

Autonomy, Dependency, and Problem Solving in Filipino Children*

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Review of Past Research

Authoritarianism and autonomy. Adorno and his associates (1950) have noted that in addition to the low authoritarianism¹ which represents genuine autonomy, there are other syndromes among low scorers on the Authoritarian, ("F") Scale, such as the "rigid" low-scorer and the "protesting" low-scorer syndromes. The first is the low-authoritarian syndrome that Adorno describes as having the most in common with the overall pattern of high F-scale scorers due to its markedly stereotypical features and its disposal toward totalitarianism.

Representatives of this syndrome can often be found, for example, among young, "progressive" people, particularly students, whose personal development has failed to keep pace with their ideological indoctrination (Adorno et al. 1950: 772).

Thinly veiled destructive fantasies and a rationalization of punitiveness, or the giving of punishment, are characteristic of this type of low authoritarian. The "protesting" low scorers, while set against parental authority, have at the same time internalized parental standards in the development of a strict conscience.

While being non-authoritarian in their way of thinking, they are often psychologically constricted and thus not able to act as energetically as their conscience demands (Adorno et al. 1950: 774).

Weitman (1962) has further systematized this distinction among authoritarians by contrasting their approaches to authority. His classification scheme includes the *non-authoritarian*, a type who has no problems with authority; the *pro-authoritarian*, who is overly concerned with and obedient to authority (Adorno's "high F," or high scorer on the F Scale); and the *anti-authoritarian*, who is overly concerned with and resistant to authority. It is the anti-authoritarian who manifests the behavior described as pseudo-autonomy. Non-

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¹ *Authoritarianism* is a personality trait characterized by repression of unacceptable motives, projection of blame on others, conventionalism, conformity, and power orientation toward others. Its opposite is *autonomy*, which will be defined below.

authoritarianism, in turn, is operationally defined in the Autonomy Subscale of the Omnibus Personality Inventory (1963), a measure which embodies the qualities enumerated in the definition of autonomy used in the research reported below. That is, by autonomy is meant independence from authority as traditionally imposed by social institutions and the capacity to initiate and carry out activities, as well as the ability to be flexible and to deal with others in an equalitarian manner. Pseudo-autonomy may appear to be like autonomy in certain respects, particularly in terms of independence in dealing with the environment, but it is characterized by counter-conformity and rigidity-qualities which suggest that the underlying dynamics are very different.

The negativism associated with resistance, which is seen developing in the child beginning in his second year, has been characterized by Levy (1955) as the oppositional syndrome. Levy defines the oppositional syndrome in terms of the refusal to conform to the ordinary requirements of authority and conventional behavior.

The "clash of wills" situation develops where the adult gets himself trapped in an untenable position in which he feels compelled to break the child's spirit. This illustrates the peculiar automaticity of oppositional mechanisms which under certain conditions are beyond control (Levy 1955: 210).

In effect, negativism in the child operates as a more primitive and safer form of aggression.

Erikson (1959) has also identified the problem of balancing autonomy and conformity in adult life as stemming from events in this early period of childhood. He observes that a possible outcome of too strict control on the child is that the child will rebel, becoming hostile and willful or pretending an ability to get along without anyone to lean on. A concomitant of such deviant autonomy is the individual's overmanipulation of himself as a consequence of a precocious conscience, a phenomenon which is seen in the "protesting" low scorer described by Adorno.

Autonomy and dependency. It has been shown that autonomy and dependency are not opposite ends of a bipolar continuum, but are independent factors which are, at the most, only moderately negatively correlated (Beller 1955, 1957; Beller and Turner 1964). Pseudo-autonomy, moreover, is one manifestation of dependency conflict; that is, the individual who has a conflict between the motivation to behave dependently and the desire to act autonomously may try to present himself as independent by inhibiting his unresolved dependency needs. In order to do this, he is considerably more rigid than the individual who is genuinely autonomous and who can express dependency needs when appropriate without feeling threatened. Beller and Haerberle (1959, Beller 1961) have observed that children with dependency conflict are less able to function autonomously, show more aggressive themes to dependency cards on the Children's Apperception Test, and are less adequate in cognitive functioning.

Signs of such dependency conflict are evident in the inhibition of dependency requests under conditions of stress, in the indirect expression or displacement of dependency requests, and in inconsistency in seeking help. The latter can be observed in a child's vacillation within a single act, for example:

. . . requesting help and not accepting it when it was offered, or rarely requesting help but being overly excited when unsolicited offers of help or affection are received . . . vacillating between few and many or between low and high intensity of dependency behavior from day to day or from week to week . . . (Beller 1961: 17).

Beller (1961) points out further that the child's willingness to be assertive in a dependency conflict situation indicates a lack of conflict.

In studying dependency inhibition in adolescent boys, Cairns (1961) also views the absence of a direct request for help in a behavioral dependency test as being indicative of dependency inhibition. The test, a practically unsolvable puzzle, is introduced in such a way as to bring out most clearly a subject's resistance to and avoidance of help-seeking behavior. Beller (1961) has shown that the latency and directness of requests for help in such a situation are to be considered more as measures of dependency inhibition than of dependency motivation. He has found that when dependency stress is heightened in a conflict situation, there is an increase in disorganized and rigid behavior, especially among highly dependent children.

In comparing children, more autonomous behavior is expected from boys in American society than from girls. It has been found that not only do dependent children come from authoritarian family regimens, but also that dependent boys are more anxious, more sexually confused, and more likely to become psychotic as adults (McCord, McCord, and Verden 1962). Kagan and Moss (1960) note in their longitudinal study² that punishment of dependent behavior in boys leads to their inhibition of such behavior and to conflict over dependency. While passive and dependent behaviors are found to be quite stable for girls from birth to late adolescence, they are minimally stable for boys.

In considering other work on autonomy, it is important to point out that autonomy as defined in the study reported below is in line with the research cited above, but is not the same as it is defined by Edwards (1959). Murray's list of manifest needs which Edwards follows in the development of the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule fails to distinguish between genuine autonomy and pseudo-autonomy, considering both as autonomy. Thus, this definition, which incorporates aspects of counter-conformity, has a more negative connotation than the concept of autonomy used here. The following statements about autonomy are illustrative:

. . . to avoid situations where one is expected to conform . . . to criticize those in positions of authority . . . [and] to avoid responsibilities and obligations (Edwards 1961: 11).

² A longitudinal study is one which is conducted on the same subjects over a long period of time to find out how their characteristics vary at different points in time.

Because of the differences in the behavior and orientation of individuals with genuine autonomy and pseudo-autonomy, as suggested in the literature, one would expect different experience correlates and different approaches to problem solving in these individuals.

Child rearing and autonomy in the Philippines. The importance of having, in the study of autonomy and dependency in the Philippines, an orientation different from that one would have in the United States is evident from research on Filipino maternal attitudes as well as research on student needs. In a factor-analytic study using the Parental Attitude Research Inventory, Guthrie (1966) found that irritability on the part of the mother is associated with assertiveness in the Filipino child, but with dependency in the American child. There were also differences in the number of factors related to parental authority and control. While in the United States sample, there were three such factors, in the Philippine sample there were seven. In contrast, five factors in the United States sample and two in the Philippine sample were related to the child's being on his own and responsible for his own behavior. Similar differences were found by Bulatao (1965), whose results showed that Philippine college students were lower than Americans on autonomy and exhibition, but higher on abasement, deference, dominance, and aggression.

Hiyâ. In considering the development of dependency and autonomy in Philippine children, one should also examine the concept of *hiyâ*, which is, above everything else, the behavior expected of the well-reared Filipino child.

Guthrie (1964) defines *hiyâ* as a "learned pattern of essentially anxiety reactions which may arise in certain interpersonal situations. In the presence of older, stronger, or more important people, children are expected to show and feel humility. Children are trained and expected to have a capacity for painful self-conscious, inferiority feelings." Guthrie (1964: 8) goes on to say:

... they [children] are expected to be embarrassed when they make mistakes. Criticism by others is misery. To lose a game or fail in school is acutely distressing. If slighted, these feelings may cause the child to withdraw from school, from social contacts, or to take other extreme measures. Avoidance of this feeling would appear to be the motivation behind a number of patterns in later childhood and adulthood. On the other hand, to be solicitous for others' feelings, to be polite and hospitable, to make the other person feel good, are all approved. The child who does not show appropriate respect is called 'without *hiyâ*' which is just about the worst thing someone can say about a child. In a very real sense it is a pattern of feelings of personal insecurity which is expected and approved.

Hiyâ is customarily referred to as shame, although Guthrie feels this term is inappropriate, perhaps because *hiyâ* encompasses more than shame. Ausubel (1955) defines shame as "unpleasant emotional reactions by the individual to actual or presumed negative judgment by others resulting in self-depreciation. The individual may not internalize, in the sense of not accept, the moral value on the basis of which others condemn him." Levin and Baldwin (1959), in their paradigm for the conditions which instigate guilt and shame, say that

shame results when a defect or lack of ability or a transgression is displayed to other people. These definitions suggest several questions that are applicable to the problem of understanding *hiyâ* and the dependent and autonomous behaviors of the Filipino child.

Is *hiyâ* a basic personality characteristic which covers the range of social situations? Or is it an adaptive interactional behavior which is elicited only in certain public situations for the purpose of avoiding anxiety which has arisen in the past in such critical situations? In terms of autonomy and dependency, can the child who manifests *hiyâ* in public also display autonomous behavior in non-public situations?

Privacy is rare in the Philippines. Dependency, first on family, then on peers, is consistently and positively reinforced, while independence is negatively reinforced to the point where the individual is anxious when alone. Since dependency is accepted and fostered, in contrast to the situation in American society, there would be little conflict about expressing it. On the other hand, because of socialization in the direction of *hiyâ* there may be serious conflict in the child and the adult when it comes to the expression of autonomy. That autonomy is present to the extent of acquiring skills and mastering tasks as the child grows, in the sense of White's (1960) competency, is accepted as a concomitant of normal development. However, achievement anxiety may be low in the Philippines due to the lack of emphasis on excellence—with poor work rewarded the same as good work—and to the unlimited emotional support of the family (Bulatao 1965).

Although it is not clear how *hiyâ* develops, it is undoubtedly related to the widespread teasing behavior of older toward younger persons. The Nydeggers in Whiting's *Six Cultures* (1963) write that it is not unusual for a group of women to tease an infant. Such teasing probably results in confusion for the infant, for while the group atmosphere is one of fun, he feels uncomfortable and insecure at not enjoying what is going on. Since the expression of anger at what is basically a hostile situation is not permitted, he is not only frustrated but confused as well. Aggression can only be expressed through teasing others younger than oneself or peers who do not conform to group norms (Hollnsteiner 1965).

The Present Study

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis in this study of autonomy and dependency among Filipino children is that those children with genuine autonomy will do better on a cognitive task than those with pseudo-autonomy. This reflects their greater flexibility in dealing with their environment without being confused by irrelevant surroundings. As Adorno and his associates (1950) note, too much concern with authority—which is characteristic of pseudo-autonomy—

is a defensive attempt to maintain structure in the environment. Weitman (1962) finds that, when compared with the non-authoritarian, both the pro-authoritarian and the anti-authoritarian do poorly on cognitive tasks such as an information test and an embedded-figures test. The hypothesized results are shown in Figure 1. Genuine autonomy is represented by high autonomy-low dependency conflict and pseudo-autonomy by high autonomy-high dependency conflict.

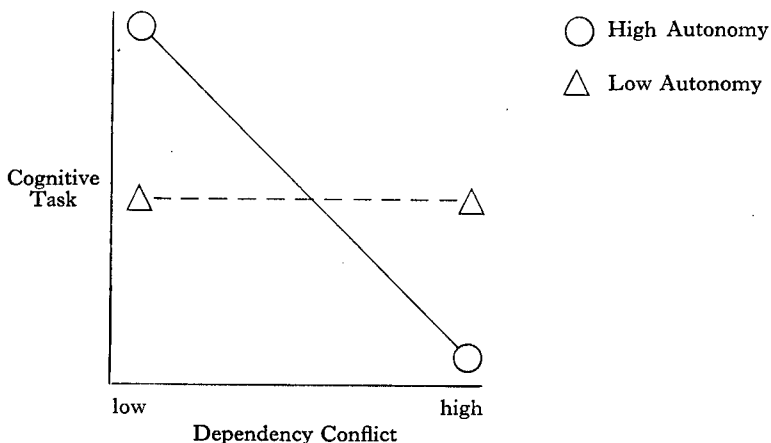


FIG. 1. *Expected results on a cognitive task for subjects with genuine and pseudo-autonomy.*

A number of recent studies on American children have shown that success and failure in problem-solving behavior depend a good deal upon the locus of reinforcement—that is, upon whether the reinforcement is inherent in the task (intrinsic) or whether it is extraneous to it (extrinsic) as well as on motivational and environmental variables (Davis 1967). The second hypothesis is that Filipino children from a developing traditional society where dependency on family and peers is encouraged, would do better in problem solving under extrinsic reinforcement rather than intrinsic reinforcement.

A third hypothesis is that children with genuine autonomy will show less hostility toward authority figures on a fantasy measure than those with pseudo-autonomy. This follows from the fact that the pseudo-autonomous are more resistant to authority in maintaining their apparent autonomous behavior.

With increasing age, there are greater pressures on boys to inhibit dependency behavior and appear independent. This has been demonstrated in American society (Kagan and Moss 1960) and is expected, but to a lesser extent, in Filipino society. The fourth hypothesis is that pseudo-autonomy

will increase as boys grow older due to the increasing conflict between dependency and autonomy.

A fifth hypothesis is that dependency conflict will be rare among Filipino children. As suggested above, the child is not expected to be self-reliant but is expected to ask for help when he needs it, and help is freely given. Although this behavior changes somewhat with age, since the Filipino child is not punished for dependency, he has less need to inhibit it. Thus, conflict about expressing dependency needs is not the predominant pattern in the development of the Filipino child.

Under stress, the Filipino, according to Sechrest (1966), tends to act out in an impulsive, voluble manner rather than withdraw. Thus the sixth hypothesis is that dependency conflict, where it manifests itself, will be expressed in impulsive, irrelevant behavior rather than as pseudo-autonomy. Since there is a lack of emphasis on excellence, and poor work is frequently rewarded to the same degree as good work, there is little anxiety about independent achievement or desire for it in children.

A further hypothesis is that *hiyâ* and autonomy will be negatively related. The independent action associated with autonomy is in marked contrast to the behaviors surrounding *hiyâ*.

The above hypotheses are formulated with respect to a *provincial*, rural, sample. Within this sample it is expected that rural lower-class subjects will show greater dependency than urban subjects, thus reflecting the conservative adherence to traditional norms in the provinces. The influence of the traditional culture would be less clear and consistent among Filipinos with Western values in Manila, the urban center, although even there, the influence of modernization and the conflict in values are not apparent in young children.

Method

Subjects. The subjects were 88 boys, five to 10 years old (mean 7.2), attending kindergarten and first grade in the Bicol region, the southernmost part of Luzon, the principal island. Sixty of them were from a private school in a provincial town, and 28 were from a nearby rural barrio public school.

Instruments. Two intelligence tests were used. One was the Raven Colored Progressive Matrices, and the other was the Intelligence Test for the Tropics (ITT) developed by Guthrie, Tayag, and Jimenez.³ These tests are both nonverbal; that is, they do not involve reading or writing.

Also used were eighteen pictures of the Children's Form of the Rosenzweig Picture Frustration Study which seemed appropriate to the Philippines. In administering this test, the examiner pointed to each picture, described the picture in a standard way in Bikol, and recorded the child's answer.

³ The Raven Colored Progressive Matrices is also customarily used by the Guidance Center of the Ateneo de Manila University.

Two experiments were conducted with each child. In the first, the child was presented with a colorful but very difficult puzzle (Kwazy Quilt) and told that he might ask for help if he needed it. The frequency and latency of his requests for help in a ten-minute period were recorded. This kind of situation has been used in research by other investigators as a measure of dependency-autonomy conflict. The second experiment measured the child's performance on a simple problem-solving task under conditions of either intrinsic or extrinsic reinforcement. The task consisted of the child's learning to find under which of three different-sized boxes an object was hidden. The boxes were presented in a standard random order for 30 trials, the criterion being ten successive correct trials. A child was given either intrinsic or extrinsic reinforcement; children were assigned randomly within their classes to one of the two reinforcement conditions.⁴

Scores on autonomy, dependency toward children, dependency toward adults, and *hiyâ* were obtained for each subject from behavior-rating scales. The first three scales were developed by Beller (1955), the *hiyâ* scale by the experimenter. Ten different kinds of behaviors (seeks help, derives satisfaction from tasks, etc.) that operationally define autonomy or dependency, as well as three dealing with *hiyâ* were used. Each subject was rated with respect to the other boys in his classroom. Ratings were made by the classroom teacher and a research assistant; the latter observed subjects during the same week the teacher was observing them and making ratings. In this way, two independent ratings were obtained; the reliabilities ranged from .50 to .73. The ratings were combined for each subject's score.

Procedure. All materials were translated into Bikol and administered to the subjects in Bikol by three Filipinas who served as research assistants. The testing was done in two sessions for each child since a different assistant carried out each experiment. The experimental situation was given first in any session, then the remaining tests were administered.

Results

The first hypothesis was not confirmed, in that children with genuine autonomy did not make fewer errors on the problem-solving task than those with pseudo-autonomy. In fact, the trend was in the opposite direction; that is, those with pseudo-autonomy did better than those with genuine autonomy.

Generally it was found that Filipino children performed better under conditions of extrinsic reinforcement than under conditions of intrinsic

⁴ In the intrinsic reinforcement condition, the child is instructed to pick up one box at a time until he finds the hidden object. His reward comes from seeing that he has chosen correctly since the examiner makes no comment. In the extrinsic reinforcement condition the child is instructed to point to the box he thinks is the right one but not to pick it up. Praise from the examiner constitutes his reward rather than his own perception of success.

reinforcement. The difference was in the predicted direction, although it only approached significance. However, it was found that highly dependent children made significantly more errors under intrinsic reinforcement while highly autonomous children made less errors under the same conditions.⁵ In addition, children with previous schooling made significantly fewer errors under conditions of intrinsic reinforcement, as has been found for American children.⁶ Under conditions of extrinsic reinforcement no statistically significant difference was found.

Success and failure of problem solving under either condition were unrelated to age and intelligence. It might be noted that while the Raven test and the ITT "loaded" on the same factor in the factor analysis,⁷ they seemed to be measuring different aspects of intelligence, the correlation being only $\cdot 21$.⁸

The score on extrapunitiveness in the Rosenzweig Picture Frustration Study was used as a measure of hostility and aggression toward authority figures. No significant differences were found between children with genuine autonomy and children with pseudo-autonomy with respect to extrapunitiveness.

The fourth hypothesis, that pseudo-autonomy in boys will increase as they grow older, was confirmed. In general, it was found that older subjects showed more conflict between dependency and autonomy on the experimental conflict task of solving the puzzle. The correlation for age and conflict was $-\cdot 37$.⁹ Age and problem solving were not correlated significantly.

Dependency conflict did not prove to be rare among the subjects studied. Fifty-three of the 88 subjects, or 60 per cent, were so inhibited that they made no requests for help during the ten-minute experimental conflict situation. However, when the sample was separated into rural and town subjects, it was found that the rural lower-class subjects showed more conflict.¹⁰ Thus it was not found that Filipino children when faced with a task which was difficult act in an impulsive, voluble manner rather than withdraw. As seen above, the majority of subjects were neither impulsive nor voluble. The three scores which made up the conflict score were highly correlated, and had loadings on the conflict factor of $-\cdot 9051$, $-\cdot 8885$, and $\cdot 6526$, for directness of requests for help, number of words used, and latency, respectively.

A significant negative relation was found between *hiyâ* and autonomy, as predicted. The correlation was $-\cdot 53$.¹¹ In addition, *hiyâ* was negatively correlated with dependency among children (correlation = $-\cdot 44$) and with

⁵ t test, probability less than 0.05.

⁶ t test, probability less than 0.05.

⁷ To the extent that a test measures a factor, it is said to *load* on the factor.

⁸ Correlation is a statistical procedure aimed at determining to what degree two things, or variables, are related, to what extent variations in one go with variations in the other.

⁹ Two-tailed test, probability less than 0.01.

¹⁰ Chi-square test, probability less than 0.01.

¹¹ Two-tailed test, probability less than 0.01.

dependency among adults (correlation = $-.33$).¹² One might posit that *hiyâ* was measuring the inhibition of dependency needs as seen in the conflict situation were it not for the fact that no significant correlations were found between *hiyâ* and any of the conflict scores. Ratings of dependency on adults and dependency on children were negatively correlated with number of siblings,¹³ a finding which suggests that children in larger families are less dependent than those in smaller ones.

Discussion

Of major interest is the finding that in the Philippines, as in the United States, problem-solving behavior varies with the locus of reinforcement. As expected, the greater dependency encouraged in Filipino children leads them to do better under conditions of extrinsic rather than intrinsic reward. However, with school experience and its emphasis on independent task completion, intrinsic reinforcement in turn increases in effectiveness. The fact that pseudo-autonomy increases with age in Filipino boys likewise indicates that pressures for independent achievement in school are coming into conflict with the dependency encouraged by the family, and that such dependency is being inhibited in school-like situations. This conflict appears to be greater for children from the more rural traditional homes than those from towns.

That differences were not found between genuine and pseudo-autonomous subjects in the problem-solving task may reflect in part the nature of the task. Actually, this cognitive task did not involve restructuring the environment, although it did involve the formulation and testing of successive hypotheses. Perhaps the task was not an adequate test of different styles of cognitive functioning between genuine and pseudo-autonomous subjects. Also, the question might have been raised as to whether pseudo-autonomy applies to the Philippines in the way it does to the United States, since less dependency conflict was anticipated. This was answered by the finding that dependency conflict was not uncommon among the Filipino subjects, although a direct comparison with an American sample using the same experimental procedures would still be desirable to affirm this finding.

Several hypotheses based on anthropological observations of Philippine society were not supported in the controlled experimental situations used in this study. In addition to showing considerable dependency conflict—a finding which was not in line with reports about the permissive attitude toward and encouragement of dependency in the Philippines—the subjects did not show impulsive, voluble behavior under the stress of an unsolvable task, as suggested by Sechrest. Thus they neither asked for help nor behaved in an irrelevant manner. Similarly, the nature of *hiyâ* remains unclear. Not only is it negatively

¹² Both significant at the 0.01 level, two-tailed test.

¹³ Probability less than 0.05.

related to autonomy and dependency, but it is unrelated to those conflict behaviors that might be encompassed within the meaning of shyness, that is, inhibition of dependency requests, latency in asking for help, and the amount of verbalization by the subjects.

Thus, while there are some contrasts between Filipino and American children, there are also similarities. It seems that the contrasts have perhaps been overemphasized. What one is led to conclude is that the norm is not the simple one of dependency in the Philippines and autonomy in the United States; rather, one is confronted here with the more complex problem of how individuals in any society learn to deal with conflicting demands made upon them—in this case with demands to behave autonomously under some conditions and dependently under others, since both demands are in fact present in the Philippines.

Summary

Among 88 Filipino boys in kindergarten and the first grade, highly dependent subjects made more errors under intrinsic reinforcement in a problem-solving task while highly autonomous subjects made less errors under the same conditions. The 20 subjects who had had previous schooling made fewer errors under intrinsic reinforcement, but no differences were found under extrinsic reinforcement. Pseudo-autonomy—that is, high autonomy with high-dependency conflict—increased with age, but pseudo-autonomous subjects did not differ from genuinely autonomous subjects with respect to success in problem solving or in amount of hostility expressed. Dependency conflict was not as rare as reports of Filipino society might lead one to believe, with rural subjects showing more dependency conflict than town subjects. *Hiyâ* or shyness was negatively related to dependency as well as to autonomy.

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