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ABSTRACT

The research reported in this paper has three major purposes: to assess the development of racial attitudes in urban children, to evaluate the effects of race of examiner on children's expressed attitudes, and to examine some of the perceptual correlates of racial attitudes. It was predicted that older children would perceive faces of another race as less distinctive from one another than would younger children. Two interrelated studies were conducted. The first was a testing program which assessed the racial attitudes of second, fourth, and sixth grade children. The variables were, in addition to chronological age: race of subject, race of examiner, and type of testing instrument--direct questionnaire, Social Distance Scale, and projective. The second study selected a subsample of these children, who were instructed to judge the similarity of schematic drawings of facial pairs which varied systematically along a number of stimulus dimensions. An apparent decline in prejudice with age was obtained on a direct questionnaire and Social Distance Scale, but was not evident on a more indirect measure. This suggests that the effects of social desirability must be considered, even in measuring the attitudes of young children. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (Author/JM)

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Racial Attitudes and Perception in Black and White Urban School Children

by

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The work I'm going to discuss today represents some preliminary data obtained on a project concerned with the measurement of racial attitudes in children. Although we clearly live in a society where racial problems are extremely prominent, a perusal of the social science literature in this area indicates that research and theory have not kept pace with the magnitude of contemporary problems. In a recent review dealing with the development of intergroup attitudes, for example (Proshansky, 1966), only about 15% of the over 200 studies cited were conducted after 1960.

There are a number of reasons why much of this earlier work may no longer be relevant to today's society. The first has to do with the increasing verbalization of racial problems in mass media. It would not be surprising, for example, to find that children's attitudes, or at least their expression of them, have changed considerably as a result of our growing racial consciousness. The second issue has to do with the methods of assessing attitudes. Many of the techniques that have been traditionally used to measure attitudes in children appear singularly inappropriate (e.g. Adorno et al, 1950) and insensitive in the light of the degree of

sophistication of today's youngsters.

The research to be reported has three major purposes. The first was to assess the development of racial attitudes in urban children. Towards this end, several different types of measures were employed, both direct and indirect, with both black and white elementary school children. There is a particular paucity of empirical information regarding black children's racial attitudes, a somewhat surprising gap in our knowledge considering the enormous changes occurring in the black community. A second purpose was to evaluate the effects of race of examiner on children's expressed attitudes. A considerable body of evidence attests to the fact that children's behavior is influenced by the characteristics of the examiner, and social attitudes might be expected to reflect similar influence. A final aim of the present research was to examine some of the perceptual correlates of racial attitudes. It has been found that ethnic awareness and categorization developmentally precede the adoption of coherent attitudes. The question explored in the present research was what developmental perceptual changes occur as attitudes become more crystallized in elementary school children. How, for example, do children of different ages view facial pairs varying along certain stimulus characteristics? Do judgments of inter- and intra-racial differences show specific developmental trends? Based in part on Dollard and Miller's hypothesis of acquired equivalence of cues resulting from labels, it was predicted that older children would perceive faces of another race as less distinctive from one another than would younger children.

In an attempt to obtain information with regard to these questions, two interrelated studies were conducted. The first was a testing program which assessed the racial attitudes of second, fourth and sixth grade children. The variables which were studied, in addition to chronological age, were: race of subject, race of examiner, and type of testing instrument (direct questionnaire, social distance scale, and projective). The second study selected a subsample of these children who were instructed to judge the similarity of schematic drawings of facial pairs which varied systematically along a number of stimulus dimensions.

PROCEDURE

Subject. All subjects were drawn from a racially integrated public elementary school in New York City. The neighborhood the school drew its population from was largely lower-middle class. The area had previously been an all-white neighborhood which was now undergoing a process of transition.

Experiment I. A battery of five tests were administered to six second, fourth, and sixth grade classes over two sessions. The first test was a General Intolerance Scale which elicited agree-disagree statements regarding racial beliefs and practices. The second test was a Social Distance Scale. Unlike earlier versions which asked questions regarding abstract racial labels, this test used six actual photographs of children as stimuli. Questions about the degree of intimacy desired with each ranged from wanting to live in the same city to inviting the child home to dinner. The stimuli were pictures of two black, two white

and two Chinese children--one of each sex--(show slide 1 and 2). The third instrument was a Dogmatism Scale which was a children's version of the instrument employed by Rokeach with adults. The fourth, a Self-Concept questionnaire, contained ten positive and ten negative adjectives with which the children described both themselves and their ideal images. Finally, a Projective Prejudice test was administered. This latter test was an original instrument designed by the senior author, which depicted slides of ambiguous interracial situations. The children were asked to select which of several alternatives were most likely for each picture. Some depicted positive events, while others showed aggressive situations. The alternatives were rated in advance as to degree of prejudice for children of each racial group (show slides 3 and 4).

A total of 168 children were tested, two classes at each of the three age levels. For one classroom at each grade level, the person giving the instructions was Negro; for the other, the examiner was white. Both testers were female, in their middle twenties. In all instances, both testers were actually present in the room. The situation was set up, however, so that one person was clearly in charge and the other assisted in the back of the room with the projector, and collecting the papers. The subjects were told that they did not have to affix their names to the papers, and that we were interested in finding out what children of different ages thought about different things. The questions were read aloud by the examiner in charge to obviate any reading difficulties the children might have had.

Experiment II. For the second experiment a total of 60 black and white children at each of the three grade levels were selected for individual perceptual testing. Within each age and racial group, half were tested individually by a white examiner, and half by a black examiner.

The perceptual testing employed the apparatus shown in the slide which is a continuous sliding scale (show slide 5). The procedure is more fully described in Kats et al (1970). The children were instructed that they were to move the lever to indicate how similar two faces looked. One side was designated the identity side ("they look exactly alike - like twins"), and the other as maximal difference ("as different as they can be"). The slide pairs differed along a number of dimensions including color, shade, type of expression, type of hair and shape of eyebrow (show examples on slides). The stimuli were schematic faces drawn onto varying shades of construction paper. They were exposed tachistoscopically for one second. Only results with regard to black-white pairs and Caucasian and Negro shade differences will be discussed.

RESULTS

Experiment I. The three tests purporting to measure prejudice were the General Intolerance Scale, Social Distance Scale and the Projective Prejudice Test. The means obtained on each of the three instruments is contained in Table 1 of the handout sheet. The total range of possible scores for each measure was from zero to ten on General Intolerance Scale, zero to nine of each subsection of the Social Distance scale, and

16 to 42 on the Projective instrument. In each instance, the higher scores were associated with higher levels of prejudice.

Multivariate analyses of variance were conducted on each test, with the three variables of age, race of subject, and race of examiner. Significant age differences ($p<.001$) were obtained on the General Intolerance and Social Distance scales. On both of these instruments, measured prejudicial attitudes appear to decline with age. The absence of such developmental trends with regard to the Projective test, however, suggests that this seeming decline may actually be reflecting the increased sophistication of the older children on tests where the socially desirable response is more obvious. Thus, it would appear that in an integrated Northern urban public school, children are taught that they are not expected to directly express negative attitudes [illegible] members of other racial groups. This is clear from the low P levels obtained by sixth graders on the GI test. When prejudice is measured by the more subtle situation of attributing malevolent or benevolent behavior to either one's own or another racial group, however, the attitudes appear to remain relatively consistent throughout the elementary school range.

One question initially raised concerned the effect of the race of examiner on children's expressed attitudes. No significant differences associated with race of examiner were obtained on either the General Intolerance or the Projective tests. No overall race of examiner effect was obtained on the Social Distance Scale. There was, however, a significant examiner effect with regard to the Oriental stimuli, such that greater social distance was elicited to these pictures with the black

examiner than with the white one. Furthermore, an age x examiner effect was found with regard to opposite race stimuli (i.e. Caucasian pictures for Negro children and Negro pictures for Caucasian children). This interaction indicated that the white examiner elicited more prejudiced responses than the black one at the second grade level. The examiner effect at this level may, once again, be reflecting the relative lack of test-taking sophistication on the part of the youngest children.

Comparisons of responses made by the black and white subjects were not significant on the General Intolerance test. On the Projective test, however, the black children obtained somwhat higher prejudice scores than whites (although we have not yet broken this down to see if it is accounted for primarily by more positive responses to black or more negative responses to whites). Another significant race of subject effect was obtained with the same-race stimuli of the Social Distance scale. On this latter instrument, black subjects express more friendliness towards black children than white subjects expressed to other white children. This may indicate that color is a more salient cue for black children.

Experiment II. In the perceptual study, the three types of slides of major interest are those which differed in color (i.e. black-white), and the shade variations within each race. The mean similarity scores obtained by each group on these various types of slides are contained in Table 2 of the handout sheet. The range of possible scores was from zero to twelve, with the higher scores being associated with greater perceived distinctiveness of the stimulus pairs.

A repeated-measures analysis of variance conducted on these scores revealed several significant effects. The effect of type of slide was significant, revealing, not surprisingly, that the black-white slides were generally seen as most distinctive. A significant age effect indicated a general decline in perceptual distinctiveness with age. The race of examiner, however, revealed a contrary trend. When tested by a black examiner, all color and shade differences appeared to be amplified. Faces were judged as more distinctive by the children with a black tester. In addition to the three main effects, a significant ($p < .05$) triple interaction of examiner x race of S x type of slide was found. This interaction revealed differential effects of the two examiners on black and white Ss, most particularly with regard to the black-white slide pairs. As can be seen in Table 2, white subjects judged black-white facial pairs as more different than black subjects when tested by a white S; black testar, the situation was reversed, however, and black subjects rated the pairs as more distinctive than did white subjects. One possible interpretation of this finding is that the subjects were more honest when tested by an examiner of the same race. An alternative interpretation, however, is that a cross-race examiner may have increased the subject's awareness of the underlying purpose of the task, with consequent inhibitions of difference judgments. The group that appeared maximally sensitive to S differences was the black sixth graders. Their responses to black-white pairs differed enormously with white S. It is possible that two different sets of socially desirable values are associated with each type of S, i.e. with the white S, it is desirable to appear unprejudiced, whereas with the black S, expression of racial identity may be the more important consideration.

In view of the differences associated with type of slide, individual

analyses were conducted for the three types of slides. These analyses reveal a significant examiner effect for all the three types (more difference with black). The developmental decline in distinctiveness was, however, only significant for other-race facial pairs and not for black-white or same race pairs. This finding is in accordance with initial expectations regarding the acquired equivalence of cues. As ethnic labels become more firmly established, intra-group perceptual differences apparently decrease.

One additional finding of interest with regard to the analysis of same-race stimuli was an age x race of E interaction ($F_{2,48} = 3.69$, $p<.05$). The means involved in this interaction are contained in Table 3 on the handout sheet. With a white examiner, intra-group perceptual differences with regard to the child's own racial group increased with a black examiner, however, a decrease with age is found.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the first study indicate that the type of measure employed differentially affects the nature of developmental trend obtained. An apparent decline in prejudice with age was obtained on a direct questionnaire and Social Distance scale, but was not evident on a more indirect projective measure. This suggests that the effects of social desirability must be considered, even in measuring the attitudes of young children. It is clear that sixth grade children have already learned what the acceptable responses are with regard to intergroup attitudes, but that their greater test taking sophistication may be, in part, counteracted by the use of more subtle measures. Clearly, more such measures are needed if we are going to accurately assess such complex attitudes in children.

The findings of the second experiment revealed that children's perceptions of facial stimuli are influenced by a number of factors, including the age of the child and the race of the examiner. The developmental trends obtained indicated that children dedifferentiate shade differences of other racial groups with increasing age. This dedifferentiation process runs counter to the more typical finding in perceptual research of increased distinctiveness with age, and this difference may represent one of the underlying processes necessary for the maintenance of ethnic prejudice. It becomes much easier to generalize attitudes to a racial label when intra-group differences are minimized. It is interesting to note that the perception of same-race stimuli showed a slight increase in distinctiveness, but only with a white examiner.

The effects associated with the race of examiner were complex. Race of tester did not appear to be particularly important in attitude assessment, affecting only some subsections of one of the tests employed. With regard to perceptual judgments, however, the presence of a black examiner apparently amplified color differences, for both white and black children. The reason for this greater color salience is not entirely clear. There are a number of possible explanations. The first possibility may have to do with the relative novelty of being tested by a black adult. Although the student body of the school used was integrated, the teaching staff was predominantly white. A second possibility is that the black tester may have increased the children's awareness of the underlying purpose of the testing. A third is that examiners of different races may indirectly provide the child with a different sets

of socially desirable response alternatives. This explanation appeared most plausible in the sixth grade black subjects who minimized black-white differences with a white examiner, and maximized them with a black examiner. A final possibility which must be considered is that the obtained examiner differences were not directly related to race, but to other physical or personality characteristics. A clear choice among these various alternatives of the color amplification finding can only be made when a layer sampling of testers and schools are used, something we are planning to do in the near future.

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TABLE 1

MEAN SCORES OBTAINED ON PREJUDICE SCALES

Group	TEST				
	General Intolerance	Social Distance			Projective Prejudice
		White	Black	Oriental	
White E					
Second Grade					
White Ss	4.32	5.05	5.50	2.14	23.76
Black Ss	4.86	3.43	4.86	3.86	27.33
Fourth Grade					
White Ss	2.90	4.13	2.78	2.80	23.87
Black Ss	2.50	2.83	4.89	3.78	26.72
Sixth Grade					
White Ss	1.33	2.84	3.13	2.25	24.21
Black Ss	1.69	1.58	3.0	1.42	25.77
Black E					
Second Grade					
White Ss	4.56	3.33	3.25	3.83	24.09
Black Ss	4.75	4.46	4.42	4.92	24.43
Fourth Grade					
White Ss	3.57	4.62	5.38	4.62	25.24
Black Ss	3.56	4.61	3.25	4.34	26.99
Sixth Grade					
White Ss	1.86	2.27	3.27	1.82	23.07
Black Ss	2.00	2.28	2.17	2.33	24.57

TABLE 2

MEAN PERCEPTUAL SIMILARITY SCORES

Group	White E			Black E		
	White-Black Differences	Black Shade Differences	White Shade Differences	White-Black Differences	Black Shade Differences	White Shade Differences
Second Grade						
White Ss	4.42	3.46	1.92	7.78	8.12	7.50
Black Ss	3.04	3.04	3.48	8.66	7.22	7.30
Fourth Grade						
White Ss	6.42	4.32	3.82	6.54	5.98	6.58
Black Ss	3.88	3.06	3.52	8.36	7.56	8.12
Sixth Grade						
White Ss	3.14	2.20	3.26	4.34	4.12	3.72
Black Ss	1.96	3.40	2.20	7.54	4.58	5.42

TABLE 3

TOTALS OF AGE x RACE OF E INTERACTION ON SAME-RACE STIMULI

Grade	RACE OF E	
	White E	Black E
2	249	736
4	344	707
6	333	415