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ABSTRACT

As a part of the National Study of American Indian Education, the self-image of the Indian student was evaluated with the Semantic Differential (SD) in terms of attitudes toward self as well as toward other persons or institutions. Study groups were expected to describe themselves in favorable, neutral, or derogatory terms. The SD used in the study was partially identical with a form used with teenagers in Chicago, Buenos Aires, Kansas City, and Puerto Rico, thus allowing for comparison of non-Indian boys and girls of the same ages in Chicago and elsewhere. The instrument, as noted, asked for a rating of several concepts including Myself, My Future, Teachers, This School, Indians, Indian Way of Life, and White People's Way of Life; it also included several pairs of adjective scales which included Good-Bad, Happy-Unhappy, Strong-Weak, and Active-Lazy. It was believed that if Indian youth were severely alienated and if they were antagonistic toward teachers and schools, the SD would reveal these differences. The study concluded that, given a like socioeconomic status, Indians have about the same level of self-evaluation as non-Indians. Some evidence indicated that Indian girls are slightly more self-critical than Indian boys. A list of the various tribes included in the study from Alaska to North Carolina is given, along with the number of participants and scores derived from each correlation. Tables of statistics are appended. (EL)

THE NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

PROJECT OEC-0-8-080147-2805

FINAL REPORT

Series III

The Personal-Social Adjustment of American Indian Youth

No. 9

The Indian Self-Image as Evaluated with the Semantic Differential

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August, 1970

NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

The attached paper is one of a number which make up the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education.

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II. The Education of Indians in Urban Centers.

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THE INDIAN SELF-IMAGE AS EVALUATED WITH THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL

The Semantic Differential can be used to measure the attitude toward oneself as well as toward other persons or institutions. With this instrument, it should be possible to get some information about the self-image of Indian youth. Do they describe themselves in favorable, neutral, or derogatory terms? By using the same instrument with Indian boys and girls and also with non-Indian groups, it should be possible to make comparisons between Indians and non-Indians, and also between sub-groups among the Indian respondents to the test.*

The Semantic Differential is a relatively easy measure to use with respondents who do not read English easily. It makes a minimum use of language. It has been used successfully with children below the age of 10, and it has been used with apparent success for comparison of teenagers of various social classes, age groups, and ethnic groups.

The form of the SD used in this study was partially identical with a form which has been used by Havighurst and others with teenagers in Chicago, Buenos Aires, Kansas City, and Puerto Rico. The instrument asked for a rating of several concepts, including Myself, My Future, Teachers, This School, Indians, Indian Way of Life, and White People's Way of Life, on several pairs of adjective scales, including Good-Bad, Happy-Unhappy, Strong-Weak and Active-Lazy. These all have a substantial weight on the Evaluative Factor, though Strong-Weak and Active-Lazy (Passive) have a considerable weight on the Power or Potency Factor.

Thus we are in a position to compare the Self-Image and the Attitude Toward Teachers of the Indian groups with attitudes by non-Indian boys and girls of the same ages in Chicago and elsewhere. If Indian youth are severely alienated, and if they are antagonistic toward teachers and schools, we might expect the Semantic Differential to tell us so.

The scales used allowed for six ratings (rather than the seven often used on a SD. Thus a respondent could score from 1 to 6 on a given scale. The scores

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*When one asks a respondent to rate himself on a Semantic Differential, one runs into the problem of the "social desirability" effect. Will not respondents rate themselves "better" than they actually feel about themselves, so as to make a good appearance? Heise (1969), in reviewing research with the SD, concludes that there probably is a considerable social desirability effect when certain "salient" concepts are used, such as "Myself" and "My home culture." However, if one uses the SD data to compare two or more groups, without giving an absolute value to the group scores, one might assume that social desirability effects are the same in the several groups to be compared. This assumption is one we must make in this research, though we must also recognize that the effect of social desirability considerations on respondents may be different in different cultures--different between Spanish-American and Anglo-American groups, for example, or between various Indian groups.

reported in the tables are averages over the six steps of the instrument, with the most favorable end of the scale always scored (1) and the most unfavorable scored (6). (Several of the scales were reversed in the instrument, but they are reported here in a manner that makes the lowest scores indicate the more favorable responses.)

The scores of Indian boys and girls are grouped into age groups: 8-11; 12-14; 15-17; and 18-20. Since the comparison groups were always 13 to 17, only the 12-14 and 15-17 Indian groups are used in the comparisons. For this part of the comparison, the respondents from a given Field Center are combined into one large group. Comparisons between the individual school groups will be made in another paper.

The mean score for a group on a given scale was computed in the usual way, and mean scores are reported in the Tables. When two mean scores differ somewhat, the question of the statistical significance of this difference is raised. With a Semantic Differential, a t-test for the significance of the difference between two means is seldom useful, because the distribution of scores on the SD is seldom even approximately normal. It ordinarily shows a modified J-curve. A chi-square procedure is more satisfactory. This is done by comparing frequencies on a given scale from two groups of respondents. Where the number of responses at a given point on a scale is below 5, this category is combined with a contiguous one. We have computed the chi-square value for a number of comparisons, and can indicate the level of significance of any difference which we report as worth attention.

The groups whose scores are reported here were the following:

Plains Indians. Five Indian communities (Blackfeet, Sioux, Navajo) studied by the University of Colorado Field Center. 150 boys and 160 girls in the age-range 12-17 inclusive.

Southwest Indians. Ten Indian communities or schools (Pima, Papago, Apache, Hopi, Laguna, Acoma, Navajo) studied by the University of Arizona Field Center. 236 boys and 237 girls, aged 12-17.

Northwest Indians and Eskimos. Four Indian and one Eskimo communities or schools (Quinault, Makah, Tlingit, Eskimo) studied by the San Francisco State College Field Center. 129 boys and 120 girls, aged 12-17.

Minnesota-Wisconsin Indians. Three schools in Wisconsin and two in Minnesota (Chippewa, Menominee, Sioux) studied by the University of Minnesota Field Center. 86 boys and 74 girls, aged 12-17, mostly in schools where the great majority of students were Indian. There was also a junior high school in Minneapolis, called School C, with 21 Indian boys and 25 Indian girls, who were in the minority in this school, and are reported separately.

Lumbee Indians (North Carolina and Baltimore). Two Indian schools in Robeson County (North Carolina) with 21 boys and 25 girls. Also a junior high school group in Baltimore (Lumbee Indians) 23 boys and 28 girls, who were a minority group in the school. These were studied by the North Carolina State University Field Center.

Oklahoma Indians. Two communities in north central Oklahoma, with a minority of Indian students (Pawnee and Ponca), 14 boys and 27 girls. These were studied by the Oklahoma State University Field Center.

Hoopa Indians. Students in the high school at Hoopa, California (27 boys and 21 girls) were studied by Professor James H. Myers, of the Chico State College.

Chicago Indians. Students in several elementary schools and a high school in Chicago, with 36 boys and 33 girls, who were a minority in the schools they attended. They were studied by the University of Chicago staff.

Chicago and Colorado White Students (Controls). White students in the same schools that were studied by the Colorado and Chicago research teams were asked to respond to the SD so that their scores might be used for comparison purposes. There were 52 boys and 52 girls aged 12-17.

Chicago Working-Class Students. In 1961, a group of 50 boys and 50 girls in the 8th and 11th grades of a Chicago suburb were tested with a form of the SD which was comparable to the form used with the Indian students. These students were all from upper-working class families. This has been reported in the work cited (Havighurst, et al.).

Kansas City Maladjusted Boys. In 1964 a group of 14-15 year-old boys in the Kansas City Public Schools were given a form of the SD which was comparable with the form used in this study. There were approximately 300 boys, all screened out in the 7th grade as probable dropouts and delinquents. These boys were studied through the following years, and assessed at the age of about 18 as belonging in one or the other of two categories: Adaptive and Maladaptive--127 in the first and 150 in the second category. These are only comparative terms, since the Adaptive Group were barely at the level of minimal competence in school and at work. Thus this study provides us with two comparison groups of boys who were visibly maladjusted at the ages of 13 or 14, and with marginal adjustment or serious maladjustment at the age of 18.

Rees--Virginia White Students. The SD was administered by Miss Martha Rees of the Colorado research staff to a group of high school students in a Virginia middle-class suburb of Washington, D. C. There were 25 boys and 25 girls. They may serve as a kind of comparison group.

Buenos Aires Students. As part of the cross-national study by Havighurst, et al, 50 boys and 50 girls in Buenos Aires were given the same form of the SD that was given in Chicago, but in a Spanish version. They, too, were from upper working-class families.

Puerto Rico Students. In 1967-68 a field study was made by Professor Guy Manaster at the University of Puerto Rico, which was parallel to the Chicago-Buenos Aires Study. An upper working-class sample of 150 boys and 150 girls was given the SD. These students were from the cities of San Juan and Ponce, and from a rural area in central Puerto Rico.

Results of the Comparative Study

Boys and girls were asked to rate the concept Myself on the following adjective scales: Good-Bad, Happy-Unhappy, Strong-Weak, Active-Lazy, Valuable-Worthless, Smart-Dumb, Friendly-Unfriendly. (Strong-Weak and Active-Lazy were reversed on the instrument, so as to correct any tendency to mark the instrument automatically, without paying attention to the separate scales.) The first four adjective-pairs have been used in SD studies with other groups of the same age (as described above). Therefore we can compare the self-evaluation of Indian students with that of non-Indians of the same age in several different societies.

Much has been written and said about "alienation," lack of "identity," and lack of self-confidence of Indian youth as they reach adolescence. A statement of this sort may be made as a comparison: "Indian youth are less sure of themselves than non-Indian youth." or "Indian youth are more alienated, as measured by a certain instrument, than non-Indian youth." This kind of statement is seldom made, because there is very little comparative data of this sort. More generally, a statement of this sort is made as a general assertion, with the implication that Indian youth are below the average of other youth or are below some desirable level, which is not defined. It seems more useful to make comparative statements about Indian self-evaluation, with the nature of the comparison stated clearly. We have tried to do this in this study with the Semantic Differential.*

Comparing Indians with Other Groups. Tables 1A and 1B compare nine groups of Indian adolescents with parallel groups of Anglo-American and Latin-American youth. With only minor exceptions, the non-Indian youth are of the same socio-economic level as the Indian youth. That is, they are from working-class homes, possibly slightly higher in relative income than is true of the Indian youth. They are defined in the ordinary social science terminology as upper-working class.

*It is possible to make comparative statements about Indian youth if they are asked to respond to a standardized psychological instrument where the norms for other groups are published or available. This has been done in a few cases. For instance, it has been done with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. In such a case, it is necessary to establish the validity of the instrument for the group being studied--the Indian group. In our judgment, the MMPI is not valid for use with ordinary Indian adolescents, who, on the average, have relatively poor reading ability. If the MMPI was used with a group of Indian adolescents, their scores should be compared with those of a group of Anglo adolescents of similar reading ability and socioeconomic status. If both groups turned out to be low, then the interpretation of the results would not emphasize the ethnic factor.

The most directly comparable groups are the Chicago-Colorado "controls," and the Chicago and Plains Indians. The "controls" are the non-Indian students in the same schools and classes with the Indian youth who were studied.

For boys, the mean self-evaluation score is 2.06 for the controls and 2.11 and 2.16 for the Plains and Chicago Indians respectively. The differences among these figures are not statistically significant. For girls, the controls have a mean score of 1.98, while the Plains and Chicago Indian female groups score 2.19 and 2.30 respectively. These differences are statistically reliable at the .05 level or less. However, the differences are not very great in an absolute sense. We note here that the Indian girls appear to be more self-critical than the Indian boys, though this is due largely to the sex difference in scores on the Strong-Weak scale. It seems natural and not an indication of self-rejection for girls to rate themselves below boys on a Strong-Weak scale. This will be discussed more fully below.

The Chicago (1961) data for Anglo-Americans give identical average scores for girls with the controls, but show an average of 1.90, compared with 2.06 for control-group boys. This would indicate a reliable difference in favor of Chicago Anglos over Chicago Indians, (score 2.16), though relatively small in an absolute sense.

For boys we have a very useful set of comparison scores from Kansas City, where two groups of lower-working class boys were studied--one of which adapted with barely acceptable success to the society during adolescence, while the other had a history of continued delinquency and school maladjustment. The Kansas City scores are reliably different in the direction of self-rejection from the Indian scores.

The Latin-American scores show a relatively large sex difference, with boys giving a more positive picture of themselves than girls do. We would interpret this hypothetically as a correlate of the often-stated Latin-American belief in male superiority. Latin American boys rate themselves more positively than Indian boys, but Latin American girls rate themselves at about the same level as Indian girls do.

We may summarize the comparisons of Indian boys and girls with Anglo-American youth as follows: There is no reliable difference, on the average, between Indian boys and Anglo-American boys of the same socioeconomic level. For girls there is a slight but statistically reliable difference, the Anglo-American girls rating themselves more favorably.

Inter-group Comparisons among Indians. Looking at the Indian data for the various sub-groups it is clear that there are some differences of fairly large magnitude between groups in self-evaluation. Since some of the groups in Table 1 are composites of several tribal groups from several different communities, it seems wise to examine the data, community by community and school by school, in the search for meaningful differences. This will be done in another paper. The largest composite groups--Plains, Southwest, and Northwest--are not reliably different in their average scores, though there are reliable differences

among the smaller groups that are barely at the .05 level of significance. (For two groups of approximately 25 members each, a difference of .50 is reliable at the .05 level.)

For instance, the Hoopa group and the North Carolina group are reliably different from the all-Indian average in the favorable direction, for boys and girls. On the other hand, the Minnesota boys are reliably different from the all-Indian average in the unfavorable direction, as are the School C girls. This suggests that there is some influence in the Hoopa and in the Robeson County communities that promotes self-confidence and positive self-evaluation in young Indians; while there is some influence in the Wisconsin and the School C situations (not necessarily in the schools) that contributes to alienation and negative self-evaluation in young Indians.

These communities and these data should be studied further for clues to the sources of positive and negative self-evaluation of Indian youth.

Another striking difference is that between the Indian girls and the Indian boys. This is summarized in Table 2, and shown in more detail in Table 1A. Table 1A shows the Indian boys to have a more favorable average score than girls in 8 of 10 comparisons. This is not true for Anglo-Americans, but it is true for Latin-Americans. It should be added at once that much of the difference between the sexes comes from the Strong-Weak scale, where boys give themselves a more favorable self-evaluation than girls do. The mean score for Indian girls would drop from 2.21 to 2.13 if the Strong-Weak scale were omitted, while the boys' score would remain at 2.06. There is just a little indication that Indian girls evaluate themselves slightly more in a negative direction than Indian boys in the SD on scales that are fairly neutral. There is similar evidence from the Self-Esteem Inventory.

Conclusion

The Semantic Differential, when used to compare the self-evaluation of Indian teen-agers with the self-evaluation of non-Indian teen-agers of comparable socioeconomic status, indicates that Indians have about the same level of self-evaluation as non-Indians. When the self-evaluations of Indian boys are compared with those of a distinctly maladjusted group of Anglo-American boys, the Indian boys appear to be in a relatively favorable situation. There is some evidence that Indian girls are slightly more self-critical than Indian boys--as this is measured by the SD.

Table 1A

COMPARISON OF GROUP MEAN SCORES ON THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL

Indian Groups on MYSELF. Age 12-17

Group	Plains	South-west	North-west	Oklahoma	North Caro.	Balti-more	Hoopa	Minne-sota	School C	Chicago
				M A L E S						
Number	150	236	129	14	21	23	27	86	21	36
Adjective Pair										
Good-Bad	2.18	2.07	2.20	2.00	1.81	2.43	1.81	2.41	2.19	2.08
Happy-Sad	2.24	1.96	1.83	1.85	1.57	1.65	1.30	1.85	2.14	1.95
Strong-Weak	2.07	2.30	2.27	2.14	1.95	2.00	1.52	2.53	1.76	2.22
Active-Lazy	1.93	2.40	2.23	2.74	1.81	2.22	1.52	2.67	2.19	2.38
Average	2.11	2.18	2.13	2.18	1.79	2.08	1.54	2.39	2.07	2.16
				F E M A L E S						
Number	160	237	120	27	25	28	21	74	25	33
Good-Bad	2.02	2.21	2.22	2.18	1.68	2.04	1.71	2.34	2.56	2.17
Happy-Sad	2.64	1.89	2.06	2.12	1.48	1.61	1.57	2.25	2.36	1.88
Strong-Weak	2.27	2.53	2.81	2.50	2.16	2.75	1.81	2.73	2.32	2.65
Active-Lazy	1.84	2.66	2.50	2.76	1.44	2.43	1.43	2.27	2.84	2.83
Average	2.19	2.32	2.40	2.39	1.69	2.21	1.63	2.40	2.52	2.38

Note: Low score is the more favorable response.

Table 1B

COMPARISON OF GROUP MEAN SCORES ON THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL

Non-Indian Groups on MYSELF. Age 12-17.

Group	Anglo-Americans					Latin-Americans	
	Chicago 1961	Chicago-Colorado 1969	Kansas City 1964 Adap.	Kansas City 1964 Mal.	Virginia-D.C. 1970	Buenos Aires 1961	Puerto Rico 1968
MALES							
Number	50	52	127	150	25	50	150
Good-Bad	2.18	1.94	2.41	2.64	1.43	1.69	1.54
Happy-Sad	1.52	1.97	2.18	2.52	1.68	1.66	1.61
Strong-Weak	2.16	2.23	2.30	2.36	1.81	2.05	2.25
Active-Lazy	1.73	2.11	2.26	2.52	2.17	2.00	1.94
Average	1.90	2.06	2.29	2.51	1.77	1.85	1.84
FEMALES							
Number	50	52			25	50	150
Good-Bad	1.81	1.96			1.65	1.87	1.72
Happy-Sad	1.79	1.63			1.72	1.86	2.12
Strong-Weak	2.58	2.23			2.35	2.92	3.17
Active-Lazy	1.72	2.09			2.30	1.95	2.25
Average	1.98	1.98			2.01	2.15	2.32

Note: The low score is the more favorable response.

Table 2

MALE-FEMALE COMPARISONS ON THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL

Indian and Non-Indian Responses by Sex of Respondent

Group Average Scores. Age 12-17

Adjective Pair	Indian		Anglo-American		Latin-American	
			MYSELF			
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Good-Bad	2.12	2.11	2.02	1.81	1.61	1.80
Happy-Sad	1.84	1.95	1.88	1.71	1.63	2.00
Strong-Weak	2.08	2.45	2.13	2.39	2.15	3.05
Active-Lazy	2.21	2.33	2.10	2.04	1.96	2.10
Average	2.06	2.21	2.03	1.99	1.82	2.23

Note: The low score is the more favorable response.