

ATTITUDE SCALE DEVELOPMENT IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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A great deal of the emphasis in education in Papua New Guinea is given to the question of attitude change. In spite of this there has been virtually no large-scale attempt to measure attitudes directly, mainly because of problems related to huge variations in culture and language. (There are over seven hundred significant language groupings in Papua New Guinea, and there is no one lingua franca).

Attempts to modify attitudes are most obvious in areas such as religious studies and social science where a major specified aim is an increase in racial, religious and cultural tolerance. This area has assumed considerable importance with increased governmental emphasis on political unity.

Attitudinal emphasis is less obvious but still important in the area of science which represents a style of dealing with problems which is quite new in the Papua New Guinea context. Again an emphasis is placed on creating awareness and tolerance of alternative viewpoints and ways of dealing with the world.

Accordingly efforts were made to provide attitude measures which could give some valid and reliable indications of changes in attitudes related to changes in educational level. Such measures would also have use in providing an indication of attitudes which exist in various parts of the community.

The emphasis was on measures of conservatism and of racial stereotypes. However it was necessary first to discover models of such attitude measures which could be followed in the Papua New Guinea situation.

Since the second world war a great deal of attention has been directed toward the investigation of attitudes in the general area of conservatism or authoritarianism. Much of this work was prompted by the anti-semitic behaviour which characterized Nazi Germany. One scale developed, in studies of "the authoritarian personality" (Adorno *et al.*, 1950), was the ethnocentrism scale, a broad measure of rejection of "outgroups" (and glorification of "ingroups"). Another scale was the Fascism scale, or the California F as it came to be known. Those who scored high on the F scale also tended to score high of measures of ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, anti-Negro feeling and political conservatism.

These scales were developed in the United States of America and came to reflect social concerns within that country. Rokeach (1960) raised an allied, more fundamental objection. He noted that although social scientists have employed various general concepts in studying authoritarianism - concepts such as intolerance, discrimination, prejudice, bigotry, social

distance, and ethnocentrism - the attitude scales produced selected out lights on the political right. Furthermore there are other forms of intolerance based upon criteria different from those ethnic and racial ones usually used, which should be studied. What was important was not what a person believed, but how he believed. Rokeach proposed the concept of dogmatism, or closed-mindedness to account for a more generalized intolerance.

Wilson and Patterson (1968) adopted an approach to attitude measurement which answered some of Rokeach's objections, proposing a notion of conservatism extending much beyond ideas of ethnic intolerance and right-wing political views. They name seven characteristics of the extreme conservative.

- (a) Religious fundamentalism
- (b) Right wing political orientation
- (c) Insistence on strict rules and punishments
- (d) Intolerance of minority groups
- (e) Preference for conventional art, clothing, institutions
- (f) Anti-hedonistic outlook
- (g) Superstitious resistance to science.

The Wilson-Patterson C scale, with items derived from these areas has had remarkable success in sorting out "Known groups" of conservatives and non-conservatives in New Zealand, England and Holland. It seemed a useful model to explore for use in highly Christian Papua New Guinea.

Apart from its content, the structure of the C scale offers many advantages. It uses "catch-phrases" in place of the traditional propositional statements. These are brief labels representing various familiar and controversial issues (e.g. death penalty, abortion, evolution, women judges, etc.) to which respondents should be able to indicate their "positions" immediately with a minimum of cognitive evaluation. The item format should, therefore, reduce the influence of cognitive processes, task conflict, grammatical confusion and social desirability. Such considerations are of major importance in the Papua New Guinea context where for most students English is a second language.

The original C scale has 50 items. Ten more items which appeared relevant to the Papua New Guinea context (such as "Afro hair styles", "obeying parents" and "tertiary education for women") were added, and the 60 items were administered to a total of 213 students preparing to enter University.

Of the four basic measures against which Wilson and Patterson validated their scale, age of subject, political affiliation, religious allegiance and sex, only the later two seemed appropriate for use with the Papua New Guinea students. (The narrow age range made validation by age impossible, and political parties in Papua New Guinea seem not to fit readily into the left-right continuum common in Western countries, largely because of regional biases.) Measures of divergent thinking were taken, and related to "Conservatism" scores since Hudson's (1966) description of a converger seems to describe a conservative, while his description of a diverger seems to fit a non-conservative.

Scores on the sixty items were clearly (and significantly) related to church attendance, though the correlation was small probably because of the homogeneity of the sample with respect to this behaviour. (Most of the subjects reported regular church attendance.) There was also an unexpected

V shaped relationship with divergent thinking. Though this result could be interpreted in a way consistent with the validity of the Conservatism measure (Jones and Shea, 1974), further validation seemed necessary.

Intercorrelations of items with each other, and with the total score indicated that many items were unsatisfactory. To improve the measure, and to reduce the scale to a more convenient size, the thirty items which showed the lowest correlations with the total scale were eliminated. This removed items such as "empire-building", probably an unfamiliar phrase to Papua New Guineans, and others like "Socialism" which seem not to relate to conservative responses as they do in New Zealand. The very few subjects who disapproved of "Socialism" were among those scoring at the low end of the conservatism scale.

After this selection of items, an attempt was made to validate the 30 item scale with a total sample of 434 students from high schools and University. Scores on the 30 item scale were found to be highly related to educational level (negatively), church attendance (positively), sex (females more conservative), and the amount of rural schooling (positive). Longitudinal observations indicated that changes in conservatism within groups occurred as educational level increased, thus suggesting that other differences found between students of differing educational level were influenced to some degree by the actual educational experience. Cross-cultural comparisons indicated that the 30 item scale could be used successfully with expatriates (mostly of Australian origin), as well as with educated Papua New Guineans. Papua New Guineans were more conservative than expatriates.

The evidence suggests that the 30 item scale is valid. Reliability studies showed a test-retest reliability of .84, and an internal consistency score (Alpha coefficient) of .81. The internal consistency increases with the educational level of the sub-samples thus indicating increased relevance of the conservatism dimension with increasing education. Thus we have available to valid and reliable measure of conservatism. However, its usefulness is restricted to educated Papua New Guineans fluent in English. Attempts are presently being made to develop a non-verbal scale so that more extensive attitude measurement may be carried out.

RACIAL ATTITUDES

Concurrent with the development of the broadly based conservatism scale, a measure of racial stereotypes was constructed. The motivation for its development was similar.

A questionnaire using 15 bipolar adjective pairs (e.g. kind/cruel; weak/strong) which were referred to 8 "target" groups within Papua New Guinea was administered to a total sample of 273 high school and university students. Responses indicated that people with lower educational experience have a greater tendency to stereotype other groups. University students showed least stereotyping. Follow-up studies suggested that living with members of other racial/cultural groups helped break down stereotypes fostered by isolation, ignorance and the news media.