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A STUDY OF COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE ATTITUDES

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A study of cognitive and affective attitudes

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FINAL REPORT

Nationalism has become once again a powerful force in world affairs. We have learned from the past that this force can serve for constructive or destructive purposes, that it can become an important factor in the development of a country's resources and potentialities, but that it can also unleash unmanageable conflicts. The determining conditions under which one or the other happens are largely political, social and economic. But it is also true that these various conditions are related to psychological processes responsible for the manner in which attitudes of national affiliation develop amongst the citizens of a country. A clearer understanding of these psychological processes is particularly important today, when interdependence of many countries of the world is an established political fact. The main purpose of the research undertaken under the Air Force Grant EOAR 4-66 was to explore some aspects of this problem in several countries of the Western world.

The problem with which the research was specifically concerned is that of the development of national affiliations and of attitudes

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towards foreign countries in children. There is a good deal of evidence in psychology about the continuity of certain patterns of attitudes from childhood to adulthood. Our attempts to understand the texture of national affiliations which are likely to become increasingly important to the Western world in the twenty years to come must therefore include gathering of more information about their incipient and formative nature in the child. The main empirical issues with which the research dealt can be specified as follows:

- (a) Is there evidence for a consensus in children between the ages of 6 and 12 (i.e., from the beginning of school age) in their structure of preferences concerning selected foreign countries?
- (b) What is the relation of these preferences to the information that the children have about the same foreign countries?
- (c) Is there evidence for the development of affiliation with the child's own country at that age?
- (d) What is the relation between the child's system of preferences towards various foreign countries and his perception of similarity or dissimilarity of these countries to his own country and to each other?
- (e) To what extent is the child capable of perceiving relations between nationals of various countries from the point of view other than that of his own country, and how does this capacity relate to his system of preferences?
- (f) To what extent the perception of similarity or dissimilarity to other groups is a determinant of friendly or hostile behavior towards them? (This part of the research was done outside the context of national attitudes).

In addition to these principal research issues, a few other minor studies were conducted in which the problems investigated included: the effects of comics on national attitudes; the relation of preferences to the assimilation of new information; the relation of social class of a child to his knowledge about, and attitudes toward, his own and other countries. As the results of these latter studies require further work of statistical analysis, they will be reported in detail at a later stage.

(a) Children's consensus concerning preferences for related foreign countries.

This study was conducted in England, Scotland, Austria, Belgium and Greece. The same four foreign countries were used in all these locations for assessing the development of a firm structure of preferences; these were: America, Russia, France, Germany. The simplest way to summarize the results is to state that in all the European locations used there was a clear trend towards preferences arranged in the following order from most to least preferred: America, France, Germany, Russia. The second main finding is that, though this pattern is already clear at the age of 6 to 7, it becomes increasingly more convincing as the children grow older. Thus, in Britain the differences between the younger and the older children are in the following direction: highly significant increase with age of preference for America; highly significant decrease with age of preference for Germany and Russia; no significant trend with age of preference for France. In Belgium, there is an increase with age of preference for America and France, a decrease with age of preference

for Russia, and no significant trend for preference for Germany. In Greece, the only significant trend with age is a decrease of preference for Germany. In Austria, there are highly significant trends for increase with age of preference for America and a decrease of preference for Russia, while France and Germany remain stable. Thus, with the one exception for Greece, there is a general consensus concerning the development of attitudes towards America and Russia, not only within each of the countries studied but also between the European countries.

The study included not only an assessment of preferences but also of the children's perception of international relations, with regard to friendships between their own country and the four foreign countries and between these four countries. Here also, there are some high concordances in the children's judgments. For example, assessment of relations of own country with America as friendly varies from 90.5% of the subjects in Britain to 70.1 percent of the subjects in Greece. The general perception of relations of the four countries with own country as friendly follows the following orders from most to least.

In Britain: America, France, Germany, Russia

In Belgium: France, America, Russia, Germany

In Greece: France, America, Russia, Germany

In Austria: Germany, France, America, Russia

The differences between the countries in this last set of findings are perhaps as interesting as the similarities previously discussed. The consensus, however, remains (with the exception of Germany for Austrian children) in the perception of America and France as more friendly than Germany and Russia.

(b) The problem of relations between preference and information was attacked as a part of the study described above. On the whole, comparisons were made between the children's consensus concerning the correct knowledge of factual items of information about the four countries (such as the fact that both America and Russia are larger than both France and Germany) with their consensus as to which countries they preferred. The over-all finding is that both knowledge of respective sizes and higher preference for America and France are very highly crystallized at the age of 8 to 11. At the age of 6-8, the consensus for preference judgments is higher than the consensus of correct size judgments in Britain, Belgium and Austria. Neither of the two reaches a level of statistical significance for Greece.

(c) The evidence for the existence of national affiliation in children from 6 to 11.

A special method was devised for this study in which the children expressed their liking for each of a set of 20 photographs of young men especially prepared for this purpose, and also categorized the photographs into two groups--those they thought to be of their own nationality and those they thought to be alien. The relation between the two sets of data provided an index of "preference" for own national group. The study was conducted in England, Scotland, Belgium, Holland, Austria, Italy and Israel. The same set of photographs was used in all the locations, apart from Israel and Italy where additional sets were used. Some local variations were introduced in the studies conducted in England, Scotland, Belgium, Italy and Israel in order to obtain information about

special problems, namely: the processes of national affiliation in a situation where distinct ethnic or national groups compose the nation-state (England, Scotland, Belgium and Israel); and the problem of the development in children of physical stereotypes of their own nation (a comparison of Italian with the other European data).

The findings of this study are multiple and complex. Their main features may be summarized as follows:

(1) In all the locations there is a highly significant preference for own national group.

(2) This does not apply when a national or ethnic sub-group is traditionally less clearly identified with the nation-state. Thus, results were not significant for the dichotomy Scottish-not Scottish in Scotland, while they were significant in Scotland for the dichotomy of British-not British introduced in a separate study; in the same way, in the Israeli study, there was a clearer identification with the nation-state of photographs of European origin than of photographs of Oriental origin despite the fact that the population of the state is almost evenly divided between groups of these two origins. This finding applied to groups of children who were both of European and of Oriental origin.

(3) In a situation of acute awareness of separate national identity of one of the subgroups forming the nation-state (which is not the case in Scotland, and even less so in the Oriental group in Israel), there is in children evidence of identification both with the nation-state and with the separate group. In the Belgian study Flemish children were used. One group worked in terms of a dichotomy Belgian-not Belgian; another in terms of a dichotomy of Flemish-not Flemish. Significant

evidence of affiliation was obtained from both groups.

(4) From a comparison of the Italian with other European data, there is evidence that some time between the ages of 6 and 11, children develop some form of a notion about the general physical stereotype of their own national group which they use with a fair degree of consistency in the upper half of our age range.

Other findings from this study are of theoretical interest in the area of the cognitive and affective basis for children's judgments. They will be reported in the detailed publications emerging from the project.

(d) Relations between the child's system of preferences and his perception similarity and dissimilarity between various countries.

This is an issue of considerable theoretical and practical importance. To what extent is it true that an increase in the perception of general similarity of various human groups (or countries) is related to the manner in which a child constructs his matrix of preferences? An exploratory study on this issue was conducted within the project in Leiden, Holland. Children engaged in various tasks, one of which consisted of a determination of perceived similarity between a number of countries, and another in a specification of their relative preferences for the same countries. The results show a close correspondence between the two systems, i.e., that the more similar any two countries are perceived to be, the nearer they will be to one another in the general order of preferences.

(e) Relations between preferences and the capacity to perceive relations between individuals from the point of view other than that

of own national group.

A study on this problem was conducted in Oxford, England. The method was too elaborate to be described here in detail. It involved the child in taking concrete decisions in specific situations for nationals of his own and other countries. Two general bases for these decisions were discovered: a patriotic preference for own country; and a general norm of fairness. With regard to the application of these foundations of choice to nationals of foreign countries, the following pattern of results emerged: children who responded exclusively on the basis of preference for their own country were not able in many cases to conceive that the national of a country they disliked would also respond on the basis of his preference for his own country, and children who responded on the general basis of fairness tended to assume that the nationals of a country they disliked would be less capable to act on that basis than nationals of a country which was highly preferred.

(f) Relation of perception of similarity and dissimilarity to behavior toward another group.

In this study no attempt was made to introduce explicitly the issue of nationality. Its aim was to explore further one of the fundamental and general aspects of the findings described in (d) above. Groups of boys were engaged in a competitive game with other groups which they had never met, neither during the game nor before. Two experimental conditions were used which differed in the nature of the information that the boys had about the general similarity or dissimilarity between their own and the competing group. One of the studies conducted in Oxford, provided striking evidence of the relation between assumed

similarity to the other group and the degree of generosity shown to that group. The second study, conducted in Utrecht, Holland, specified these results further, showing that this relationship was not stable but dependent upon the personality type of the boys engaged in the game.

Conclusion

The findings described above point toward the need for further intense research into the development of national attitudes in children for reasons which are both of theoretical and practical nature. Theoretically, we need to know more about the manner in which a human being relates himself to the large groups of which he is a member. The practical issues are fairly obvious: the system of preferences and the information that children assimilate about their own and other countries originate from the various social and educational influences which impinge upon them. The children of today are the adult citizens of tomorrow, and a closer understanding of the processes which underlie their national and international attitudes can be immeasurably helpful in the planning and prediction of long-term developments.

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This research is a study of childrens' (ages six to twelve) developing attitudes toward foreign countries, affiliation with their own country, perception of similarities and dissimilarities of foreign countries, perception of relations between nationals of foreign countries, and perception of similarities and dissimilarities to other groups as determinants of friendly or hostile behavior. The research was conducted in England, Scotland, Austria, Belgium, and Greece. Preferences were found to be arranged in the following order: America, France, Germany, Russia. This pattern is clear at ages 6 to 7 and becomes increasingly more convincing as the children grow older.			

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