

## Dimensions of Adolescent Alienation

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A review of the psychological, sociological and educational literature indicated that the various conceptualizations of "alienation" could be fitted into five tentative categories appearing to have considerable overlap. An item pool developed to represent these categories of alienation was screened by expert review and pilot testing in the 9th grade and then administered to 500 "normal" adolescents in 9th-grade classes in four diverse communities in Minnesota: a rural area, a suburban area, and working class and inner city areas of a large city. Factor analysis identified three coherent dimensions in student responses, which were labeled "Personal Incapacity," "Cultural Estrangement," and "Guidelessness." Simple cluster scores constructed to represent these dimensions had internal-consistency reliabilities of .80, .70, and .67 respectively. Patterns of significant differences shown by analyses of variance among groups defined by community type, socio-economic status, ability, and sex, compared well with hypothesized patterns; the few exceptions were tenable. The scales provide concrete measures of alienation that may enable more meaningful investigation of its incidence, correlates, and causes.

"Alienation" is one of the most frequently encountered concepts in social science. Indeed, the amorphous, global concept of alienation has been used as a catchword to explain nearly every

kind of aberrant behavior from drug abuse to political demonstrations. Although many scholars have discussed constructs that can be loosely grouped as alienation, few have attempted to measure it. Clark (1959), Gamson (1961), and Horton and Thompson (1962) defined alienation as a feeling of powerlessness. Nettler (1957) and Keniston (1965) conceptualized alienation as a feeling of estrangement from American society and culture. In an attempt at synthesis, Olsen (1969) subsumed all the descriptions of alienation under three dimensions: social isolation, normlessness, and powerlessness.

The work of these investigators, proceeding for the most part independently, has focused on adults and given little explicit consideration to adolescents. Three major methodological problems limit the utility of the extant scales for use with adolescents in contemporary American society. First, the available scales often were validated with limited and atypical populations. For example, Clark's (1959) scale was developed for and used only on members of an agricultural cooperative. Dean's (1961) widely used scale was validated with an adult sample in Ohio.

A second weakness with available alienation scales is their lack of control for a response set to agree (or disagree) with almost all statements.

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Generally all the items are stated in the same negative direction with no reversed items. This is a weakness that is especially important for adolescents who take many tests of all kinds and who may be unconscientious in marking a test that "doesn't count." Frequent reversal of polarity of items may keep attention high and discourage stereotyped item marking as well as neutralize a sincere response set. Even if it does not prevent careless marking, a mixture of reversed polarity items will cause long runs of identically marked items to put a student's score in the middle of the distribution, where it will have minimal effects on the analysis.

Finally, as demonstrated in a recent survey of alienation measures (Mackey, 1973), nearly all the available scales were developed in another era. In a period of emerging counter-cultures that use alienation as a fundamental precept, this is unacceptable; new eras require new instruments. In one of the few instances in which alienation scales have been used with adolescents, Clarke and Levine (1971) used a four-item measure to assess alienation in high school seniors. Their short scale was based upon a conceptualization that defined alienation as political estrangement. Besides the limitation of this narrow range of meaning, seniors, at the outer range of adolescence, cannot be considered representative of adolescents in general.

In a study of institutionalized adolescent delinquents (Allen & Sandhu, 1967), the investigators report the development of a fourteen-item scale to measure alienation. The conceptualization of alienation in this study was narrow, the scale was brief, and the population—adolescents in prison—was atypical.

The major purpose of the inquiry reported here was to structure empirically the several loosely defined domains commonly conceived as alienation, first through correlational study of the interrelationships of components, and then through dimensions of discrimination among social groups.

### Method

The study consisted of five parts. First, a set of

distinct descriptions of "alienation" was distilled from the literature. Second, a series of propositions regarding sub-groups of alienated adolescents was deduced from the intensional definition. Third, a pool of Likert-type items to measure the dimensions was developed. Fourth, the item pool was administered to a large and diverse sample of early adolescents and the dimensions of response analyzed to provide an empirical redefinition of adolescent alienation. Fifth, the construct validity of the dimension measures was investigated by comparing the pattern of group differences to the pattern expected from theory.

### Conceptualization of Alienation

The first task of the study was to posit a preliminary description of adolescent alienation. A survey of the educational, psychological, and sociological literature suggested that nearly all the attitudes scholars talked about when they described alienation could be subsumed under five categories. The well-known definitions developed by Seeman (1959) initially served as organizers, but we modified them considerably for application to adolescents. The five tentative and obviously somewhat overlapping categories in the adolescent alienation construct were:

1. *Powerlessness.* Powerlessness is the feeling of being unable to influence the forces that affect the adolescent's chances for success in life. It refers to a lack of influence over social institutions and forces. At its root, powerlessness is a feeling of drift or helplessness in an unresponsive universe where decisions are made by caprice and where luck is a primary determining agent. This kind of alienation relates to what Coleman called sense of control of environment (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld & York, 1966).

2. *Role estrangement.* Role estrangement is the adolescent's sense of being related to solely through social roles (e.g., as a clerk or a student). In this dissociation from his role, he perceives that his "authentic self" is not valued but only his contrived performances. Role estrangement includes the belief that rewards of all kinds

come from extrinsic activities, that intrinsic rewards are not important. Etzioni's *The Active Society* (1968) provides the clearest contemporary discussion of this kind of alienation.

3. *Meaninglessness.* Meaninglessness is the perception by the adolescent that he cannot predict what will happen because he lacks adequate knowledge, and, furthermore, that it is impossible for him to acquire that knowledge because the world is so complex. To resolve meaninglessness, adolescents often adopt simplistic solutions to life problems (Seeman, 1959).

4. *Guidelessness.* Guidelessness is a disproportion between the adolescent's desires and his means for achieving these desires. It is the feeling that social rules are either ineffective or unrealistic. The guideless adolescent feels a resentment toward the society that fails to provide him with sufficient opportunity to satisfy his desires. The feelings inherent in guidelessness are represented by a long tradition in social theory extending from Emil Durkheim to Robert Merton (Olsen, 1969).

5. *Cultural estrangement.* Cultural estrangement is an attitudinal state where the adolescent voluntarily separates himself from the predominant value system. A culturally estranged adolescent may have full knowledge of these values and the means to achieve them, but he explicitly rejects them. These adolescents often actively withdraw from any involvement in the pursuit of success, money, possessions, and other "middle class" goals. In a series of brilliant studies, Keniston (1965) provided the foundation for this domain.

### Hypothesized Group Differences

According to the theoretical contexts in which these concepts were formulated, and consistent with previous research, different groups of people would have markedly different likelihoods of having these forms of alienation. One set of expectations can be stated fairly simply: Because he would be more likely actually to have adequate knowledge, skills, role models and encouragement, the more advantaged adolescent

in terms of ability, socio-economic status and community type would be expected to feel *less* of a sense of powerlessness, role estrangement, meaninglessness and guidelessness than the less advantaged student; but as studies conducted during the past decade (Westby & Braungart, 1966; Flacks, 1970) reveal, because their privileged status allows them the luxury of "deviance," students of higher socioeconomic status are more inclined to develop a critical stance toward unconventional beliefs than their less advantaged peers. Thus, the same conditions both encourage alienation and discourage cultural estrangement.

It is important to emphasize that our expectations were not that "disadvantaged" groups would be *globally* more alienated, but that different groups would show distinctive *patterns* of alienation. The specific hypothesized deviation from a global alienation was high cultural estrangement for advantaged youth, who would show low alienation in other domains. Other distinctive patterns were to be determined empirically.

In order to compare measured alienation patterns to these suppositions, several measures of advantage were chosen as independent variables. Perceived academic ability was chosen because the relation between ability and alienation was one of the salient findings of *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Coleman, et al., 1966). Other research has also documented the relationship between ability and alienation (Seeman, 1966; Seeman & Evans, 1962). Measures of socioeconomic status were used because as Templeton (1966) reported:

In the case of every piece of research bearing on this relationship, social status was found to be negatively related to alienation (p. 253).

Community was included because several studies document a relationship between community type and adolescent social attitudes. Adolescents in more advantaged communities are encouraged to be active and are socialized to believe that they have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives; in less affluent

communities, the development is disproportionately smaller (Patrick, 1969). Finally, sex identity was chosen as an independent variable because of the assumption that adolescents of both sexes are similar with regard to their attitudinal development in these domains, and that there would be no significant sex differences in valid measures of alienation.

#### Construction of a Representative Item Pool

The item pool was created from a variety of sources that included other attitude scales, the underground press, rock music lyrics, and interviews with adolescents. The conceptualization of adolescent alienation, however, guided the selection of all items. Each of 94 Likert-type items was identified with one of the five domains of adolescent alienation, and there were approximately 18 items for each of the five domains. A

sample item from each of the five domains is given in Table 1.

To establish content validity, the item pool was reviewed by five individuals with experience in attitude scale construction. The experts were asked, subsequent to reading the conceptualization scheme, to indicate whether the items tentatively identified with each of the domains were accurate operational exemplars of the domains. If more than one of the experts failed to endorse the placement of an item, the item was eliminated from the set. Twenty-one items were eliminated by this screening, including six from powerlessness, five from role estrangement, three from meaninglessness, two from guidelessness, and five from cultural estrangement. These items were satisfactorily categorizable and representative of domains commonly characterized as alienation, although this in itself does not constitute evidence for the psychological struc-

Table 1  
Representative Item Statements from  
94-Item Alienation Pool

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Powerlessness:

"By actively involving myself in political discussions in school, I can contribute to making a better world." \*

Role Estrangement:

"People get ahead by using pull, and not because of what they know."

Meaninglessness:

"Most people know what to do with their lives." \*

Guidelessness:

"I seldom feel that I have a chance to get what I want."

Cultural Estrangement:

"I'm not interested in adjusting to American society."

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\* Reversed item.

ture of alienation.

Simultaneously, the readability of the items in the pool was determined by the administration of the item set to a group of 145 ninth-grade students. Any item was eliminated that five per cent or more of the students indicated they could not understand. Eleven items were identified as unsatisfactory by this criterion; five of these were items already eliminated by the expert screening. Thus, twenty-seven items were eliminated by the expert and student screenings, leaving sixty-seven items for statistical analysis. Each of the five domains was represented by approximately 13 retained items.

### Subjects

The student sample consisted of 500 adolescents enrolled in grades nine and ten in public schools in four Minnesota communities selected to represent the spectrum of schools in Minnesota. The schools included two from different areas of a large city, one from a suburban area and one from a rural community. (For want of a more convenient term these different areas will be referred to as communities, although only the rural group clearly constitutes a community in the full sense of the word.) Of the students in the sample, 242 were males and 258 were females. The student sample included 100, 60, 50, and 30 percent of the rural, suburban, working-class, and inner-city schools, respectively; selection was made from among the classes of social studies teachers who were interested in cooperating with the research project. All the classes were untracked and heterogeneous in their particular schools. The students, by virtue of being at least marginally successful in public schools, were thus not representative of the full range of alienation in adolescents.

### Measures

The measures employed in the study included those derived from the adolescent alienation item pool, which are described in the analysis section, and five independent variables, corresponding to the sociological determinants hy-

pothesized under the conceptualization. Perceived Ability is the student's self-rating of his ability as a student, as "above average," "average," or "below average." Sex is the student's self-identification as male or female. Parent Occupation is the student's report of the occupation of the head of household, classified according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census system (1970), and trichotomized into levels, subsequently categorized "professional," "skilled labor," or "unskilled labor." Parent Education is the student's report of the highest level for the head of household, categorized as "attended or graduated from college," "graduated from high school," or "attended grade school." The Community categories are "suburban," "city working class," "inner city" or "rural." U.S. Bureau of Census income data (1970) was used to rank the communities on affluence (in the above order). Clearly, these variables are somewhat redundant indicators of the general domain of socioeconomic status (SES), but they were separately retained to determine which aspects of SES were most relevant to expression of alienation.

### Analysis and Results

The task was to seek structure in the amorphous concepts of alienation by analyzing responses to items representing five rather loosely defined domains found in the literature. The analysis had three stages: first, to identify the underlying dimensionality of adolescent alienation through factor analysis of responses to the item pool; second, to construct simple item-cluster scores to approximate the factors; and third, to ascertain the discriminant validity of the cluster scores by comparing their relationships to the independent variables with expected relationships.

Because the results of each stage of the analysis determined the details of the next stage, the analysis and results are presented below in an integrated format.

### Identification of Empirical Dimensions

The primary function of the factor analysis



was to determine whether the initial five domains could be represented by independent dimensions or, if not, how the domains would combine into a smaller number of factors. Further, factor analysis was used to determine tentative clusters of intercorrelated items and to eliminate items that showed no strong relationship to any of the dimensions.

Principal components analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the entire sample of 500 subjects. Although six components were identified by the criterion of eigenvalue 1.0, accounting for 74% of the total variance among the 67 items, rotations of the first 2, 3, 4, and 5 components had well separated eigenvalues. The "scree" criterion advocated by Cattell (1966) suggested that a three factor solution would be interpretable.

After prolonged reflection on the loadings and the conceptual meaning of the items, it was decided that the varimax three-factor set did indeed provide the best characterization of response patterns; the set of high-loading items for the three rotated factors was congruent with the theoretical structure of alienation, while the patterns of loading for the sets of two, four, five or six rotated factors were more difficult to interpret.<sup>1</sup> The first three factors accounted for 55% of the total variance.

Two of the factors were congruent with the cultural estrangement and guidelessness conceptions; the highest-loading items on factors 2 and 3 were those initially identified as belonging to these concepts. The first factor seemed to be an amalgam of the hypothesized concepts of meaninglessness and powerlessness. The factor analysis indicated that the conception of role estrangement was not empirically coherent; the items associated with it had little in common with each other or with other item sets, and this concept was thus abandoned.

The first factor accounted for over 25 % of the

total variance in the item responses and loaded heavily on items that began with or included personal pronouns. More particularly, all the items in this factor tapped the adolescent's perception of his competence in knowing about and dealing with his world. Since this dimension related to the individual's feeling of personal effectiveness or capacity, it was named "Personal Incapacity."

The second factor accounted for 15% of the total variance. The items were indicators of a rejection of middle class values. Dominant in this dimension was a rejection of a perceived overemphasis on materialistic values. Although in two instances the items asked the adolescent to pass judgment on the general state of American society, the items were mainly attitudes about specific elements such as school, dress, success and the importance of social status. This factor was thus given the name of the initial conception, "Cultural Estrangement."

The third factor accounted for 15% of the total variance. The items in the factor reflected an agreement that society fosters infinite desires but provides limited means for satisfying these desires. Items in the factor measured rejection of not the culturally prescribed goals but the socially acceptable means of achieving the goals. This factor, too, was named for the initial conception, "Guidelessness."

### Construction of Reliable Cluster Scores

For convenience in administering and scoring the instrument and in explaining the meaning of the dimensions, an attempt was made to represent the three factor dimensions by simple cluster scores. The adequacy of the cluster scores was assessed by: (1) how large their internal consistencies were; (2) how exclusively items related to only one of the three scores; and (3) how small the cluster intercorrelations were. Although there was nothing in the theory that would preclude correlations among different forms of alienation, the usefulness of the scores for emphasizing the multidimensionality of alienation would require a fair degree of independence.

<sup>1</sup>A list of items, the correlation matrix and factor matrices, are available from the authors for those readers inclined to their own prolonged reflection.

Table 2  
Sample Items and Item-Scale Correlations

Scale and Items	Item-Scale r		
	Personal Incapacity	Cultural Estrangement	Guidelessness
<b>Personal Incapacity</b>			
19. The problems of life are sometimes too big for me.	.52	.01	.12
25. It is hard to think clearly about most issues because the world is changing so fast.	.59	.09	.26
34. More and more I feel helpless in the face of what is happening in the world today. <sup>a</sup>	.55	.01	.25
<b>Cultural Estrangement</b>			
2. It is important to act and dress for the occasion. <sup>b</sup>	.13	.51	.08
8. The school is most important as a place to build social relationships. <sup>b</sup>	.12	.48	.07
17. I'm not interested in adjusting to American society.	.17	.54	.18
<b>Guidelessness</b>			
6. Cheating in school is all right if you don't get caught.	.10	.06	.47
20. There's little use for me to vote, since one vote doesn't count for very much anyway.	.18	.03	.51
21. It is all right to get around the law if you don't actually break it.	.15	.08	.49

<sup>a</sup> Item borrowed from Powerlessness Scale (Neal & Seeman, 1964). <sup>b</sup> Reverse-scored item.

Beginning with simple sums of items that had factor loadings of .35 or higher, items were added or deleted to optimize conditions (1), (2), and (3) above. At each step, Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficient of internal consistency, cluster-item correlations, and cluster intercorrelations were recomputed. Twenty-nine items comprised the initial clusters, and 13 more items were successfully incorporated; one item of the initial 29 was omitted. The final clusters comprised 41 items: 14 in Personal Incapacity, 15 in Cultural Estrangement, and 12 in Guidelessness. Representative items from the final clusters are displayed in Table 2.

Internal-consistency reliabilities of the final cluster scores were .80 for Personal Incapacity, .70 for Cultural Estrangement, and .67 for Guidelessness. The correlation between Cultural Estrangement and the other two scores was low: .03 with Personal Incapacity and  $-.11$  with Guidelessness. The correlation of Personal Incapacity and Guidelessness was a moderate .43.

The .43 correlation of Personal Incapacity and Guidelessness clusters was somewhat higher than expected but still low enough to argue that the two factors measure different dimensions of adolescent alienation. Since both dimensions relate to alienation that is essentially involuntary and to the adolescent's response to his personalized experience, it is reasonable that some of the feelings inherent in each of the two dimensions are common to the other.

(Incidentally, in spite of the persuasive thrust to the factor analytic approach, the authors satisfied their curiosity by calculating internal consistencies for the five clusters corresponding to the initial domain identification of the items. They were reassuringly low.)

### Group Differences

Because of correlations among the five independent variables, it was impractical to run five-way factorial analyses of variance. Instead, one-way analyses of variance were run on each of the five independent variables; these were run separately for each of the three dimensions of aliena-

tion as criteria, giving 15 one-way analyses of variance in all. The results are displayed in Table 3. Within-group variances are substantially the same across groups in all 15 analyses, as is evident in Table 3; there was only one instance of significant heterogeneity of variance (Bartlett-Box F test,  $p < .05$ ), which resulted from unusually consistent and low Cultural Estrangement responses of students in the rural community.

Although a multivariate test comprising all three criteria was not explicitly made, the univariate results indicate a clearly significant multivariate relation: of the fifteen one-way analyses of variance that were performed, seven showed significant differences between groups at the  $p < .001$  level, and four more at the  $p < .05$  level; and two of the four insignificant differences had been hypothesized not to be significant.

Table 4 summarizes the significant differences among groups and indicates where there were discrepancies from the hypothesized group rankings. In each case the discrepancy can be characterized as a single shift in order of one group to an unexpectedly extreme position.

*Perceived ability.* The differences among the ability groups in Personal Incapacity and Guidelessness were significant at the  $p < .001$  level in the hypothesized directions. Adolescents who reported high ability as students also had feelings of efficacy in the world outside the school; these adolescents indicated that they can know and influence their social worlds. They felt, furthermore, that the rules that guide them are understandable and that others are not getting more than their share by breaking the rules. The differences in Cultural Estrangement among the three ability groups were significant at the  $p < .01$  level but not in precisely the direction that had been predicted: the average-ability students were less culturally estranged from middle class values than were above average students, but low-ability students were even more estranged.

*Parent occupation.* The differences in Personal Incapacity among the three occupational groups were significant at the  $p < .01$  level, in the hypothesized direction. The differences in



Table 3  
Group Statistics on Alienation Scales and F values for One-way Analyses of Variance

Category and Group	Personal Incapacity			Cultural Estrangement			Guidelessness					
	Mean	SD	N	F	Mean	SD	N	F	Mean	SD	N	F
Perceived Ability												
Above average	34.93	6.61	177		36.21	5.64	173		23.40	4.57	177	
Average	36.88	6.33	273	9.88***	34.90	5.99	266	4.79**	26.08	5.15	273	20.26***
Below average	40.42	7.16	24		38.14	5.68	21		28.13	5.25	24	
Parent Occupation												
Professional	34.41	6.75	145		35.67	5.86	138		23.58	4.85	144	
Skilled labor	37.07	6.37	230	9.24***	35.47	6.02	226	0.04	25.51	5.18	230	12.40***
Unskilled labor	37.43	6.34	99		35.53	5.73	96		26.71	4.92	100	
Parent Education												
College	34.63	6.69	144		35.64	6.02	136		23.96	5.01	142	
High school	36.82	6.53	276	8.74***	35.74	5.81	271	1.85	25.43	4.97	279	8.43***
Grade school												
Community												
Suburban	35.20	6.61	312		35.77	5.94	299		24.63	5.03	312	
Working class city	37.67	5.92	85		36.71	6.27	84		25.82	4.91	85	
Inner city	38.40	5.80	50	11.44***	34.50	5.34	50	6.36***	27.10	5.74	50	4.25**
Rural	41.30	6.20	26		31.35	2.43	26		26.00	5.25	26	
Sex												
Male	36.25	6.24	228		35.00	5.97	224		25.82	5.20	229	
Female	36.47	6.94	244	0.13	36.07	5.82	234	3.75*	24.57	5.00	243	7.06**

Note.--Numbers of subjects in groups are those for which no scale items were missing.

\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Table 4  
Correspondence between Hypothesized and Actual Group Ranks

Category and Group	Personal Incapacity		Cultural Estrangement		Guidelessness	
	Hyp.	Act.	Hyp.	Act.	Hyp.	Act.
Perceived Ability						
Above average	3	3	1	2	3	3
Average	2	2	2	3	2	2
Below average	1	1	3	1 --- too high	1	1
Parent Occupation						
Professional	3	3	1	x	3	3
Skilled labor	2	2	2	x	2	2
Unskilled labor	1	1	3	x	1	1
Parent Education						
College	3	3	1	x	3	3
High school	2	2	2	x	2	2
Grade school	1	1	3	x	1	1
Community						
Suburban	4	4	1	2	4	4
Working class city	3	3	2	1 --- too high	3	3
Inner city	2	2	3	3	2	1 --- too high
Rural	1	1	4	4	1	2
Sex						
Male	x	x	x	x	x	2
Female	x	x	x	x	x	1 --- too high

Note. --- Non-significant hypothesized and actual group differences are indicated by x's.

Guidelessness among the three occupational groups were significant at the  $p < .001$  level, also in the hypothesized direction. While the mean scores on Cultural Estrangement revealed slight differences in the direction of the hypothesized outcome—the higher the socioeconomic status, the higher the cultural estrangement—the differences were meager and not statistically significant.

**Parent education.** The differences in Personal Incapacity and Guidelessness among the three educational groups were significant at the  $p < .001$  level in the hypothesized direction. The results supported the proposition that adolescents from homes where educational level of the head of the household is high were less subject to feelings of guidelessness than were adolescents with less educated parents. The differences in Cultural Estrangement among the three educational groups, although essentially in the hypothesized direction, were not significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

**Community.** The differences in Personal Incapacity among the community groups were significant at the  $p < .001$  level in the hypothesized order: the higher the average income of a community, the less likely the adolescents were to feel personal incapacity. The differences in Guidelessness among the four community groups were significant at the  $p < .01$  level. The mean differences showed that the more advantaged the community in terms of average income, the less the adolescents in the community felt guideless, with one exception: the adolescents in the inner-city neighborhoods felt the effect of guidelessness somewhat more than did the more advantaged adolescents. The differences among the adolescents in the four communities were significant at the  $p < .001$  level on Cultural Estrangement. The group means were in the order of average income with one exception: adolescents from the working class were more culturally estranged than any of the other three groups. The standard deviation for the rural group on Cultural Estrangement was less than half of the other community groups. Although the rural group also reported the least

cultural estrangement, their scores were still well above the minimum possible score for the scale; so the small spread of responses cannot be attributed merely to a floor effect.

Although communities did not fall strictly in line in order of affluence on the three scales, the overall alienation pattern still shows the community “distances” ordered by affluence. Figure 1 shows the community group means plotted in a three-dimensional space defined by the three alienation scales. Even though the metric is somewhat arbitrary, it is obvious that communities closest in affluence are also closest in position.

**Sex.** There was no significant difference between the sexes on Personal Incapacity and Cultural Estrangement. This was as predicted. The difference between the scores on Guidelessness, however, was significant at the  $p < .01$  level. Females felt a greater disparity between their ambitions and the means to achieve them.

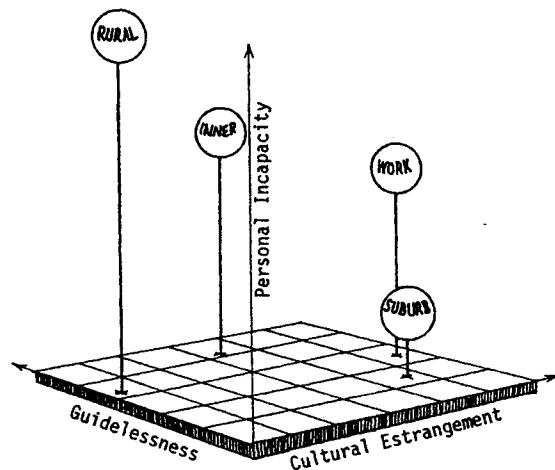
**Discussion**

The analysis provides substantial confirmation for the construct validity of the three dimensions of adolescent alienation. The group differ-

Figure 1

Pattern of Community Group Means on Three Dimensions of Adolescent Alienation

(The range shown for each dimension is approximately  $\pm 0.5$  SD to either side of the pooled grand mean.)



ences for Personal Incapacity were as expected; the differences for Guidelessness were as expected, with two minor exceptions; differences for Cultural Estrangement were as expected, with some distinct exceptions.

*Discrepancies in guidelessness.* Both males and inner-city adolescents were unexpectedly high on Guidelessness. The sex difference might be explained by the differences in the process of identity formation in early adolescence: for boys the key developmental task of this period is the establishment of independence; for girls the process of identity is less discontinuous, concerned more with deepening extant relationships (Elkind, 1971). (Perhaps this difference will fade as the new role directions fostered by the women's liberation movement permeate adolescent consciousness.)

The reversal of order for the two communities highest on Guidelessness might be explained by a truly greater complexity of a metropolitan area where the rules may appear highly ambiguous to adolescents; the simpler rural environment is probably easier to interpret.

*Discrepancies in cultural estrangement.* The construct validation for Cultural Estrangement was not as clear cut as for the other two dimensions. As expected there were significant differences among the ability groups and community groups, but not precisely in the predicted order.

Contrary to the initial conjecture, low-ability students were more culturally estranged than either of the higher-ability groups. This is understandable if Cultural Estrangement is considered to be essentially a measure of lack of adjustment to middle-class values. The superior student who is secure in his ability as a student is apt to develop the intellectually critical stance toward middle-class values inherent in Cultural Estrangement, while low-ability students are inclined to reject cultural dictums that are cast in terms of values and opportunities that they feel are beyond their reach.

The communities fell in the expected order on Cultural Estrangement except that the highest level of alienation was found for the working-

class community rather than for the suburban community. This deviation from the simplistic "advantage" proposition is not unduly dissonant because the working class has recently had special cause for this type of alienation. During the past decade the working class in America has been alternately ignored and caricatured. All around them, people of the working class see change and ferment; groups above and below them in the social structure are seen obtaining advantages, while the working class is ignored and derided (Simon, Gagnon, & Carns, 1969). In sum, members of the working class increasingly seem to feel poorly served by the institutions of American society. Although the rural group had an unusually small spread of scores on Cultural Estrangement, they showed no such difference for the other two scales; apparently rural students shared a highly uniform perception of their cultural identity.

The lack of significant difference among socioeconomic status groups, defined by parent education and parent occupation, was surprising. Perhaps it can be understood if the historical context of the late 1960's and early 1970's is considered. That short but vivid period represented an aberration in American social history. Inner city and campus riots, political assassinations, and especially the Vietnam War left indelible marks on the era (Yankelovich, 1974). This maelstrom of events may have combined to mold the attitudes of adolescents at all socioeconomic levels in a similar fashion. With the winding down of the war, the situation may be reverting to normal. In fact, preliminary analysis of more recent data (Mackey, 1975) indicates that class differences more in line with those predicted are now appearing.

### Conclusions

The inquiry has sought to define alienation more precisely by developing and validating a set of attitude scales to measure dimensions of alienation in adolescents. Analysis demonstrated that adolescent alienation could be characterized by three independent dimensions,

which were measurable with an efficiently administrable and easily interpretable set of three scales. The three scales, each comprising about 15 items, are: Personal Incapacity, the feeling of not having the skills needed to succeed; Cultural Estrangement, the rejection of the predominant criteria for success; and Guidelessness, the rejection of socially acceptable means of achieving goals. Patterns of significant group differences were substantially the same as had been hypothesized, except for Cultural Estrangement. Even there, the exceptions could be accounted for tenably. (Some deviation from the expected pattern is entirely tolerable in the construct validation of scales; if the precise pattern of alienation were already predictable, there would be little reason to measure it.)

Greater facility in measuring alienation should lead to : (1) expansion of research to dysfunctionally alienated groups (which could provide further validation for the instrument); (2) identification of groups or individuals that could benefit from special instruction or counseling; (3) evaluation of school and community programs, including differential effects on groups with different alienation patterns; (4) correlation with general climate of schools and institutions (apart from curriculum or service content) as measured by such instruments as the Learning Environment Inventory (Anderson, 1970) or the Minnesota School Affect Assessment (Ahlgren, Johnson, & Johnson 1973); (5) correlation with current behavior and, subsequently, behavioral prediction in longitudinal studies; (6) investigation of the etiology of alienation, perhaps through correlation with traits such as those measured by the MMPI, the Study of Values (Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1960), the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (Cattell, 1973), objective derivatives of Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Scale (Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz, & Anderson, 1974), and actual measures of ability.

The authors have already begun investigations in some of these directions. In general, with the greater clarity afforded by the scales in the definition of adolescent alienation, researchers may be able to investigate more meaningfully its incidence, correlates and causes.

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