies as measured by the *CSD* questionnaire are demonstrably consistent over a month interval as well as consistent from item to item within the test itself.

Although results are presented in the fol-

TABLE 1
CSD MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

Grade	Boys			Girls			Both sexes	
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
3	54	27.66	10.82	61	30.67	9.86	29.26	10.43
4	66	18.71	10.88	49	25.76	9.68	21.71	10.95
5	53	21.75	8.84	53	23.00	9.33	22.38	9.11
6	93	17.68	8.33	73	22.12	8.82	19.63	8.83
8	69	15.98	9.09	93	17.53	8.63	16.87	8.86
10	90	13.07	6.40	93	14.55	7.30	13.82	6.91
12	52	10.67	6.80	57	14.47	7.83	12.66	7.60

lowing discussion for children from third through twelfth grade, it should be remembered that the two forms of the *CSD*, the ones for younger and for older children, vary in both format and method of administration. Thus, trends covering the whole range of subjects studied must be accepted only tentatively. Table 1 gives the descriptive statistics for the *CSD* scale. Scores ranged from 1 to 47 for the 47-item direct question form of the questionnaire, and ranged from 0 to 44 on the 48-item true-false form. The data indicate that girls' *CSD* scores are higher than boys' at all grade levels and that there is a general tendency for socially desirable responses to decrease with age (grade) for both sexes. The smaller standard deviations in the upper grades are evidence of increasing within-sample homogeneity of response, especially among the male subjects.

Grade (Age) Differences

In order to examine more definitively the tendency noted above for *CSD* scores to decrease with age, *t* tests were run between *CSD* scores of subjects who were two grades apart, as well as between the lowest and highest grades of the older sample. (No comparison was made between any of the lower grades and any of the upper grades because of the difference in test forms and administration.) Relevant data are reported in Table 2. It will be seen that there was a tendency for older children to give significantly fewer socially desirable responses with only a few exceptions. The propensity to give socially desirable responses apparently develops early in life since it is shown in these data to be well developed by grade three, the earliest grade tested here. It is possible that the maximum desire to appear socially acceptable occurs at an even earlier age. We can only tell from these data, however, that after Grade 3 this response steadily decreases.

The wider variability of scores at the younger ages reported in Table 1 might suggest that either the culture is not as clear in its demands for some children as it is for others and/or that children at these younger ages vary more in their wish to appear socially acceptable. However, the larger means

TABLE 2
TESTS OF DIFFERENCE OF *CSD*
SCORES BETWEEN GRADES

Grades compared	<i>t</i>	Direction
Grades 3 versus 5		
Boys	2.956***	3 > 5
Girls	4.280****	3 > 5
Both sexes	5.200****	3 > 5
Grades 6 versus 8		
Boys	1.404	6 > 8
Girls	3.398****	6 > 8
Both sexes	2.921***	6 > 8
Grades 8 versus 10		
Boys	1.826	8 > 10
Girls	2.389**	8 > 10
Both sexes	3.121***	8 > 10
Grades 10 versus 12		
Boys	2.235*	10 > 12
Girls	.198	10 > 12
Both sexes	1.609	10 > 12
Grades 6 versus 12		
Boys	5.263****	6 > 12
Girls	5.179****	6 > 12
Both sexes	6.849****	6 > 12

Note.—For *N*, means, and standard deviations, see Table 1
 * $p < .05$.
 ** $p < .02$.
 *** $p < .01$.
 **** $p < .001$.

at the earlier grade levels would seem to indicate that, in general, the culture makes its expectations sufficiently clear by early grade-school age for them to be able to respond appropriately and consistently in a socially desirable direction. But why does the young child choose to, or need to, appear so socially acceptable? It may be that this response reflects his greater dependency on the approval of adults during the early years when he feels neither instrumentally adequate nor emotionally independent. Since he cannot yet "do for himself" he must maintain the good will of his caretakers by being, or attempting to appear, a "good boy" or a "nice girl." As the child develops greater instrumental competence he is then able to obtain rewards for behaviors other than simply for appearing "nice" or "good."

In addition, the decrease in the older children's *CSD* responses probably reflects

TABLE 3
DIFFERENCES IN *CSD* SCORES OF
BOYS AND GIRLS

Grade	<i>N</i>	<i>t</i>	Direction
3	115	1.54	G > B
4	115	3.50***	G > B
5	106	.70	G > B
3, 4, 5	336	3.55****	G > B
6	166	3.19***	G > B
8	162	1.18	G > B
10	183	1.36	G > B
12	109	2.71***	G > B
6, 8, 10, 12	620	3.47****	G > B

*** $p < .01$.
**** $p < .001$.

their desire to attain independence from adults, and perhaps may even be evidence of the rebelliousness against social strictures often attributed to adolescent conflict with authority figures. Nevertheless, it may be that the adolescent, like the young child, still needs to appear socially acceptable. Perhaps at this age, however, he no longer wishes to obtain acceptance from adults, but prefers to obtain it from his own gang, clique, or the adolescent subculture in general. In this respect, it should be noted that some items of the *CSD* scale probably represent more nearly the demands of the adult world and, in fact, may be antithetical to what teenagers consider required social behavior to gain peer-group acceptance.

Sex Differences

Table 3 summarizes the results of the tests of difference in *CSD* responses for boys and girls at each grade level. Significant sex differences are evident in the fourth, sixth, and twelfth grades. Furthermore, when all girls in Grades 3, 4, and 5 are compared with all boys in these grades, the *t* is highly significant. This difference also occurs when *CSD* responses of girls in the sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades are compared with those of boys in these more advanced grades.

One might question whether this sex difference is a reflection of the greater actual conformity of girls as compared with boys. While it is true that girls tend to be more conforming than boys in actual behavior, it

is apparent from the undeviating behavior required to give each socially desirable response that few girls could be truly as conforming in overt behavior and attitudes as the items demand for such a response. Thus, even though girls may be behaviorally more conforming, the *CSD* items are so worded that girls' *SD* responses must still represent an attempt to *appear* socially desirable rather than a true reflection of actual behavior. The sex difference in *CSD* responses suggests that it may be more important for American girls to appear socially acceptable than for American boys to do so.

Both Edwards (1957) and Marlowe and Crowne (1962) fail to find significant differences between college men and women on their social desirability scales, although Edwards' difference approaches significance. It is difficult to determine why this sample of girls attained significantly higher scores than the boys while Edwards and Marlowe and Crowne did not find this difference in their adult samples. These disparate results may be due to the fact that the *CSD* scale items differ from those in the Marlowe-Crowne and the Edwards *SD* scales, or because the present subjects are younger, or because the samples used by these other investigators differed from our sample in another important respect. That is, the men and women used as subjects by Marlowe and Crowne and by Edwards were all college students. It may be that college women have a lesser desire or need to present a socially acceptable facade than do women in general. If so, they would achieve lower *SD* scores which are more similar to those of men. In order to pursue the possibility that girls with an intellectual-academic orientation might be as low on social desirability as boys with similar backgrounds, the *CSD* scores of the girls and boys from the college laboratory school sample of the current study were analyzed separately. No significant difference between the two sexes was found ($t = 1.67$, $p > .10$). Thus, a tentative conclusion might be that females in the general American culture are more consistently taught to be, and expected to be, "nice" than are males, unless they come from academically oriented backgrounds where parents of girls may be

less concerned with this aspect of behavior and development. An alternative, but not mutually exclusive, possibility is that the girl who is able to obtain satisfaction from intellectual competence, when it is valued, has less need to get approval by appearing "sweet" and "good."

CSD Responses and IQ

For the younger group of third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade children the correlation between *CSD* responses and IQ was $-.19$, significant at the $.01$ level. For the older group of sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders, the association was $-.20$, significant at the $.001$ level.⁴ While these correlations are moderate, they indicate that, in general, the less intelligent a child is, the more he attempts to present a socially desirable facade. This negative relationship seems to suggest that even duller children, like younger children, must have been able to "pick up the cues" by which the culture communicates its expectations for children's attitudes and behaviors. The fact that less intelligent children give *more* socially desirable responses may be due to their inability to get satisfaction from behaviors such as intellectual competence and social leadership which are so highly valued in present-day American culture. Perhaps, then, these children fall back on those rewards which are still open to them for being respectful, polite, obedient, and cooperative, the rewards reflected in the *CSD* scale. Such a compensatory explanation is, at present, highly speculative but could be tested in future research.

CSD and Social Class

The correlation of the children's *SD* scores and *Father's Occupation* (the SES measure used for the lower grades) was a nonsignificant $-.09$. For the older children, using the full Hollingshead Two Factor Index, the relationship between family socioeconomic status

⁴In addition to assessing associations of *CSD* scores and IQs for the total group of younger children and the total group of older children as reported above, correlations were run separately for boys and girls at each of the grade levels studied. The significant correlations did not form any observable pattern, although all subsample correlations were negative in direction.

and the subjects' *CSD* scores was $-.16$, significant beyond the $.01$ level.⁵ It would appear at first glance that there is some tendency for the older children who come from lower-class families to try to present a more socially desirable front than do children from higher status homes. However, because of the consistent relationship often reported between social class and IQ, analyses of variance were computed on the children's *CSD* scores on the basis of these two dimensions. For both the older and the younger children, social class did not account for a significant amount of the variance, once the influence of intelligence was removed. Variance in *CSD* scores due to IQ did produce a significant effect for both younger and older boys ($F = 5.54$, $p < .05$ and $F = 8.15$, $p < .01$) and for the sexes combined in the older group ($F = 7.00$, $p < .01$). Why IQ was influential only for the boys and not for the girls is unknown. At any rate, the small but significant correlation of $-.16$ between *CSD* scores and social class is probably spurious and due only to the correspondingly higher intelligence of the upper-class child as compared with his lower-class peer.

CSD and Ethnicity

Negro children's *CSD* scores were compared with those of white subjects. The test of difference for the younger children yielded a t of 2.13 ($p < .05$) with Negro subjects attaining the higher scores. For the older children, t was 2.01 ($p < .05$), and again the Negro children gave the greater number of *SD* responses. However, only 38 of the younger group and only 62 of the older children were Negroes. These children constituted the very small Negro enrollment in those grades of the schools used in the present study, and it should be remembered that these southwestern Ohio schools have a primarily white student body. It is possible, therefore, that this sample is not typical of most American

⁵In addition to assessing associations of *CSD* scores with SES for the total group of younger children and the total group of older children as reported above, correlations were run separately for boys and girls at each of the grade levels studied. The significant correlations did not form any observable pattern, although 12 of the 14 subsample correlations were negative in direction.

Negroes and that the differences found here might not obtain between white children and more representative samples of Negro children.

In regard to the relationship of social desirability to IQ, social class, and ethnic group, another body of data was made available to the present authors.⁶ These were the *CSD* scores of 470 children who were in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades of three Syracuse, New York, schools. They are described as "more than 90% Negro," coming from a "culturally deprived" section of the city, and having parents who "are almost all in the lower class." The mean IQs of these children were 85.0 for the boys and 88.2 for the girls (California Test of Mental Maturity). The boys of this sample had a mean *CSD* score of 20.92 with a standard deviation of 8.05. The girls' mean was 22.48, standard deviation 9.14. When both sexes were combined, the mean was 21.66, standard deviation 8.61.

The *CSD* scores of these children were compared with those of the sixth- and eighth-grade subjects of the current study who make up a more representative sample of American children. The test of difference between boys' scores resulted in a $t = 4.92$, $p < .001$. Between girls' scores the t was 3.23, $p < .005$, and for both sexes it was 5.56, $p < .001$. In each case, the Syracuse sample had significantly higher scores than the more representative sample of the present study. It is impossible, of course, to ascribe their greater tendency to give socially desirable responses to their lower status on one or another of the determinants, IQ, social class, or ethnicity, and this will not be attempted. This comparison is only meant to illustrate that subjects in the less privileged position on all these demographic variables do, in fact, demonstrate greater social desirability of response.

CSD scores were also examined in respect to size of the child's family and whether he was first born or later born, but no significant results were found.

In addition to the differences noted between the Syracuse sample and the present one, it is interesting to observe that among the more

representative sample of the present study as well, those children in the less advantageous positions on each of the demographic variables where significant results were obtained are those children who attained the higher *CSD* scores; i.e., younger children, children with low IQs, Negro children, and girls. It is tempting to generalize that when a child feels at a disadvantage for any one or a number of reasons, one readily available response is to attempt to appear "nice." While support for this hypothesis is not fully developed, it seems to have some demonstration in certain relationships found with California Psychological Inventory variables. High *CSD* scores (subjects from the tenth-grade sample used here) were negatively and significantly related to the CPI variables called Sociability, Social Presence, and Self-Acceptance and positively and significantly related to Self-Control and Good Impression. (The remaining CPI scales did not relate significantly to *CSD* scores). These results will be more fully discussed in a future report. In the meantime, however, they seem to imply that the child who has a strong wish to appear socially desirable is the child who is shy, withdrawn, unsure of himself in social situations, lacking in self-confidence concerning his own social skills, has a low sense of his own personal worth, and has "little capacity for independent thinking and action." He is restrained and able to inhibit his antisocial impulses. He tries to create a good impression of himself and is concerned with how others react to him.

In addition to the foregoing individual differences in the personality correlates of social desirability, it may be that this response, whether verbally given or otherwise evidenced, may also be partially determined by aspects of the situation in which the child finds himself. To the degree that this is the case, and our "compensatory" or "disadvantaged" hypothesis is correct, then the socially desirable response should be especially called forth when the child is interacting with someone who is a member of some or all of the more favored groups on the demographic dimensions examined in this study; i.e., people who are older, white, more intelligent, male, etc. All of the testing in the present study was

⁶ Grateful appreciation is expressed to David E. Hunt, Syracuse University, for these data.

done by adult examiners introduced to the children as psychologists from the Fels Research Institute, and it is likely that the children expected their questionnaires would be evaluated by similar persons. It would be interesting in future research to find out whether lower *CSD* scores would be obtained from a similar sample of children if they were tested, for example, by an apparently lower class, Negro, nonprofessional girl—if such a situation could be arranged to seem reasonably realistic. In the present study a beginning attempt was made along these lines in the individual testing of the fourth-grade subsample. Half of the boys and half of the girls were tested by a female examiner, and the remaining subjects by a male. The examiners did not differ from each other on any of the other aforementioned dimensions, however, and the results showed no significant examiner differences in either the boys' or the girls' *CSD* scores.

In future research, it might also be possible to compare high *CSD* scorers' behavior in two social situations, one in which they were in interaction with high-prestige persons and the other where they were in situations with individuals like themselves. Until studies of this nature are done, it is impossible to say how situation-specific or how generalized social desirability tendencies are.

It should be pointed out that a possible alternate interpretation of high scores on the present scale might be made. It might be argued that children who are of dull normal intelligence or are so young that they are incapable of making fine semantic distinctions, are not bound by the exact "always" and "never" wording of the *CSD* items. Thus, they would be freer to endorse more items than are the older, brighter children who recognize these restrictions. This alternate interpretation of *CSD* responses would also predict the negative relationships found between intelligence and *CSD* scores and between age and these scores. However, it would not account for the sex differences found in the present study. The girls of the current sample, who have higher *CSD* scores than the boys, are not only equal to the boys in age and intelligence, but the means of their intelligence test scores are slightly

higher than those of the boys (younger girls' mean IQ = 104.4, boys' mean = 101.5; older girls' mean IQ = 103.7, boys' mean = 103.3. The *t* tests between these means do not reach significance).

The interpretation that high-scale scores represent an attempt to gain social approval is supported by the results of other investigations using the same operation for determining social desirability tendencies (the Marlowe-Crowne *SD* scale). High M-C *SD* scale scores predict greater conformity under group pressure (Strickland & Crowne, 1962), the expression of approbation of a boring task to the examiner (Marlowe & Crowne, 1961), and greater sensitivity to minimal social reinforcements (Crowne & Strickland, 1961; Marlowe, 1962). These findings are most plausibly interpreted as the product of a desire to obtain social approval. Furthermore, it will be remembered that *CSD* scores in the present study related ($r = .51, p < .001$) to the Good Impression scale of the CPI.

A word of caution should be made here. The present scale and the Marlowe-Crowne scale are both based on an operation which "pits" the respondent's honesty and integrity against his need to present a socially acceptable picture of himself. This method of measuring social desirability rests on two premises, both of which may be faulty. On the one hand, it must be assumed that individuals do not differ in their honesty and that only their need to appear socially acceptable causes the differences in social desirability scores. However, if subjects are not homogeneous in the strength of their honesty, then honesty, as well as social desirability, will influence their scale scores.

The second premise must maintain that subjects do not differ in their need to *appear* honest, and this assumption may also be faulty. Honesty is clearly an approved value in our culture and a low scale score could simply reflect the subject's desire to impress the examiner with his honesty. Thus, subjects' true honesty, as well as their need to *appear* honest, detracts from high social desirability scale scores. However, the latter need actually reflects one form of the desire to appear socially acceptable. The measurement paradox is that this need leads to *lower* social desir-

ability scale scores. These difficulties argue for the development of other methods of measuring social desirability.

Despite the limitations cited above, the CSD scale has thus far been shown to have predictive utility. It correlates negatively and significantly with: achievement themes in children's stories to TAT-like pictures; various free-play behaviors of grade-school children, such as the frequency with which they instigated verbal and physical aggression, their recognition-approval seeking for their accomplishments, their concern with mastering fine motor skills, the quality of their language, the time they spent alone involved in tasks, the amount of independent achievement efforts they displayed, etc. The strength of these correlations varies greatly, however, depending on the sex of the subjects. In addition, boys' standardized achievement-test scores and their grade-point averages are also negatively correlated (in the .30s and .40s) with their CSD scores from fifth grade through twelfth. Such empirical findings will be more fully described in future reports, but are mentioned here to indicate that the CSD scale, although not operationally pure, is somehow predicting individual differences in a variety of behaviors in a systematic fashion.

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