

AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENT CONCEPTIONS OF IRELAND

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The affective development of the student's conception of Ireland poses a problem for educators. For while it is frequently mentioned as an educational objective we are still unsure of its real nature. It is argued here that there is no comparable problem in the cognitive domain. A psychological theory of affective development is presented and the problem of evaluation is discussed. In the final section of the paper 100 essays are analyzed to produce a scale of affective development that could be used in large scale exploratory research.

Ireland, in one sense or another, is frequently brought up in our second level schools. This is obvious enough in the case of subjects like History and Geography, Irish, and Irish literature, from time to time it would be true also for other subjects, such as Art or Civics. If we think of these subjects collectively, and to the extent that they expose students to some aspect of Ireland, physical, historical, or cultural, we can say that they share a single objective to develop the student's conception of Ireland. It is the nature of this objective which I wish to discuss here.

COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT

A *conception* of Ireland can be taken loosely to mean all the things which a particular student thinks and feels about Ireland. We need to say 'thinks *and* feels' because it is generally accepted that a country and its culture call for *understanding and* appreciation, and that the two are not the same. Even so, the notion of appreciation raises several anxieties. It will suggest brainwashing to some, and sentimentality to others. And it poses a formidable problem of assessment. It would be a sound instinct therefore to steer well clear of appreciation.

Yet there is no getting away from the phenomenon itself. I am not aware of a single educationalist who denies that appreciation is distinct from comprehension and an educational objective in its own right. This

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is true even of subjects, such as mathematics, where there would be a good case for saying that the only valid appreciation was the variety which showed itself in comprehension. In the practical management of the classroom also, teachers feel that appreciation is a distinctive attitude, that it should be encouraged, and that it is by no means tied to levels of comprehension. For these reasons therefore, the student's conception of Ireland is said to contain both cognitive and affective components.

By a *development* in the student's conception of Ireland is meant a transition from lower to higher levels of functioning. In order to study development in the cognitive component we could use a model such as Bloom's (1), with its well known levels. The six levels are (i) Knowledge the student retains some information on Ireland, and can make correct statements about it. (ii) Comprehension the student understands these statements well enough to paraphrase them and expand on them a little. (iii) Application the student can use this information in order to assimilate new material on Ireland. (iv) Analysis the student can break down a body of material on Ireland according to some of its underlying ideas. (v) Synthesis the student can assemble materials on Ireland according to some underlying ideas. (vi) Evaluation the student is aware of the additional problem of validity in an overall view of Ireland. The scale runs from a bare recall of information up to a kind of intellectual mastery which shows itself in improvisation and informed criticism. It is possible to apply these levels to almost any situation in which students are trying to improve their understanding of Ireland. For example, O'Connor (6) has used them to study students' grasp of events in Irish history.

In principle there is no reason why we should not try to do something similar for affective development. And in fact Bloom and others (2, 5) have proposed five levels, which again are applied here to the topic of Ireland by way of illustration. (i) Receiving the student is at least willing to take in some materials on Ireland. (ii) Responding the student participates more actively, wants to know more about Ireland, and takes trouble to find out. (iii) Valuing the student sees some positive aspects of Ireland and is able to explain and defend them. (iv) Organization valued aspects of Ireland are organized and structured, in particular, derived values are distinguished from basic values. (v) Characterization the student is able to articulate the philosophy of life which is peculiar to Ireland. These levels, like their cognitive counterparts, have been widely applied and no doubt they could also be put to good use in a study of affective development in students' conceptions of their own country.

It is well, however, to reflect on the differences between these two scales, the cognitive and the affective. For the fact that plausible levels can be identified, labelled and operationalized in both cases conceals a huge gulf between them. The cognitive levels are securely nested in a very precise theory of development which, at least in its general outline, commands almost universal acceptance in cognitive psychology, in the philosophy of mind, and in common sense. The operations it encompasses, recalling, comprehending, applying, analyzing, etc., are all familiar and can be tightly defined over a wide range of materials. Indeed they have all been programmed in computer simulation of cognitive processes. In addition, the theory of development into which they are combined is also virtually beyond question. There is simply no denying that comprehension demands retention and goes beyond it, that application demands comprehension and goes beyond it, and so on. Bloom's cognitive levels are therefore built on firm foundations.

But his affective levels can command no such support. There are no theories of affective development which are generally accepted. More basically still, we do not even have any clear conceptions of the elements and operations which should be included in them. We can suggest some, as Bloom suggests 'responding' and 'valuing'. And we can suggest a general pattern of development for them, as Bloom has suggested increasing internal differentiation. But whereas Bloom's cognitive levels take us back to theories we already fully accept, his affective levels are probes into the unknown.

The probes, of course, are necessary, and I will make some of my own shortly. But it is necessary also to be aware of the theoretical vacuum in which we are working. Any approach will demand that theoretical terms such as 'responding' and 'valuing' be operationalized and so tied to observation. But they must be tied, at the same time, into a general theory of affective development. Otherwise we finish up with theoretical terms dangling from the admittedly 'objective' phenomena on which they are defined, but failing to make any statement on the nature of affective development itself.

In the next section I will outline a theory of affective development similar in many ways to Bloom's. This will be followed by an empirical section in which the theory is partially operationalized.

FOUR LEVELS OF AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT

The following four levels of affective development are taken from Dabrowski (3) and are illustrated here by the kind of written statements which students make in essays on Ireland

- (i) *Unreflective attachment* Attachment is expressed unselfconsciously in the form of positive statements about the external features of Ireland
- (ii) *Ambivalent attachment* With the discovery that attachment to one's country is partly an accident of birth, statements about Ireland become self conscious and defensive Attachment sometimes switches to indifference or hostility But the external features of Ireland still dominate the student's conception
- (iii) *Moral evaluation* Attachment is felt to be something which Ireland must earn by the behaviour of its people Consequently it is expressed sometimes as a commitment to what Ireland *could* be, and sometimes as a rejection of what it *is*
- (iv) *Personal identification* Building on the ideas of the previous stage, the student tries to isolate a distinctive ideal of Irishness in personal experience These levels are illustrated in the four essays which follow The students received no instructions except to write what they felt to be important about Ireland There was a time limit of 20 minutes

The following essay illustrates the first level of unreflective attachment

Ireland is a very nice country with plenty of nice green land The majority of people are farmers The weather in Ireland is normal Not too hot or too cold Irish is rarely spoken except in the West There are lots of rivers, mountains and lakes There are no wild animals such as lions, tigers, etc The majority of the people are Christian There are thirty two counties and four provinces Many tourists come to Ireland in the Summer We have to import some of our goods but others we supply ourselves, such as milk, butter, cheese etc Ireland is noted for famous carpets, some of the best in Europe We export carpets, meat and some other things None of the land is wasted In the bogs the turf is collected and then trees are planted to make it look nice There are many cities and in Belfast there is a huge shipyard Most of the people are friendly and help each other in many ways The land is fertile and is used for cows In the mountains there are many sheep There is a lot of history about Ireland as well We used to be ruled by England and so lived very poorly

(Boy, 12)

This essay is dominated by positive statements about the external environment of Ireland. There is no need for the writer to say specifically that he likes Ireland: this is taken for granted.

In the next essay, however, the writer's attachment to Ireland is the first thing mentioned, and the rest of the essay is in defense of it. It represents the second level of ambivalent attachment.

I like Ireland because I have lived here for a long time. The people from other countries think it is a horrible place to live, they won't even come over on a holiday because they are afraid they will get bombed up or shot. But it is not like that all over the country. They don't think that we export goods and other things to their country for them. I am glad I live here because if I lived in England I bet I wouldn't like it because it is very built up and there are a lot of factories puffing smoke. And if I lived in a hot country I would be afraid of an earthquake or something like that, and nothing like that happens here. We are an agricultural country, we export a lot of goods. We produce some good cattle. (Girl, 13)

The writer is reflecting on her attachment, not just expressing it. She is aware that her views of Ireland are not shared by everybody. This makes her position like a personal choice, and so she defends it. Ireland itself however remains as it was in the first essay: an external, physical reality. Even the bombs and bullets in the North are probably to be taken mostly as an environmental problem, like smoke or earthquakes. The people have yet to come clearly into focus.

In the next essay, which represents the third level of moral evaluation, the standards to be met by Ireland have become internal, moral ones.

Ireland is a nation of people who are basically friendly, or are known to be so in international circles, but I would not entirely agree. I think that Irish people can be very self-centred or county-centred. Look at the divisions the Irish have created for themselves, and bitter hate has grown into the people, in the North. They try to make each other inferior, e.g., the city people continually call each other superior to those who live in rural areas — 'culchies'. When at home in Ireland the Irish have a tendency not to work too hard, but when they emigrate they are renowned for their efforts, the reason for this is they have to prove themselves. Many foreigners, especially Americans, have a very amusing

view of Ireland. I heard for a fact that some of them believe we have pigs in the parlour, half doors and leprechauns but nobody could possibly blame them for this belief because any souvenir brought from Ireland has a picture or image of a completely untrue or ancient setting or scene. Many people now talk about the 'changing face of Ireland'. I think that Ireland is changing for the worse in many respects, basically we are becoming more materialized, young people have little regard for money, which is becoming so quickly spent on virtually nothing, a pound is nearly worthless, it has less elasticity. More and more people are leeching off the state, take the thousands who are on the dole and at the same time have an income. The itinerants who throw their 'poverty' in everyone's face, and you lose pity or charity for them because they don't really want to improve themselves. I think a visit to the city centre on a Saturday night would open a lot of people's eyes to the 'changing face of Ireland'. It makes you want to run, firstly you see the itinerant children with dirty faces and cardboard boxes sitting on O'Connell bridge begging for money, while their parents drink themselves silly in the pubs, the most frightening time of all is if you happen to be around between the time the pubs close and before the last buses pull out at 11.30.

Although I have said many bad things about Ireland, I do not think that it can be the worst place in the world to live in. A lot of young people are leaving Ireland because they cannot get employment. I think that some drastic changes will have to be made to create jobs for the school leavers or else the education will be used to advantage in other countries. (Girl, 17).

Like the previous essay, this one explores alternative points of view on Ireland. But the writer is no longer threatened by them. In fact she makes them the basis for her essay. She says that it is precisely the failure to achieve an outsider's point of view which harms Ireland. People born in the city cannot appreciate rural culture. People born in our times cannot appreciate the values of older times, when for example people were less materialistic. From this kind of narrowmindedness comes ignorance, superiority, and in the end, hatred and violence. For this writer, therefore, Ireland is no longer an environment only. It is also an ethical ideal, something which *ought* to be the case but *is not*. Consequently Ireland falls down not because of the weather or the economy but because of the behaviour of the people.

The final essay is evaluative and idealistic also, but in a different way. It represents the fourth level of personal identification.

I would not consider Ireland to be in any way superior to other nations. To me it is special but not perfect. I do not feel very personally Irish, and I can look at all Irishmen, whether from town or country, as if I am completely uninvolved. Ireland at the moment seems to be changing continuously. In history, the Irish were very inward-looking, afraid to take anything from other nations for fear of losing their difference. When Ireland achieved independence, the floodgates opened to ideas and cultures from all over the world. In the cities especially, anything Irish was second-rate and out of date. Now the pendulum seems to be swinging back again. Irish language and culture have regained their importance as the Irish saw the danger of losing their identity. The taste of modern living has caused us to value anew the old slow ways. However, there is still a strong feeling of Irish things being of a lower quality. Because of English rule, Ireland is 'behind' other countries in industry and economics. This gives us the chance to watch and learn what may go wrong. Indeed, if we can learn rather than follow, English rule in Ireland may be seen as a blessing in years to come.

During my holidays this year, in Galway, I found a world still existing that I thought had disappeared. I experienced myself the friendliness we Irish are famed for. Indeed I was treated as a foreign visitor which in a way I was. Connemara is almost another world from Dublin and while the youth of Connemara try to reach the 'big smoke', more and more Dubliners are growing to envy the way of life of the Connemara people.

I regard Ireland as a country with a chance of becoming great and of being an example to a dying society.

(Boy, 16).

This writer too is concerned with the Ireland that *could* be more than the Ireland that *is*. But his ideal is no longer expressed in moral terms only, and it has a distinctive personal dimension. The writer is asking: in what does *my* Irishness consist, and how does it arise in *my* experience? For him it no longer consists in an urge to praise or defend Ireland, or in a feeling of closeness to Irish people. If anything he experiences the opposite. His Irishness has a vaguer and more pervasive form; it is the recognition of some dim values: the value of 'the old slow ways', the value of being

'different' and 'special' (as opposed to 'great'), and above all the value of an 'identity'. He also sees recent Irish history as a search for national integrity. He thinks we may be in a third phase, having erred first on the side of insularity, and then on the side of facelessness. In general, therefore, the ideals expressed are more personal and more diffuse than those of the previous essay.

THE PROBLEM OF AFFECTIVE EVALUATION

The paradoxical idea behind Dabrowski's scale is that disintegration is a positive force in affective development. Any *stage* of development demands, by definition, a certain consolidation of structures, a certain degree of stability and internal consistency. Yet internal consistency is also a potential obstacle to development. By making it easy to assimilate new experiences, it also makes it less likely that the system itself will ever again be revised. In other words, it provides a basis for rationalization. Hence the necessity for a stage of development in which internal consistency breaks down.

This is Dabrowski's second level. It is characterized by conceptual confusion and instability of conviction. What it gives in return is freedom from the old structures and increased reflectiveness. We can see these in the second essay. In addition, Level 2 prepares the way for conceptual differentiation. The wavering of attachment prompts a distinction between the Ireland one is attached to and the Ireland that can be disowned. This can be seen in the third essay. What the final essay adds is a personal concern. The moral ideals of the previous stage are now incorporated into an ideal of cultural and personal integrity.

Dabrowski's model of affective development is very general. It can be applied to almost any concept which is initially presented to children as good without qualification, e.g., home, parent, friend, church, education, life or love. In all of these cases it is inevitable that one will find unquestioned attachment at first, giving way eventually to doubts, and then being rebuilt with the help of a distinction between *is* and *ought*. It can hardly be doubted that this progression is also a development, i.e., a movement from lower to higher forms of attachment.

However, in educational research, scales like Dabrowski's pose a serious problem. They take us deeply into clinical diagnosis but provide none of the evidence that clinicians consider essential, particularly interviews. No

clinician would be happy pronouncing on somebody's affective development on the basis of a 20 minute essay. Even those of them who do make use of written materials use them as corroboration only. In educational research, on the other hand, written essays are about the richest clinical material that one can hope to analyse in a systematic way.

In the long run, the solution to this problem will undoubtedly require teachers to take responsibility for a wider range of assessment than they do at present. But formal models supported by large scale data are necessary also, both as a support for the teachers' assessments and as a protection against eccentricity. I will now try to integrate the essays into a model of this sort.

A SCALE OF AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT

The essays presented above may give the impression that it would be possible to make global assessments of essays which would place them on one of Dabrowski's levels or, at least, in between them. But these essays were hand-picked. Most are not so clearly located and there would probably be wide disagreement between different judges. Moreover, Dabrowski's levels require a good age span, say five or six years, before they become clearly differentiated. In most evaluation tasks the students would be from the same class and the scale would achieve little discrimination.

In order to produce a finer scale, the individual statements in each essay were sorted into one of the following content categories:

- 1 Physical Environment
- 2 Places
- 3 Vegetation
- 4 Animals
- 5 Climate
- 6 Population (statistics)
- 7 Scenery (the physical environment as beautiful or ugly)
- 8 Ecology (the physical environment as pleasant or unpleasant to live in, e.g., 'the air is fresh', 'the beaches are polluted')
- 9 Farming
- 10 Tourism
- 11 Industry and technology

- 12 Economy (production, consumption of goods, Ireland as a place to earn a living)
- 13 Resorts (places for sport, recreation, holidays)
- 14 Welfare (facilities for looking after the sick, the poor, the unemployed)
- 15 Education
- 16 Social amenities (places to meet people)
- 17 Personalities (from politics, entertainment, sport)
- 18 Emblems (tricolour, shamrock)
- 19 North (any reference to the troubles in the North)
- 20 History (any unqualified reference to Ireland's history)
- 21 Historical sites (buildings and objects included)
- 22 Historical events
- 23 Historical personages
- 24 Historical conditions (reconstructing living conditions in the past)
- 25 Religion (any unqualified reference)
- 26 Religious symbols (churches, saints, dignitaries, ceremonies)
- 27 Religious influences (on the life of the people)
- 28 Visual stereotypes (how we are reputed to look)
- 29 Moral stereotypes (how we are reputed to behave)
- 30 Atmosphere (statements about the 'spirit' of Ireland, not yet translated into moral or psychological terms, e.g., 'Ireland is easy going', 'the Irish are a very determined race', 'Ireland is go ahead')
- 31 Culture and tradition (unqualified statements, e.g., 'Kerry is a very traditional county', 'Ireland has a lot of culture')
- 32 Folkways (thatched cottages, etc.)
- 33 Art
- 34 Irish Language
- 35 English Language
- 36 Personality (e.g., 'the Irish are friendly')
- 37 Irishness 1 (being Irish is identified with some vague internal state)
- 38 Irishness 2 (some expansion on the previous topic)

The list was drawn up to cover the most common topics in the essays and also to capture the most obvious differences between the essays of younger and older students

Initially it may seem that content analysis brings us no nearer to a scale of affective development since a particular content, the landscape for example, can surely be entertained at any level of affective development we choose to mention. But when the contents of individual essays are considered together, it is evident, first of all, that they tend to come from

definite content regions and, secondly, that there is a definite progression from one region to another as the level of affective development increases. This can be seen in Figure 1 in which the contents of 100 essays are 'unfolded' into a one-dimensional content space*. Each essay is located at the average level of the contents occurring in it, while the contents are simultaneously ranked according to the average level of the essays which mention it. It is noteworthy that the distinction between younger (12-13 yrs) and older (16-17 yrs) students has been recovered almost perfectly, though it was not part of the data. The first 50 essays include only five from older students. The ranking of essays within the younger and older groups was also found to be plausible by teachers who knew the students. It seemed to capture a certain level of thoughtfulness unrelated to academic ability. It was possible to check the connection with academic ability by correlating the ranking of the younger students with scores from their academic files on Irish Studies, English, Mathematics, Biology, Religion, and Physical Education. No significant relation was found, in keeping with the view that affective development is not closely related to cognitive development.

The content categories are also scaled from an arbitrary starting point and, thus, the final solution derives solely from the content profiles of individual essays. The dimension which emerges runs from external to internal aspects of Ireland. Very likely it is therefore closely related to Dabrowski's levels, which also go from external realities to moral and cultural ideals. Of course the scale captures none of the richness of Dabrowski's model. For example, it is based on a simple count of contents and disregards the attitude of the subject towards them. Thus it completely misses the distinction between *is* statements and *ought* statements and the phenomenon of ambivalence.

At the same time the scale probably captures enough of Dabrowski's progression to stand proxy for it and has the great advantage that it is feasible in large scale research. The assignment of contents to categories is a relatively objective operation, it doesn't take too long and it produces a scale that is fine enough to discriminate between students of the same age. I am suggesting therefore that it is the kind of compromise between clinical diagnosis and educational measurement for which I argued earlier. It would be useful in the early stages of projects which emphasize affective components, such as the recent Irish Studies Project. It provides a frame

* The method used is taken from (4) and was programmed by Fionn Murtagh

FIGURE 1

AN UNFOLDING OF CONTENTS AND ESSAYS IN ONE DIMENSION

Final rank of contents	Final rank of essays (y = young o = old)	
1 Places		
2 Historical Sites	y	
3 Physical Environment	y	
4 Climate	yyy	
5 Animals	yyyy	
6 Religious Symbols	yyyy	
7 Historical Personages	yyy	
8 Farming	yy	
9 Population	yyyy	o
10 Emblems	yyy	o
11 Tourism	yyyy	
12 Industry and Technology	yy	
13 Vegetation	yyyyy	
14 Historical Events	yyyy	
15 Personalities	y	o
16 Religion	yyy	oo
17 History		oo
18 Ecology	yy	oo
19 Art	y	
20 Resorts		
21 Scenery		oooooo
22 English Language		oooo
23 North		oooo
24 Economy	yy	o
25 Irish Language		ooo
26 Historical Conditions		ooo
27 Folkways		ooooooo
28 Education		ooo
29 Culture and Tradition		ooo
30 Social Amenities		o
31 Visual Stereotypes		o
32 Moral Stereotypes		o
33 Irishness 1		
34 Welfare		oo
35 Religious Influence		
36 Personality		o
37 Irishness 2		
38 Atmosphere		

work for the intuitions of teachers and forces them into greater clarity. It would also be a help in the design and layout of the curriculum itself showing up the areas in which the students' conceptions are one-sided.

On the other hand, the scale is probably of little use as an instrument of summative evaluation, particularly since it is an unobtrusive measure to some extent. But this is not a serious drawback. For the biggest question facing affective education is not, 'Have we done it?' but, 'What is it?' This is the question which prompted this paper. In reply, I am proposing Dabrowski's model as a very general answer and the subsequent scale as a useful device to pursue it further in an empirical setting.

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