SELF-ESTEEM AND PARTICIPATORY BEHAVIOR AMONG ADOLESCENT MANILANS

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In 1970, paper-and-pencil questionnaires on self-esteem and participatory behavior were administered to 1,271 Manila high school students. Significant positive association was found between self-esteem on the one hand and, on the other, five measures of group participation; further, the same kind of relationship was found between self-esteem and social class. Among members of the same social class, self-esteem showed a positive association with participatory behavior, but this relationship was most consistently significant among lower-class respondents.

Social science literature is replete with examples supporting the notion that one's self-concepts has an impact on his attitudes and behavior (Wylie 1961; McCandless 1961: chapter 6). A number of studies have demonstrated, for example, that individuals with low self-images are inclined to be more anxious than those with positive self-concepts (Lipsitt 1958; Mitchell 1959; Rosenberg 1965), while other research has noted the existence of linkages between poor social adjustment and critical self-evaluation (Crandall and Bullugi 1954). Evidence also suggests that a healthy self-image is generally accompanied by a greater acceptance of other human beings, by a more optimistic view of the world, and by a higher level of academic achievement (McIntyre 1952; Fey 1955; Gebel 1954; Coopersmith 1959).

Self-esteem likewise appears to have an impact on the extent to which individuals join and participate in social groups. In a study of male college students, Dittes reported that subjects with low self-appraisals, in comparison to subjects with high self-esteem, demonstrated more attraction to groups where a concerted effort was made to make them feel welcome. Their greater need for social reinforcement was also reflected in the fact that they were less attracted than those with high self-esteem to groups

where acceptance was low (1959). In related research, Gebel (1954) noticed that sorority girls who asserted themselves in leaderless groups generally held positive attitudes about themselves, others, and the world, in contrast to the girls who remained unassertive. Similarly, Mussen and Porter (1959: 26) found that self-assured individuals were "much more likely to participate actively and vigorously in groups of peers whom they did not know previously," while their cohort co-members who had negative self-images were less active and consequently "regarded by other members as relatively ineffectual."

In his work with pre-adolescents, Coopersmith discovered (1967: 51-52) that youngsters with high self-esteem not only joined more social groups, but also seemed to be more actively engaged in them than were those who held negative self-concepts. Elsewhere, Coopersmith has asserted (1968: 98) that middle-class urban boys "with a high degree of self-esteem are active, expressive individuals who tend to be successful both academically and socially. They lead rather than merely listen in discussions, are eager to express opinions, do not sidestep disagreement, [and] are not particularly sensitive to criticism." These findings among pre-adolescents parallel Rosenberg's research

(1965: ch. 10) with high school students, where those with positive self-images also belonged to more clubs, were more frequently chosen as leaders by their peers, and assumed more aggressive roles in group discussions.

Study Design and Procedures[1]

From a review of the literature on self-esteem, it was hypothesized that Manila high school students with positive self-conceptualizations would: (1) belong to more clubs and organizations; (2) participate more actively in them; (3) demonstrate greater involvement in class and all-school political activities; and (4) engage with greater frequency in classroom discussions about civics and social issues.

In testing the hypotheses, the respondents were asked the extent of their membership in clubs and organizations and the number of times they had been elected to positions of leadership in them. Information concerning their election to class or all-school political offices was also obtained. Students were questioned about how often they perceived opportunities to discuss and debate government, civics, and social issues in their schools and the frequency with which they participated in these discussions. Adolescent self-conceptualization was measured by a three-point index constructed from a combination of nine items used by Rosenberg in his study of self-image among American high school students.[2]

The data presented in this article were collected in Manila in the spring of 1970 from pencil-and-paper questionnaires administered to 1,271 high school students who were part of a larger study of the political socialization of city high school students and their parents.

The large variety of schools in Manila, coupled with the unavailability of comparable statistical information in the bureaus of public and private schools at the time the study was initiated, necessitated the elimination of certain categories of schools and the employment of a mixed procedure for the selection of institutions included in the study. Two "regular" public schools were selected randomly by a cumulative proportional method, using August 1969 total enrollment figures, while a "special" public school, noted for its academic excellence, and two private "elite" schools were included to insure a wider representation of socioeconomic and ethnic groups.[3] Within each institution, students were selected randomly according to the rules of a cluster-model sampling technique (Stephen and McCarthy 1958).

Since the method of sampling precludes knowing the probability of including respondents outside the regular public schools, caution must be urged in generalizing from the findings to include all Manila high school students and their age cohorts. This is particularly important in view of the number of students who drop out before graduating from high school in Manila.[4] Notwithstanding these caveats the ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic diversity of the sample suggests its usefulness, especially from a cross-cultural perspective, for testing the relationship between self-esteem and adolescent participatory behavior.

Findings

The relationship between self-esteem and adolescent participation in clubs and organizations is presented in Table 1. Whereas only 27 percent of the respondents with low self-regard indicated they belonged to any clubs or organizations, 78 percent of those with high self-regard claimed membership in such groups. The data also reveal a greater proclivity among respondents with high self-esteem to engage in a larger number of extracurricular social groups (37 percent of the students in the highest category of self-esteem claimed affiliation with three or more clubs or organizations, compared with 7 percent of the students in the lowest category). The relationships are monotonic in all cases, with increasing social-group activity going hand-in-hand with greater self-esteem. The results are almost identical to the findings of Rosenberg who reports (1965: 14) "a striking relationship between self-esteem and club membership" among his New York state high school students.

Joining clubs and organizations which at the high school level are generally open to all who

Table 1

*Self-esteem and membership in social clubs and organizations
(Manila high school students, 1970)*

Number of clubs of which a member	Self-esteem		
	Low	Medium	High
None	73%	46%	22%
One	15	18	21
Two	5	15	20
Three or more	7	21	37
Total	100%	100%	100%
Respondents (n)	186	599	458

Chi-square = 169.83, df = 6, p < 0.001

Table 2

*Self-esteem and frequency of selection to offices in clubs and organizations
(Manila high school students, 1970)*

Number of offices held	Self-esteem		
	Low	Medium	High
None	81%	73%	65%
One	11	13	14
Two or more	9	13	22
Total[a]	101%	99%	101%
Respondents (n)	187	596	452

Chi-square = 30.0, df = 4, p < 0.001

[a]Because of rounding error, percentages do not add to 100.

seek membership is not nearly as stern a test of self-esteem as competing with one's peers for a position of leadership within such groups. A comparison of Tables 1 and 2 clearly underscores this point. An examination of the highest category of self-esteem demonstrates that 78 percent of the respondents (Table 1) participated in one or more extracurricular social groups but only 36 percent of the same adolescents (Table 2) claimed to have been elected to one or more positions of leadership in the clubs and organizations of which they were members. A further inspection of Table 2 discloses that self-appraisal among adolescent Manilans is moderately associated with peer-group leadership, for 81 percent of those with low self-esteem in comparison to 65 percent of those with high self-esteem indicated never having been elevated to an elective position, with adolescents who viewed themselves positively being more likely to have held several positions of leadership in extracurricular social groups. In this respect, the Manila data are again consistent with the findings of Rosenberg.

Just as adolescents with high self-regard are more likely than others to rise to positions of authority in clubs and organizations, so are they more likely to be elected by their peers to comparable positions in class and all-school

political contests (Table 3). When elections to class and all-school political offices are juxtaposed to those taking place in clubs and organizations, the data disclose that a larger proportion of the respondents reported having risen to positions of leadership in the former rather than the latter. This is just the reverse of what Rosenberg found in his investigation of self-esteem and election to classroom offices. However, the discrepancy is probably attributable to differences in the questions used in the two studies, since Rosenberg's inquiry was limited to elections in the homeroom class where the total number of elective positions was relatively limited. Viewed separately, the results of Table 3 present a familiar picture, namely, that positive self-regard is associated with an increase in the frequency with which students indicate having been elected to positions of leadership by their classmates.

With a fairly extensive social studies curriculum being offered in most Manila high schools, it is not unreasonable to assume that some classroom time is devoted to discussions of civics and social issues. In testing this assumption, the respondents were asked two related questions: (1) "How often are students in your high school given an opportunity to discuss and to debate government, civics, and

Table 3

Self-esteem and election to class or all-school political offices
(Manila high school students, 1970)

Number of offices held	Self-esteem		
	Low	Medium	High
None	69%	59%	52%
One	17	24	23
Two or more	14	17	25
Total	100%	100%	100%
Respondents (n)	190	605	446

Chi-square = 20.88, df = 4, p < 0.001

social issues?" and (2) "If there are discussions about government, civics and social issues, how often do you participate in them?"

An inspection of the data reveals, as hypothesized, that students with high self-esteem not only perceived greater opportunities for discussion of civics and social issues, but also recorded a higher incidence of participation in such discussions (Table 4 and 5). Although 58 percent of the adolescents with strong egos, in contrast to 35 percent with weak egos, declared they were "often" or "very often" afforded an opportunity to discuss and debate civic and social problems, only 41 and 27 percent, respectively, of the same respondents maintained that they engaged in these intellectual

Table 4

Self-esteem and perception of opportunity to discuss civic and social issues in school
(Manila high school students, 1974)

Perceived frequency of opportunity for discussion	Self-esteem		
	Low	Medium	High
Never/don't know	47%	21%	10%
Occasionally	18	30	32
Very often/often	35	49	58
Total	100%	100%	100%
Respondents (n)	190	613	461

Chi-square = 109.87, df = 4, p $<$ 0.001

Table 5

Self-esteem and participation in school discussions about civic and social issues
(Manila high school students, 1970)

Reported frequency of participation in discussions	Self-esteem		
	Low	Medium	High
Never/don't know	43%	21%	16%
Occasionally	30	46	43
Very often/often	27	33	41
Total	100%	100%	100%
Respondents (n)	189	612	458

Chi-square = 59.81, df = 4, p $<$ 0.001

exchanges more than occasionally. Nevertheless, the predicted correspondence between self-esteem and group participation is borne out, with individuals who possessed negative feelings about themselves taking little part in the discussions, while the notion that individuals with poor self-appraisals often feel too inadequate and too vulnerable to venture an opinion in a group context is bolstered by the large percentage of students with poor self-images who fell into the "Never/don't know" response category.

Whereas Coopersmith (1967: 82-84) and Rosenberg (1965: ch. 3) reported a modest relationship between the social-class backgrounds and the self-images of their respondents, a stronger correspondence was discovered between social class background and self-esteem among adolescent Manilans.[5] As Table 6 indicates, middle- and upper-class respondents evince higher levels of self-esteem, with 56 percent of the upper-class adolescents falling into the highest category of self-esteem, in contrast to 20 percent from the lower class. The 36-percent difference between the upper and lower class in·Manila is more than twice the difference found by Coopersmith and Rosenberg in their studies. This obviously raises the question of whether or not student participation in Manila is simply an artifact of social class rather than self-esteem.

Table 7 indicates a positive, though in some cases small and nonsignificant, correspondence in all three social classes between rising self-conceptualization and increasing participation in extracurricular activities and classroom political discussions, with self-esteem becoming more important to participatory behavior as one moves from the upper class to the lower class. However, upper-class adolescents tended on the average, regardless of their self-perceptions, to engage in social activities more than middle-and lower-class students. Given the sharp distinctions between the upper and lower classes in Philippine society, this finding was not particularly surprising. Clearly, children of the upper class, whatever their psychological disposition may be, learn quickly that they are better off than the vast majority of Filipinos, enjoy more opportunities for organized group participation and, according to Guthrie (1961: ch. 4), frequently come from household environments which encourage greater independence and self-expression than is typical for lower-class children. Under these circumstances, as Table 7 suggests, positive self-esteem becomes increasingly salient as a motivational factor in the participatory behavior of middle-and especially lower-class adolescent Manilans. Adolescents from the lower classes who possess positive self-images are therefore more likely to succeed in the competition for peer-group

Table 6

Social class and self-esteem
(Manila high school students, 1970)

Self-esteem	Social class		
	Lower	Medium	Upper
Low	24%	10%	7%
Medium	56	46	37
High	20	44	56
Total	100%	100%	100%
Respondents (n)	536	485	247

Chi-square = 130.46, df = 4, p $<$ 0.001

Table 7

Participatory behavior, by social class and self-esteem
(Manila high school students, 1970)

Behavior and level of participation	Lower class				Middle class				Upper class			
	Low	Medium	High	Signif.[a]	Low	Medium	High	Signif.[a]	Low	Medium	High	Signif.[a]
1. *Membership in clubs and organizations*												
None	83%	59%	34%	0.001	65%	41%	24%	0.001	28%	21%	9%	0.02
One or more	17	41	66		35	59	76		72	79	91	
Total n	120	292	105		46	216	215		18	91	137	
2. *Election to offices in clubs and organizations*												
None	81%	78%	64%	0.01	80%	68%	62%	n.s.	76%	69%	68%	n.s.
One or more	19	22	36		20	32	38		24	31	32	
Total n	123	292	107		46	215	208		17	89	136	
3. *Election to class or all-school political offices*												
None	74%	63%	48%	0.001	60%	57%	55%	n.s.	59%	52%	50%	n.s.
One or more	26	37	52		40	43	45		41	48	50	
Total n	124	298	107		47	217	208		17	90	130	
4. *Perception of the opportunity to discuss civic and social issues in school*												
Never/DK	51%	27%	17%		38%	16%	8%		39%	14%	8%	
Occasionally	17	32	39	0.001	21	31	31	0.001	17	24	26	0.01
Very often/often	32	40[b]	44		40	54	61		44	62	66	
Total n	123	299	109		47	222	214		18	92	137	
5. *Participation in school discussions about civic and social issues*												
Never/DK	46%	25%	22%		38%	20%	14%		35%	11%	15%	
Occasionally	28	43	45	0.001	32	49	42	0.001	29	47	42	0.05
Very often/often	26	32	32		30	31	44		35	42	43	
Total n	123	298	108		47	222	213		17	92	136	

[a]The chi-square test was used throughout.
[b]Because of rounding error, some percentages in subtables 4 and 5 do not add to 100.

leadership and classroom recognition than is the case for their less self-confident cohort co-members.

Summary and Conclusion

It is evident from the foregoing that Manila high school students with low self-esteem, especially those from the middle and lower classes, have only a modest impact, if any, on their social environments. They participate in fewer extracurricular clubs and organizations and are less frequently elected by their peers to positions of leadership within these social groups. A similar pattern is observable in class and all-school elections with those manifesting poor self-images being less often chosen to lead. Pre-adults with warped self-appraisals likewise tend to avoid the give-and-take of classroom debates and discussions concerning civic and social issues, preferring instead to listen and remain unnoticed. Thus, as Rosenberg has aptly observed (1965: 202), "Whether the group is formal or informal, voluntary or involuntary, the person with low self-esteem tends to be a relatively impotent social force."

It should be noted in conclusion, however, that fewer than 20 percent of the respondents fell into the lowest category of self-esteem, with most students holding medium to high self-images. In addition, almost 60 percent of the respondents indicated they belonged to one or more clubs and organizations, while 79 and 78 percent, respectively, of the students suggested that they were afforded some opportunity to discuss civic and social issues in school and that they participated at least occasionally in such discussions. Thus from the perspective of the Philippine political system, the findings generally paint a positive picture of the participatory orientation of the oncoming generation of Manila high school graduates.

Notes

1. A more detailed description of the study design is included in my doctoral dissertation (Youngblood 1972: 173-80) and in a latter article (Youngblood 1973).

2. The scale items were (1) I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others; (2) I feel that I have a number of good qualities; (3) All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure; (4) I am able to do things as well as most other people; (5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of; (6) I take a positive attitude toward myself; (7) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself; (8) I certainly feel useless at times; and (9) At times I think I am no good at all (Rosenberg 1965: 16-36, 305-07). The suitability of using the Rosenberg items in the Philippines as a measure of self-esteem was determined by consulting with Filipino informants and by pretesting the questions on a group of Quezon City high school students.

3. "Regular" refers to public schools in Manila requiring only an elementary diploma for entrance; "special" refers to public schools in Manila requiring an examination for entrance, and "elite" refers to private schools in the city that cater to children from the upper socioeconomic class.

4. Estimates on dropout rates in Manila are varied. One study reports that 36.5 percent of the school age population (7-25 years of age) were not attending school in 1965, while another study suggests that from 1963 to 1968 the average dropout rate for public elementary and high schools in Manila was 4 percent and 8 percent, respectively. See *Manila: Its needs and resources*, cited in Sicat (1970: 27); also see Division of City Schools, Manila (1969).

5. The social-class index was constructed from a combination of parental occupation and education.

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