

# THE GEO-ETHNIC PREFERENCE INVENTORY: WORLD CULTURES AND AUTISTIC THINKING

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to measure subjects' perceptions of the cultures of the world. This is part of a program designed to measure the variables influencing international tensions and understanding.

The stimuli for this study come from the fields of philosophy, general semantics, and social psychology.

In F. S. C. Northrop's *The Meeting of East and West*<sup>5</sup> we find this statement of the philosophy of cultural pluralism: "These diverse philosophical conceptions fall into two groups: those which differ because they refer to different factors in the nature of things, and those which conflict because they are offering contradictory things of the same factor. The philosophy of the Orient with its attention upon things in their aesthetic immediacy in contrast with the philosophy of the West with its emphasis upon the theoretically designated and inferred factor in things exemplifies the first group; the medieval and modern worlds or traditional communistic and democratic economic and political theory are instances of the second."

S. I. Hayakawa in his recent book *Language in Thought and Action*<sup>2</sup> carries this thesis a step further by stating: "... the two-valued orientation . . . may be regarded as an inevitable accompaniment to combat. . . . The trouble with such thought, of course, is that there is never any way of evaluating any new experience, process, or object . . . (for) They have in their language no means of progressing towards new evaluations, since all things are viewed only in terms of two sets of values."

Eugene Hartley<sup>1</sup> in *Problems in Prejudice*, has used a series of Bogardus-type scales to study the perceived relationships among various cultures. He reports: "Our hypothesis is that such tolerance represents to a significant extent a function of the persons responding, rather than of the groups responded to." Farther on he suggests: "... individuals who consider members of different national and religious groups similar tend toward tolerance."

T. E. Newcomb<sup>4</sup> has reviewed Hartley's study and others and has these comments to make: "Correlations of scores of social distance toward these three groups (Danireans, Pireneans, and Wallonians) correlated consistently about .8 with social distance toward the other thirty-two groups, among five sets of subjects. Examination of these regression lines, moreover, shows uniformly that those extremely hostile to the non-existing groups were also extremely hostile in total score of attitude toward the other thirty-two groups, and *vice versa*; apparently there were no exceptions at all. For these hostile individuals, in short, to know that a strange group existed (or so they supposed) was to take a hostile attitude toward members of that group."

These are some of the data which have led Newcomb to hypothesize that: " . . . the likelihood that a persistently hostile attitude will develop varies with the degree to which the perceived inter-personal relationship remains autistic, its privacy maintained by some sort of barriers to communication."

With these studies in mind the following hypotheses were raised for this research:

1) If Northrop's hypothesis is valid, then differences in the perception of the world's cultures will be along a continuum from America and Europe on the one hand to Central and Eastern Asia on the other. The Soviet Russian culture will not fall opposite the Anglo-American, but lie somewhere between the latter and Asia.

2) If Hayakawa's thesis is fruitful, then an experimental design which presents a multi-valued world will be perceived as multi-valued. As a corollary we may add that those cultures which upon investigation appear to be polar to each other will be the same cultures which are most hostile toward each other today.

3) If Hartley's study is definitive, then we may expect differences in perception due to the selection of a different population. Furthermore, if a culture differs from the subject's culture, we may expect a gradient of increasing hostility or intolerance from those cultures closest to one's own through those most different.

4) Newcomb's hypothesis might be included under Hartley's as well as the one now offered. If Newcomb's hypothesis is valid, then we might expect the imaginary culture to be identified among those cultures most inversely related to one's own; i.e.,

the imaginary culture will be polar to the subject's own culture, indicating autism and accompanying hostility.

## II. METHOD AND INSTRUMENT

The measuring instrument used in this study was a verbal preference inventory. The basic pattern of the inventory was adapted from *Kuder's Preference Record*<sup>1</sup> with the author's permission. The peoples of the world were classified into nine geographic-ethnic areas as indicated in Table I. A tenth, Imaginary, area was added as a measure of autism.

TABLE I.—THE TEN GEO-ETHNIC CULTURE AREAS USED IN THIS INVENTORY

A. Anglo-Saxon, United States, British Commonwealth	F. Negro African G. German, Scandinavian
B. Hindic, Southeastern Asian	H. Sinic, Japanese
C. Semitic, Arabic, Hebraic	I. Slavic, Eastern European
D. Latin American	J. Imaginary
E. Latin European	

Four attributes of these cultural areas were used to elicit preference responses: nations, regions, rivers, and cities. Items within each group were homogeneous geographically, and were placed randomly throughout the inventory. (See Table II)

TABLE II.—FOUR SAMPLE ITEM GROUPS USED IN THE INVENTORY

Nations	Regions	Rivers	Cities
a. China (H)	a. Broszk (J)	a. Zakolo (J)	a. Natal (F)
b. Peru (D)	b. Punjab(C)	b. Volga (I)	b. Stockholm(G)
c. Scotland(A)	c. Prussia(G)	c. La Plata(D)	c. Alexandria(C)

A total of one hundred groups of three items each appeared on this test. For each group of three items the subject indicated his first and last choices. In scoring the test the first choice in each group was assigned a weight of three, the second choice two, and the third one. Each group was analysed by comparing the high and low scorers within each of the ten subtests. Those items which did not discriminate were discarded. For final scoring thirty groups of items remained, a total of nine

items for each of the ten cultures. The subjects for this study were one hundred twenty-four college students.

### III. RESULTS

Reliability was studied by the test—re-test method. The scores of the subjects on the test and re-test were correlated. The coefficients of correlation are given in Table III.

TABLE III.—THE COEFFICIENTS OF RELIABILITY OF THE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE RAW SCORES ON THE TEST AND THE RE-TEST

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
.72	.54	.46	.48	.48	.51	.67	.63	.46	.42

The intercorrelations among the subtests were determined. They ranged from  $-.56$  (A-H) to  $.34$  (A-E). The intercorrelations among these variables on the re-test were highly similar. (See Table IV)

TABLE IV.—MATRICES OF INTERCORRELATIONS OF THE RAW SCORES ON EACH SUBTEST

[illegible]

The group centroid method of factor analysis<sup>6</sup> was used to study the relationships among the ten cultural variables. This was deemed important in light of the reliability coefficients, and the similarity among the intercorrelations on the test and re-test. The unrotated factor matrix is given in Table V.

TABLE V.—FACTOR MATRIX OF THE FOUR FACTORS OBTAINED BY THE GROUP CENTROID METHOD (UNROTATED)

	1	2	3	4
A	— .645	.340	— .242	.170
B	.441	— .009	— .134	.285
C	.511	.523	— .039	— .032
D	.070	.068	.438	— .185
E	— .587	.229	.338	— .147
F	.378	— .282	.091	— .382
G	— .542	— .330	— .126	.014
H	.714	— .116	— .202	— .131
I	.218	— .237	.094	.359
J	— .441	— .032	— .342	— .333

#### IV. DISCUSSION

*Test reliability.*—The correlation coefficients which indicate the relationships between the subjects' raw scores on the test and re-test fall between .42 (J) and .72 (A). The intercorrelation matrices are very similar, however. The factor analysis gives some indication about the relatively low reliability coefficients. It must be acknowledged that although individuals' ideas may change, the cultures may shift, and the items may not prove to be similar throughout the test, probably the greatest reason for low reliability is the clustering of the variables into factors. Therefore, the subjects may shift from one subtest to another, but stay within the same factor while making their preference selections.

*Factor analysis.*—Four factors are indicated by the group centroid factor analysis. These factors appear in the unrotated matrix in Table V.

1) The first factor might be designated as discriminating the major 'world outlooks.' We may call this factor one of *Weltanschauung*. In one cluster we find the Anglo-American, Latin

European, German-Scandinavian, and Imaginary cultures, and in the other the Hindic, Semitic, Sinic, and African. The various differences between these clusters include caste and class, religion, perceived 'racial' differences, etc.

2) The second factor appears to be one of 'monotheism.' In one cluster we find the Anglo-American, Semitic, and Latin European cultures, and in the other the African, German-Scandinavian, and Slavic. It might be well to qualify this by considering the former cluster as the one which has been more firmly rooted in these traditions, whereas the cultures of the second cluster have been late-comers to the monotheistic fold, if they have come at all.

3) Thirdly, we have the 'Latin' factor comprised of the two major areas of the Latin world as compared with the Anglo-American and Imaginary group. The major components of this factor may be Roman Catholicism, statism with tendencies toward central control, political instability in the form of revolution, differences in sex morals, etc.

4) Finally, the fourth factor might be described as a 'fantasy' factor. The cultures concerned in this plane are two about which we have much information which tends to be highly autistic, (Hindic and Slavic), and two about which we know very little extensionally, (Africa and Imaginary).

These are the suggested interpretations of the four factors found in this study. Further research with different populations may indicate more or different factors.

*Hypotheses.*—We may now turn to the hypotheses upon which this study has been based, and see to what extent they have been verified.

1) If Northrop's hypothesis were valid, then the cultures would cluster around Anglo-Western Europe and Asia with the Slavic culture falling somewhere in between. These two phenomena are supported by the data indicated in the first factor.

2) If Hayakawa's thesis were to hold, then an experiment which presents a multi-ordinal design should receive multi-ordinal results. The distinctness of the various cultures supports this hypothesis.

However, the corollary that those cultures polar to each other are also the ones most hostile to each other requires further investigation. If we may take the current 'cold war' as an

indication of hostility, then we should expect a bi-polar division between Anglo-America and the Slavic culture. Such a picture does not appear.

3) Should Hartley's interpretation be correct, there should be significant differences between his study and this one because of the differences in time and in sample population. However, the rank order correlation between Hartley's cultures and those on the GEPI, omitting the non-comparable United States Negro and the African Negro, is .784. Secondly, hostility should increase directly with social distance, but this does not appear to be the case. We may again refer to the 'cold war' and find that the cultures most distant from that of the subjects are not those against which most of the hostility is being directed.

4) If Newcomb's hypothesis were valid, we would expect the imaginary culture to be polar to the United States. Instead it appears frequently in the Anglo-American cluster, (factors 1 and 3), and once, (in factor 4) polar to the Soviet culture.

Although the results of this study have not corroborated all of the hypotheses which were posited when this research was begun, we may feel that the hypotheses have been quite fruitful. Perhaps the results may serve to qualify rather than to contradict these theses.

Some hypotheses which arise from these results are as follows:

a) The imaginary culture may be expected to fall in the cluster closest to the self or most polar from the self.

b) Hostility toward the imaginary culture will also tend to be polarized.

c) Bi-polarity, major cultural difference, or great social distance is not a sufficient condition for the expression of hostility.

These hypotheses do not attempt to explain the phenomena which have been studied in this experiment. However, an indication toward such an explanation may be made. The major point of difficulty seems to arise in the relationship between social or cultural distance and the expression of hostility. We may find, for instance, that one of the significant 'barriers to communication' is autism in the communication itself.

The general hypothesis I should like to offer may be stated as follows:

Cultures may be distributed along a J-shaped gradient of social distance with the origin at one's self or own group.

When the curve reaches a certain rate of acceleration we will find the strongest expression of hostility. Beyond this rate hostility will not be expressed to such a degree. Aggression against the groups prior to this point of acceleration is actively inhibited by the similarity of cultural tradition and by the active threat of in-group or self punishment, whereas the influence inhibiting aggression toward the groups past this point of acceleration is their falling outside of the subjects' psychological field.

Such a hypothesis should be amenable to test by laboratory experiment and field research. The particular formula for the point at which the important rate of acceleration is reached remains to be worked out.

#### V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1) A verbal inventory of one hundred questions was made. Each question was composed of three items. Each item represented a different geo-ethnic culture. The subject ranked the three items on the basis of his preference. He also indicated items he had not heard of previously. The nine geo-ethnic cultures were: African (Negro), Anglo-American, Germanic-Scandinavian, Hindic-Southeast Asian, Islamic-Hebraic, Latin American, Latin European, Sinic, Slavic, and a fictitious culture.

2) The test was administered to one hundred twenty-four college students. The data and discussion refer to this group. Reliability was computed by the test-retest method for each subtest. The reliability coefficients ranged from .42 to .72.

3) Although the cultures are distinct from each other, there is sufficient clustering to affect the reliability.

4) The four hypotheses upon which this study was based are discussed, and an attempt is made to draw them together in a new statement. This hypothesis is designed to synthesize the study of hostility and social distance.

5) This method is suggested as fruitful for the analysis of attitudes toward world cultures and the inter-relationships among them.

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