



Changes in the need for social approval, 1958–2001 [☆]

Jean M. Twenge ^{*}, Charles Im

Department of Psychology, San Diego State University, 5500 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA 92182-4611, USA

Available online 4 May 2006

Abstract

American college students' and children's scores on two measures of the need for social approval closely follow changes in the state of the larger society, decreasing significantly from 1958 to 1980 and leveling off between 1980 and 2001 (total $n = 36,004$ across 203 samples of college students responding to the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability scale; total $n = 4741$ across 38 samples of children responding to the Children's Social Desirability Questionnaire). Need for social approval correlates with positive social trends such as a low divorce rate, low crime rate, and low unemployment rate. However, need for social approval does not correlate over time with changes in anxiety and self-esteem, suggesting that these birth cohort trends are not due to shifts in response styles.

© 2006 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Birth cohort; Response styles; Culture; Socially desirable responding; Need for social approval

1. Introduction

Bob is careful about how he dresses, rarely talks about his bad qualities, and tries to present himself in a good light. In other words, he wants other people to approve of him. Mike, in contrast, dresses poorly, readily admits to his faults, and feels no need to shape his behavior to make a good impression. Thus Mike he does not much care what other people think of him. What is the difference between these two men? Bob is high in the need for social approval, whereas Mike is low in this trait.

[☆] We thank Jeff Bryson and Niels Christensen for their comments on an earlier version of the manuscript, and Mark Reid for designing the graphs.

^{*} Corresponding author.

E-mail address: jtwenge@mail.sdsu.edu (J.M. Twenge).

Over the past forty years, the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSD; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960, 1964) has been cited in over 3600 articles. The authors of the MCSD describe the scale as a measure of the need for social approval, which can be considered a quantifiable personality trait. For example, people who scored high on the MCSD displayed obedience to authority (Marlowe & Crowne, 1961), conformed in an Asch-like judgment paradigm (Strickland & Crowne, 1962), and anchored their social behavior in cultural norms (Horton, Marlowe, & Crowne, 1963). Overall, they were characterized by “conventional, polite, acceptable behavior” (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964, p. 39) and shaped their behavior around “conventional, even stereotyped, cultural norms” (p. 85). Paulhus (1991) describes those who score high on scales like the MCSD as presenting “a socially conventional, dependable persona” (p. 21).

For much of its history, the MCSD has been used as a measure of socially desirable responding (SDR). There has been much debate about what SDR scales actually measure. Many of these scales were originally intended to measure the “response bias” of trying to look good to others (Paulhus, 1991). However, several recent studies have found that using SDR scales to “correct” personality test scores does not improve results (Ellingson, Sackett, & Hough, 1999; Ones, Viswesvaran, & Reiss, 1996; Piedmont, McCrae, Riemann, & Angleitner, 2000). In many cases, it undermines validity because the tendency toward SDR may be considered a personality trait in and of itself (McCrae & Costa, 1983). Thus this paper will instead define the MCSD as a measure of the need for social approval, just as its authors originally labeled it.

1.1. The influence of the larger social environment

In this paper, we explore birth cohort, or generational, changes in the MCSD and its companion measure for children, the Children’s Social Desirability Questionnaire (CSDQ; Crandall, Crandall, & Katkovsky, 1965). We examine how scores on these measures have changed in the United States between 1958 and 2001, analyzing samples of college students and children from the literature in a cross-temporal meta-analysis (e.g., Twenge & Campbell, 2001). Examining like-aged samples collected at different times allows us to examine birth cohort changes in the measure. In other words, were 1950s young people more concerned with social approval than young people in the 1970s? What about today?

As many theorists have argued, the larger social environment can have a substantial impact on the individual. For example, research finds considerable differences between Eastern and Western selves (e.g., Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999; Heine & Lehman, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998). In addition, culture affects questionnaire responses and self-presentation (e.g., Heine & Renshaw, 2002; Heine, Takata, & Lehman, 2000; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997).

Generations and birth cohorts experience varying cultures as well. For example, 1950s America was a very different culture than 1970s America. Thus birth cohort becomes a proxy for the larger cultural environment (Caspi, 1987; Stewart & Healy, 1989; Twenge, 2000, 2006). These cultural shifts have an impact on the individual. Recent research has found birth cohort changes in many different traits and attitudes, including anxiety, extraversion, self-esteem, locus of control, and depressive symptoms (Klerman & Weissman, 1989; Twenge, 2000, 2001a; Twenge & Campbell, 2001; Twenge, Zhang, & Im, 2004). This paper seeks to explore whether cultural trends over time have also affected individuals’ need for social approval.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات