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RELATION OF CYNICISM TO CERTAIN OTHER VARIABLES*

CHARLES O. NEIDT

It is not uncommon to hear the remark "He's a cynic", or "He has a cynical attitude" expressed in everyday conversation. During the course of an investigation designed to develop a test of cynicism, certain data were available for study in connection with cynical responses. These data were analyzed to answer several questions concerning cynicism and certain other variables. For example, are college men more cynical than women? What is the relation to religion, politics, and marriage? Does cynicism increase with age—or education?

I. THE INVESTIGATION

To investigate the nature of cynicism, 200 testing items were originated by Dr. M. F. Fritz of the Department of Psychology and the Testing Bureau of Iowa State College and labeled a "Practical Policy Test". A so-called "Scale for Answers" made it possible for a subject to indicate the strength of his acceptance or rejection of a particular testing item. The items were so arranged that a cynical response for some items would be indicated by marking "A", or "a", and the others "D", or "d". This procedure is illustrated by the following sample items:

"I would say that perhaps as much as half of our tax money finds its way into the hands of grafters" A a d D

SCALE FOR ANSWERS

- A—*Definitely acceptable. I agree most wholeheartedly with the statement.*
- a—*Fairly acceptable. In general, I agree with the statement but not too strongly.*
- d—*Mild disagreement. I am inclined not to agree with the statement. In general, I think I would reject it.*
- D—*Definitely rejected. I absolutely do not agree with the statement.*

"Most successful people have earned their success. They deserve it" A a d D

Acceptance of the first testing item and rejection of the second have the same interpretation regarding cynicism.

"Webster's Collegiate Dictionary" defines cynical as "contemptuously

* This report is part of a study for which a grant-in-aid was received from the Iowa Academy of Science.

distrustful of human nature” and a cynic as “one who believes that human conduct is motivated wholly by self-interest”. The cynical responses for each of the 200 testing items were validated in terms of these definitions.

Copies of the test were distributed at random intervals to 364 students enrolled in psychology courses at Iowa State College during the years 1944 and 1945. The students did not sign their names, but completed a short questionnaire attached to the test regarding their sex, political preference, church preference, father’s occupation, marital status, education, and age.

The tests were scored by counting the number of strongly cynical responses and the number of mildly cynical responses. Strongly cynical responses were assigned a weight of 2 and mildly cynical responses a weight of 1. The total cynical score of any subject was secured by combining the weighted responses.

The test scores were arranged in descending order from the highest score of 233 to the lowest of 25. The distribution was divided into quarters and the data for the variables tabulated.

II. RESULTS

Chi square was computed for the sex data in Table I and found to be 36.772. With 3 degrees of freedom, a chi-square value of 11.341.

TABLE I

SEX DISTRIBUTION AMONG 4 QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS

SEX	QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS				Total
	High Q4	Q3	Q2	Low Q1	
Male	39	29	19	5	92
Female	52	62	72	86	272
TOTAL	91	91	91	91	364

is found at the 1% level of confidence. It was concluded that there is a highly significant difference among the male and female students taking this test and the 4 quarters of the distribution of the test scores. The men’s scores were more cynical than the women’s far beyond the 1% level of confidence.

Since no students in the lowest quarter expressed a preference for the Socialist Party as is shown in Table II, the 6 socialist scores were combined with the scores of the students indicating no political preference for computational purposes. This combination is necessary because a chi-square value cannot be computed with a zero frequency in any cell. These data revealed a chi-square value of 7.354 among the 4 quarters of the distribution and students expressing a

TABLE II

POLITICAL PARTY DISTRIBUTION AMONG 4 QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS

PARTY	QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS				Total
	High Q4	Q3	Q2	Low Q1	
Republican	42	43	43	46	174
Democratic	25	26	35	23	109
Socialist	3	2	1	0	6
None	21	20	12	22	75
TOTAL	91	91	91	91	364

political preference for the Republican Party, Democratic Party, and the combined "no affiliation" and the Socialist Party. This chi-square value is about equal to that found at the 30% level of confidence with 6 degrees of freedom. It was concluded that there is no significant difference between the scores of students in the 4 quarters of the distribution and the political preferences listed by these students.

The religious data are shown in Table III-A. In the computation of chi-square the Jewish preferences were not utilized, since only 2 cases in the distribution were reported. Chi square for the 3 religious

TABLE III-A

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AMONG 4 QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS

AFFILIATION	QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS				Total
	High Q4	Q3	Q2	Low Q1	
Protestant	73	84	80	78	315
Catholic	7	4	9	11	31
None	11	3	1	1	16
Jewish	0	0	1	1	2
TOTAL	91	91	91	91	364

categories, Protestant, Catholic, and None, and the 4 quarters was found to be 18.715 with 6 degrees of freedom—highly significant. The data in Table III-A were broken down into those students expressing a religious preference and those expressing no religious preference as shown in Table III-B. In this table Jewish preference

TABLE III-B

RELIGIOUS INDICATION AMONG 4 QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS

INDICATION	QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS				Total
	High Q4	Q3	Q2	Low Q1	
Religion	80	88	90	90	348
None	11	3	1	1	16
TOTAL	91	91	91	91	364

is included in the category of those students expressing a religious preference. Chi square for the data in Table III-B was found to be 17.782 with 3 degrees of freedom. It was concluded that there is a highly significant difference among the students indicating a religious preference and those indicating none, and the 4 quarters. Students who indicated no religious preference obtained higher cynical scores than students indicating a religious preference. The original data were inspected and Table III-C tabulated. The chi-square value for

TABLE III-C

SEX DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS INDICATIONS

SEX	RELIGIOUS INDICATIONS		Total
	Yes	No	
Male	85	7	92
Female	263	9	272
TOTAL	348	16	364

Table III-C was found to be 3.037 with 1 degree of freedom. It was concluded that there is a slightly less than significant difference among the numbers of male and female students who gave no religious preference and those who listed a religious preference. Female students were more inclined to give a religious preference than male students at a level of confidence slightly less than 5%. The data in Table III-A were broken down into Catholic and non-Catholic categories and chi square computed on the data which are shown in Table III-D. The chi-square value for this table, 3.772, is slightly less than

TABLE III-D

RELIGIOUS BELIEF AMONG 4 QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS

BELIEF	QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS				Total
	High Q4	Q3	Q2	Low Q1	
Catholic	7	4	9	11	31
Other	84	87	82	80	333
TOTAL	91	91	91	91	364

significant at the 5% level of confidence with 3 degrees of freedom. It was concluded that non-Catholic students are more cynical than Catholic students at about the 5% level of confidence.

Table IV was tabulated from the original data concerning father's occupation. Chi square computed for farmers' and non-farmers' chil-

TABLE IV

FATHER'S OCCUPATION AMONG 4 QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS

OCCUPATION	QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS				Total
	High Q4	Q3	Q2	Low Q1	
Farmer	23	30	28	23	104
Other	68	61	63	68	260
TOTAL	91	91	91	91	364

dren and the 4 quarters revealed a value of 2.261 with 3 degrees of freedom. It was concluded that there is no significant difference between "father's occupation" and the 4 quarters, since this chi square value is about equal to that found at the 50% level of confidence.

The data in Table V concerning marital status were treated by analysis of variance. These data revealed an F value of 64.912—sig-

TABLE V

MARITAL STATUS AMONG 4 QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS

STATUS	QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS				Total
	High Q4	Q3	Q2	Low Q1	
Married	9	7	8	5	29
Engaged	12	6	11	15	44
Single	70	78	72	71	291
TOTAL	91	91	91	91	364

nificant but not highly significant. It was concluded that the differences shown in Table V among the categories of marital status and the 4 quarters are significant at between the 5% and 1% levels of confidence—married students tending to obtain higher cynical scores and engaged students lower cynical scores, than unmarried students.

The coefficient of correlation for the educational data in Table VI and the 4 quarters was found to be $-.06$ with a probable error of $\pm .03$. For the computation of the coefficient of correlation, the scores of students who could not be classified into undergraduate classes were discarded. It was concluded that there is no significant difference among undergraduate classes and the 4 quarters.

TABLE VI

EDUCATIONAL DISTRIBUTION AMONG 4 QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS

EDUCATION	QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS				Total
	High Q4	Q3	Q2	Low Q1	
Senior	9	3	3	3	18
Junior	9	14	9	18	50
Sophomore	20	24	36	32	112
Freshman	50	49	42	35	176
Other	3	1	1	3	8
TOTAL	91	91	91	91	364

The coefficient of correlation for the data concerning age shown in Table VII and the 4 quarters was found to be $+.23$ with a probable error of $\pm .03$ —highly significant.

TABLE VII

AGE DISTRIBUTION AMONG 4 QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS

AGE	QUARTERS OF TEST RESULTS				Total
	High Q4	Q3	Q2	Low Q1	
Over 25	7	7	3	2	19
24	5	4	1	1	11
23	2	2	2	1	7
22	9	2	1	2	14
21	15	5	8	8	36
20	5	16	18	14	53
19	15	2	22	32	89
18	22	26	25	19	92
17	11	8	5	7	31
None	0	1	6	5	12
TOTAL	91	91	91	91	364

The scores of students not listing their age were discarded for this computation. It was concluded that there is a positive correlation between the age levels and the 4 quarters at a significance beyond the 1% level of confidence.

SUMMARY

When the data concerning certain variables and the 4 quarters of the distribution of the test scores of a test measuring cynicism were treated for statistical significance, it was concluded that there is a highly significant difference between sex and the 4 quarters of the distribution, between religious preference and the 4 quarters of the distribution, and between age and the 4 quarters of the distribution.

Male students obtained higher cynical scores than female students, students expressing no religious preference obtained higher cynical scores than students expressing a religious preference, and older students obtained higher scores than younger students.

It was concluded that there is a significant but not highly significant difference between marital status and the 4 quarters. Married students obtained higher cynical scores, and engaged students obtained lower cynical scores, than unmarried students.

The differences between (1) political preference, (2) father's occupation, and (3) education, and the 4 quarters were found to be not significant.

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