A Comparison of the Relationship between Self-Concept of Intellectual Ability and Self-Esteem in Nigeria

Julius Andera Ate
Western Michigan University

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A COMPARISON OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT OF INTELLECTUAL ABILITY AND SELF-ESTEEM IN NIGERIA

by

Julius Andera Ate

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
Degree of Master of Arts

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 1980
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I wish to express my sincere appreciation to members of my thesis committee for their individual and group support which enabled me to complete this work. Dr. Edsel Erickson, Chairman of the committee, worked with me on all stages of the paper. His guidance and encouragement throughout my graduate work at Western are very much appreciated. Dr. Linda Rouse assisted a great deal in arranging the format of what otherwise would not have been a well coordinated paper. Her scholarly suggestions were very helpful. Dr. Subhash Sonnad was often available and ready to help whenever I dropped into his office.

Two other people deserve my word of thanks here. Kathy Tiemann was of tremendous help on the computer, and my wife Christine helped in coding the responses, and in having the entire manuscript typed. To these and other people who helped in some way, I say a big "thank you."

Finally, my thanks go to the Ministry of Education officials at Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria, for permission to collect data from various Secondary schools in the State.

Julius Andera Ate
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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, M.A., 1980
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study compares the relationship between self-concept of intellectual ability and general self-esteem under differing conditions of tribal/ethnic identity, socio-economic status level, and gender in Nigeria. Specifically, the study will include three ethnic groups of Benue State, Nigeria: the Idoma, the Igala, and the Tiv tribes.

Introduction to Research Problem

An important hypothesis, which will be elaborated upon later, is that for some people self-conceptions of intellectual ability are less relevant to their feelings of self-esteem than for others. For example, Subhadhira (1979) found that women in lower-class groups exhibited lower correlations between self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem than did upper-class women. For lower-class women being intellectually "less-gifted" was not as important as it was for middle- and upper-class women. Subhadhira (1979) also observed clear differences between students in Thailand and the U.S.A. She found that self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem were more strongly correlated in Thailand than in the U.S.A. She had hypothesized this difference based upon her studies of the two cultures, noting that Thailand is similar to
certain other Eastern cultures in placing a high value on intellectual ability.

Subhadhira's (1979) research, however, involved certain methodological and theoretical difficulties: (1) the translation of the research instruments into Thai; (2) the categorization of socioeconomic status into two levels; (3) the limited sample size on ethnicity; and (4) the provincial nature of the bulk of similar research at the time Subhadhira was investigating. Also, her study—perhaps a first of this type—only compared two general cultures, the U.S.A. and Thailand. While her Thai data were limited to Bangkok, the Capital, Subhadhira's U.S.A. data were obtained from a previous study conducted several years earlier, which makes one skeptical about their comparability with a 1979 study.

The present study used subjects who belong to a culture which is distinct in many ways from the United States but who are also familiar with the English language. Instrument translation was therefore not a problem. In a country with some 200 languages one would expect to find clear ethnic and cultural differences. In addition, since no research of this nature, as far as the present researcher knows, has ever been done in Nigeria before, it was intriguing to conduct one for the first time.

Theoretical Background (A Brief Overview)

**Defining self-esteem**

The term "self-esteem" has been applied to various phenomena.
Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem as a positive or negative attitude toward the self. According to Rosenberg, feeling "very good" about oneself connotes high self-esteem. A person who thinks of him or herself as "good enough" or "inferior" is said to exhibit, respectively, medium and low self-esteem.

The definition of self-esteem used in this study is Rosenberg's, measured by Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale. This measure, also used in the Subhadhira (1979) study, consists of ten items ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" designed with brevity and ease of administration in mind. This scale has yielded high reliability and validity over a wide area of testing.

Self-concept of intellectual ability will be measured by the Michigan State Self-Concept of Academic Ability Scale (MSSCAA). This scale has been selected because of its high validity in many local and cross-cultural research studies and because of the fact that it has been found to be reliable on many samples throughout the world (Subhadhira, 1979). Self-concept of intellectual ability is a gradually evolving state which stabilizes as the person matures. Rosenthal's research in the area of attitude and self-concept change is supportive of this view by pointing out that it is significantly easier to radically alter young children's self-concept of ability than it is to alter the same in older children (Rosenthal, 1968: see Depew, 1976).

The general theory underlying this study is derived from the symbolic interactionism perspective which is an offshoot of the work of George Herbert Mead. Mead (1934) "considered variations in human
performance or quality task performance to be defined as a function of self-concept of ability with respect to a given task." However, Brookover (1955, pp. 229-338) considers such a definition as functionally limiting in the sense that "one's volitional behaviours are confined within the boundaries of one's definition of ability to carry out the behaviour in question" (Depew, 1976). Following closely in the line of Mead is Kinch (1963, pp. 481-486) who views self-concept as that organized set of qualities which the individual attributes to himself, and asserts that these properties emerge via social interaction. According to this view, self-concept characteristics, once developed, serve to guide and influence behavior until changed (Depew, 1976).

Pertinent to the point in question are certain defining premises of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). Briefly stated, these are:

I. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Such things include "significant other" persons as well as material objects.

II. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.

III. These meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters.
Thus, it would appear that one's conception of intellectual ability will be closely related to the meaning attached to it in one's culture.

**Influences on self-esteem**

The work of Cooley, Mead, and James point to the fact that the individual's self-appraisal is to an important extent a derivative of "reflected appraisals," that is, the interpretation of others' reactions to him or her (Rosenberg, 1965). As Cooley (1902, pp. 20-21) points out:

> The self that is most important is a reflection, largely, from the minds of others. . . . We live on, cheerful, self-confident . . . until in some rude hour we learn that we do not stand as well as we thought we did, that the image of us is tarnished. Perhaps we do something, quite naturally, that we find the social order is set against, or perhaps it is the ordinary course of life that is not well regarded as we supposed. At any rate, we find with a chill of terror that . . . our self-esteem, self-confidence, and hope, being chiefly founded upon the opinions of others, go down in a crash.

A student's self-concept of ability is positively related to the image he perceives significant others such as parents, teachers, and peers hold of him. Helper (1958) found a positive relationship between self-concept of eighth and ninth grade pupils and the ideals held for them by their parents. The influence of some significant other person may be responsible for the failure of many students to achieve at high levels. Lower-class parents may not see high academic attainments as a possibility for their children and therefore may not be inclined to sanction and reward academic behaviors.
as much as middle- and upper-class parents (Brookover & Erickson, 1975, p. 311).

Interactional influences may have a powerful bearing upon self-evaluation. The individual's self-feelings are invariably borne out of his or her prestige in the peer group or, for the adult, position in the occupational world. In a society which strongly emphasizes occupational success questions which might arise are: What is the effect of occupational failure upon self-esteem? What is the effect of widespread intellectual competitiveness on social life in school? (Rosenberg, 1965). This study poses a similar question: "In a society or tribe which strongly emphasizes intellectual ability, what is the effect of academic failure on self-esteem?"

Attitudes toward education in Nigeria

Most nations of the world today are concerned with the need for training high level personnel to meet the ever-increasing complexity of the twentieth century era. In Nigeria the ascendancy of grammar schools and recent social movements indicate that intellectual abilities of an academic nature have increasingly been accorded prestige and internalized by the population. As Ikejiani (1955) pointed out, anything less than a grammar school education is held to be derogatory and below the dignity of the Nigerian. If Ikejiani is correct, those students in Nigerian schools who define themselves as intellectually inferior should therefore tend to have
a low self-esteem, while those who perceive themselves as intellectually superior will tend to have a higher overall self-esteem. The question of focus here then is the relevance of individuals' self-assessments of intellectual ability in relation to their self-esteem. Do people really care about their lack or presence of intellectual abilities, particularly academic abilities in Math, Languages, Science, and Social Studies? The available literature which has been limited to Thailand and the United States suggests that the relationship of self-concept of intellectual ability to self-esteem is largely a class phenomenon (Subhadhira, 1979).

Since there is considerable variation in socio-economic status as well as cultural difference among tribes in the value placed on intellectual achievement, it is possible to test hypotheses that the correlation between self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem is a function of ethnic, sex, and social status differences.

The Tribes

The three tribes that make up most of what is now the Benue State of Nigeria are the Idoma, the Igala, and the Tiv. They occupy an area in the central part of the country, carved out as a State in 1976. Each tribe has a rich cultural heritage, a tremendous sense of pride, and a separate period of contact with Western influence, all of which have impact on the way tribe members perceive themselves today. Available literature suggests that each tribe is
class-conscious (Forde et al., 1955). A brief discussion of each tribe follows below.

**Idoma**

Although it had been visited as early as 1833 by the European explorers, the Idoma tribe was first organized administratively in 1908 following the Niger-Cross River Expedition by the British, who then established military headquarters in the southern part of the tribe (Armstrong, 1955). Executive officials were appointed in the area and chieftain posts were filled for ease of administration. In 1948 a paramount chief, the Och'Idoma (or chief of Idoma) was elected by a council of chiefs (the Ojira).

Idoma districts were relatively peaceful prior to the advent of British administration. Armstrong (1955) maintains that the peoples of every district feel that they are related to each other genealogically and therefore belong together. The position of women, he says, is relatively high in Idoma. Beer-making business is a women's monopoly and women also dominate petty trading in the area. Idoma men claim that they work harder and longer than women. Idoma women refute this claim by saying that although men work harder, women work longer.

**Igala**

The Igala kingdom, founded about the end of the seventeenth century (Monsell, ms) is comprised of a people with a long tradition
of knowledge in general and intellectual ability in particular. Boston (1968) notes that the Igala tend to validate knowledge in general by saying that it comes from the past, and their way of saying that a fact belongs to the widest order of human experience is to say that it was known to the ancestors of long ago.

For a long time the Igala kingdom had a reputation for territorial expansion. In the period 18th-19th centuries the Igala had conquered Nsukka, a neighboring town, and had established occupational personnel in key village positions, particularly as shrine priests (Shelton, 1971). The Igala people were, and still are, united in the kingship of the Attah (literary, "father") of Igala, who sits at Idah their political headquarters (Shelton, 1971). This kingdom reached its historical climax during the reign of Ayegba Om'Idoko whose daughter, Inikpi, volunteered to be buried alive in order to save her father's kingdom from being destroyed by the Jukun invaders (Boston, 1968, pp. 21-29). Even today, Inikpi's statue stands erected at Idah, the Igala capital, as a "salute to patriotism" and to the "manhood of a woman."

The literature available on Igala people is not unanimous on the date of European contact with these people. The majority of reports, however, point out that a number of Portuguese priests accompanied a Benin invasion army on an expedition against the Attah of Igala during the 15th century and thereafter were able to encroach on the Igala dynasty at Idah (Seton, 1930; Boston, 1968).
The Tiv tribe, the third and largest ethnic group in Benue State, Nigeria, are a proud and homogeneous group of people who for several years had successfully resisted European and Muhammadan encroachment on their territory (Akiga, 1939; Bohannan & Bohannan, 1953). At various times in their history the Tiv have been referred to as the "noble savage," "solid," "brave," and "respectable people." Akiga (1939) describes them as a virile race of farmers, whose two great ambitions in life are to fill their yam stores and granaries with food, and their homes with children; an independent people who have no respect for organized authority and who themselves have not been motivated enough to form a cohesive force.

British administration finally started in Tivland in 1911, several decades after the first European contact with the area had been made in 1852 (Bohannan & Bohannan, 1953).

The foregoing brief discussion of the three ethnic groups involved in the present study reveals that (1) each group has its unique cultural characteristics and a different historical background; (2) each group had made contact with Western ideas at a different time; and (3) each group had some form of social organization but was politically and administratively organized following the infusion of Western tradition. All three factors are important regarding the way each tribe views itself today. It was hypothesized, for this study, that self-concepts of intellectual ability and general self-esteem are differentially related according to
tribe. Specifically, the correlation between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem for Igala students was expected to be greater than that of Idoma students, which, in turn, would be greater than that of Tiv students.

Socio-Economic Status and Self-Esteem

Subhadhira (1979) found that her Thai students exhibited a higher correlation between self-concept of academic abilities and general self-esteem at the higher socio-economic status (SES) level (higher SES Thai, r = .60, higher SES American, r = .30). At the lower SES level, however, there was no significant difference between Thai and American students. Considering the fact that the three tribes being studied—Idoma, Igala, and Tiv—have distinct cultures and have been seen by some writers to be class-oriented, the question would then arise: How would the correlation between self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem vary within distinct cultural groups in Nigeria, specifically among the Idoma, the Igala, and the Tiv tribes?

Sex Differences

Sex differences are a universal phenomenon, especially among the higher animal forms. These differences are evident in both the structures and behaviors of the sexes. Structurally, these differences are manifested in the greater size and strength of males, and in the appearance of secondary sex characteristics; behaviorally, males, in most cultures, appear to be more active and dominant while
females are passive (Rosenberg & Smith, 1972). In the division of labour, cooking is a female activity in well over 90% of societies while the manufacture of musical instruments is almost entirely a male occupation (Munroe & Munroe, 1975). In contemporary societies, sex and academic behavior, especially in regards to choosing academic majors, are significantly related. For example in the U.S. culture, math as a major is viewed as being inappropriate for women, who tend to do less well in it than men (Kaminski, 1975). In Western society, strong achievement-orientation has been considered more essential for boys than for girls. The girl achiever may earn social disapproval if she lets her strivings show or if her goals are deemed more appropriate for boys (Rogers, 1969). It was of interest in this study to determine whether or not sex difference would be associated with differences in the correlations of self-conceptions of intellectual ability and self-esteem in an African situation.

In all the three Nigerian tribes studied there is hardly any evidence that the position of women is greatly enhanced. The presence of polygamy in all the tribes illustrates this point. The relatively high status of women in Idoma, it is argued in this thesis, is not sufficient to offset the overall correlation between self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem as envisaged for men in the three Nigerian tribes. The immediate question then arises: What will be the variation in correlation between self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem for men and women in Nigeria? Specifically, it is being hypothesized that the correlation between self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem
for boys in Nigeria will be higher than that for girls.

Specific Hypotheses

The major hypotheses tested in the present study are the following:

$H_1$: The positive correlation between self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem of Igala students will be greater than that of Idoma students, which, in turn, will be greater than that of Tiv students.

$H_2$: The positive correlation between self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem of upper-class Igala students will be greater than that of lower-class Igala students.

$H_3$: The positive correlation between self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem of upper-class Idoma students will be greater than that of lower-class Idoma students.

$H_4$: The positive correlation between self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem of upper-class Tiv students will be greater than that of lower-class Tiv students.

$H_5$: The positive correlation between self-concept of intellectual abilities and self-esteem for men ($M$) in Nigeria will be greater than that for women ($W$).

These hypotheses were postulated on the basis of the available literature on the three tribes, as previously mentioned, and also
on the basis of the researcher's acquaintance with the tribes.
CHAPTER II

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter reports on instrument design, data collection, and sample distribution.

Design

The present study is an attempt to explore the relationship between the dependent variable—that is, the correlation between students' self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem—and the main independent variables of tribe and socio-economic status. Control variables will be sex and socio-economic status. The subjects studied are about the same age (15-18 yrs.) and socio-economic levels (lower and upper) as those of the United States and Thailand (Subhadhira, 1979), so that results can be reasonably compared to generate hypotheses regarding differences or similarities warranting further research. Self-concept of intellectual ability will be measured by the Michigan State Self-Concept of Academic Ability Scale (MSSCAA). This scale was developed under USOE Cooperative Research Project No. 845 (Brookover et al., 1962) and has five scores ranging from the lowest to the highest. The sum of the scores on this scale measured a student's self-concept of intellectual ability. The reliability and validity of this scale have been established by testing in Germany (Depew, 1976), Japan, and Lebanon (Sidani, 1970, cited in Subhadhira, 1979).
Self-esteem was indexed by use of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This scale consists of ten items answered on a four point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." This scale too has yielded a high reliability and validity over a number of testing situations (see Subhadhira, 1979).

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) was used to measure the strength of the relationship between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem. This statistical technique is useful for pairs of interval-level variables, as used in the present study. Pearson's r serves as a measure of the "goodness of fit" between the predicted rankings and the observed rankings. It varies from a value of -1 when there is a perfect inverse relationship, to +1 when the relationship is perfect and direct.

Data Collection

In collecting data, five schools in Benue State, Nigeria were randomly selected. Schools in the State are government-operated and have a student population that represents a cross-section of the State population. However, because of the overwhelming size of the Tiv tribe, students from that group tended to dominate the sample overall.

In each school the researcher entered the eleventh grade classroom, introduced the research to the students and asked for those who were willing to participate in it. Most students were eager to participate, while those who had some other engagements were free to leave. Teachers were not asked to help in administering the
questionnaires so as to give the students the chance to choose whether or not to participate in the study rather than being compelled to do so as a result of their teachers' presence.

In all the schools no attempt was made to exclude other ethnic groups from participating in the study. This was necessary in order to enable the students to think in terms of individual identities, rather than tribes, in answering the questions—a further attempt to reduce sample bias. In addition students were specifically asked not to write their names. Data were collected from a total of 304 eleventh grade students. Fifty-six (56) of those subjects belonged to several ethnic groups (other than Idoma, Igala, and Tiv) and had to be dropped, leaving a total of 248 respondents (see Tables 2-1 and 2-2 below).

Description of Sample

Tables 2-1 and 2-2 describe the tribal identification, socio-economic status, and sex of respondents in the final sample.

The distribution for the Tiv tribe was heavily weighted at the lower socio-economic status level. This is in accord with the literature pertaining to this group which describes them as a virile race of farmers, whose two great ambitions in life traditionally are to produce food and fill their homes with children (Akiga, 1939). As will be seen shortly, peasant farmers belonged to the lower SES level in this study.

In the present study socio-economic status was assessed by asking the students to respond to the question: "If your parents
Table 2-1
Nigerian Students:
Distribution of Sample by SES and Tribe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES</th>
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<th></th>
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<td></td>
<td>Idoma</td>
<td>Igala</td>
<td>Tiv</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher SES</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower SES</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown SES</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

work, what kind of jobs do they have? Tell us what kind of work they do rather than what company they work for.

Father__________________  Mother__________________

Several responses were obtained which were then categorized and ranked as follows:

Peasant farming, domestic activity ........ Lower SES

Business, the military, and government

civil service ............... Higher SES

These SES levels were used for all the three tribes studied.

As can be seen in Table 2-2 the distribution of sample by sex shows that in both the Igala and Tiv tribes, men tended to dominate the sample (n = 70 and 110 respectively), while Idoma women (n = 42) tended to dominate the distribution for that group. A few reasons could be given to account for these differences. First, it is in accordance with the literature on Idoma that women work more persistently than men (Forde et al., 1955). Academic achievement could
be one area where these strivings are making a great impact. Secondly, the distribution could have reflected the proportion of men to women attending school in the three tribes. Thirdly, schools were selected on a random basis for the purpose of data collection. It is possible that some other important factor was overlooked in that process.

Table 2-2
Nigerian Students: Distribution of Sample by Gender and Tribe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idoma</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igala</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiv</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

This chapter reports on the statistical findings of the study.

Socio-Economic Differences

The most striking overall result is the extremely low correlation obtained between self-image of intellectual ability and overall self-esteem for the SES levels within this Nigerian sample. Table 3-1 shows the correlations obtained between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem for each tribe, for higher and lower SES respondents within each tribe, and for higher and lower SES respondents in the sample as a whole.

Table 3-1
Correlations of Self-Image of Intellectual Ability and Overall Self-Esteem, by Tribe and Socio-Economic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Idoma r (n)</td>
<td>Igala r (n)</td>
<td>Tiv r (n)</td>
<td>Total r (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.12 (31)</td>
<td>-.45 (25)</td>
<td>-.26 (82)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.05 (44)</td>
<td>.08 (91)</td>
<td>.01 (158)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.08 (75)</td>
<td>-.02 (116)</td>
<td>-.06 (240)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No significant differences (.05 level) in r's by tribe or SES.
In order to decide whether any of the differences in the correlations in Table 3-1 are significant, a statistical test was used. A Fisher z test is a suitable test of significance for this sample. It has two major advantages. First, the sampling distribution of \( z_r \) is for all practical purposes independent of \( \rho \). The distribution has the same variability for a given value of \( N \) regardless of the size of \( \rho \). The second advantage is that the sampling distribution of \( z_r \) is approximately normal, so that values of \( z_r \) can be interpreted in relation to the normal curve (Ferguson, 1976). For the present purpose the test of significance will be conducted on the group where there is the greatest difference in correlation coefficient (Tiv tribe, Table 3-1) and then generalized to the other two groups.

Test of significance — Fisher z

1. Null hypothesis \( H_0 \): There is no difference in correlation between the upper and lower SES groups within the Tiv tribe (\( H_0: \rho_1 = \rho_2 \)).

   Alternative hypothesis \( H_1 \): There is a difference in correlation between the two Tiv groups (\( H_1: \rho_1 - \rho_2 \neq 0 \)).

2. Let the level of significance (\( \alpha \)) be .05. \( Z \alpha/2 = .025 \). This is equivalent to a critical value of \( z \leq -1.96 \) and \( z \geq 1.96 \) (two-tail test) as found in the standard normal tables.

3. For the upper SES Tiv \( (r = -.45) \) and lower SES Tiv \( (r = .08) \) the corresponding \( z \) values in the table are \(-.4847 \) and \(.0802 \).
Substituting these values in the above formula gives a $z$ value of 2.37. Since $z$ is in the critical region of rejection, we reject the null hypothesis. That means that the difference between the two correlations is significant at the 5% level, but in the direction opposite to that hypothesized.

**Differences among the tribes**

It was hypothesized that the correlation between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem of Igala students would be greater than that of Idoma students and that, in turn, would be greater than that of Tiv students, at both the higher and lower SES levels.

**Research Hypothesis** $H_{R1}$:

$r_{1\text{Tiv}} > r_{2\text{Idoma}}$, at each SES level, and $r_{1\text{Tiv}} > r_{3\text{Igala}}$ only at the higher SES level. As shown in Table 3-1 the overall correlation between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem for Idoma students ($r = -.10$) was greater than that for both Igala students ($r = -.08$) and Tiv students ($r = -.02$). This was tested for significance as follows:

1. Null hypothesis: The correlation for Idoma group = the correlation for Tiv group ($\rho_1 = \rho_2$).
Alternative hypothesis: The correlation for Idoma group ≠ the correlation for Tiv group ($\rho_1 - \rho_2 \neq 0$).

2. Let the level of significance be set at .05.
   The critical region of rejection is $z \leq -1.96$ and $z \geq 1.96$ for a two-tail test.

3. For $r$ values of -.10 and -.02 the $z$ values are -.1003 and -.0200 respectively, obtained from the normal distribution table.
   $N_1 = 49$, $N_2 = 116$. Substituting these values in the formula on page 22, a $z$ value of .46 is obtained.

4. Decision: The $z$ value of .46 falls within the noncritical region of rejection. Therefore we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Differences among the tribes within each SES group

Overall the Idoma-Tiv difference is greater among upper SES (-.06 vs -.45). This could be tested for significance as follows:

Test of significance of $r$ difference among upper SES groups

1. Null hypothesis $H_0$: The $r$ for Upper SES Idoma = the $r$ for Upper SES Tiv ($\rho_1 = \rho_2$).
   Alternative hypothesis $H_1$: The $r$ for Upper SES Idoma = the $r$ for Upper SES Tiv.

2. Let value be .05. When $z = \alpha/2 = .025$ (two-tail test) the critical region of rejection is set at $z \leq -1.96$ and $z \geq 1.96$ as obtained in the table for normal distribution.
3. \( r_1 = -0.06 \) and \( r_2 = -0.45 \). These values correspond to \(-0.0601\) and \(-0.4847\) respectively in the Fisher z table. \( N_1 = 26, N_2 = 25 \). Substituting these values in the formula on page 22, a z value of 1.42 is obtained.

4. Since 1.42 lies within the noncritical region of rejection, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Sex Differences

General Hypothesis \( H_5 \):

It was hypothesized that the correlation between self-concept of intellectual ability and general self-esteem for men (M) in Nigeria would be greater than that for women (W). Table 3-2 compares the correlations obtained between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem for women and men in this sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Correlations of Self-Concept of Intellectual Ability and General Self-Esteem, by Gender and Tribe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contrary to our prediction, the level of correlation for males
was relatively lower than that for females with both having negative signs. This difference was tested for significance as follows:

**Test of significance for r difference among the sexes**

1. **Null hypothesis Ho:** The correlation for men = that for women ($\rho_1 = \rho_2$).

   Alternative hypothesis $H_1$: Correlation for men = that for women ($\rho_1 - \rho_2 \neq 0$).

2. At the alpha level of .05 the critical region of $-1.96$ and $+1.96$ is obtained in the standard tables.

3. $r_1 = -.05$, $r_2 = -.12$. In the Fisher z table these values correspond respectively to $-.0501$ and $-.1206$. $N_1 = 191$ and $N_2 = 57$. A z value of .46 is obtained.

4. This z value falls within the noncritical region of rejection.

   Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.
Table 3-3
A Comparison of the Correlations of Self-Concept of Intellectual Ability and General Self-Esteem of Nigerian Students by Sex and Socio-Economic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>(48)</td>
<td>-.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>(139)</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>(187)</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No significant differences in the hypothesized direction (.05 level).

The difference between the upper and lower SES levels for men and women was tested for significance as follows:

Test of significance for upper and lower SES levels for men and women

1. Null hypothesis: The correlation coefficient between the upper and lower SES levels is the same for both men and women ($\rho_1 = \rho_2$).

   Alternative hypothesis: There is a difference in the magnitude of the correlation between the two SES levels ($\rho_1 - \rho_2 \neq 0$).

2. At the alpha level of .05 the critical region of -1.96 and +1.96 is obtained in the standard normal tables.

3. $r_1 = -.26$, $r_2 = .01$. These values correspond respectively to -.2661 and .0100 in the Fisher z table. $N_1 = 82$, $N_2 = 158$. 
Substituting as before in the formula on page 22, a z value of 1.99 is obtained. Since 1.99 falls within the critical region of rejection, we reject the null hypothesis at the .05 level. That is a difference in the magnitude of the correlation between the upper and lower SES levels for men and women, but not in the hypothesized direction.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study do not support the hypothesized differences in associations between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem under the varying conditions of tribal identity, SES level, and gender.

Possible differences that were observed and statistically different at the .05 level were: (1) Upper SES Tiv students who tended to have high self-concepts of intellectual ability tended to have low self-esteem (-.45) in contrast to the finding that there was almost no association between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem for lower SES Tiv students (.08); (2) Upper SES men and women who tended to have high self-concept of intellectual ability tended to have low self-esteem (-.26) which was in contrast to the finding that there was almost no association between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem for lower SES men and women (.01).
CHAPTER IV

REVIEW, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Review of Research Problem, Method, and Findings

Self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem are two important concepts that have been separately researched in a number of countries across the world. However the relationship between them has only recently been examined systematically. One such study was the cross-cultural comparison of the relationship between self-concept of academic ability and self-esteem in Thailand and the United States (Subhadhira, 1979). Subhadhira's study had a number of interesting discoveries. She found that women in lower-class groups exhibited lower correlations between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem that did upper-class women. She also found that self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem were more correlated in Thailand than in the United States and concluded that Thailand was similar to certain other Eastern cultures in its high emphasis being placed on intellectual ability. Subhadhira (1979), however, had theoretical and methodological problems that needed to be considered. Also there are other cultures, such as Nigeria, which seem to be different from both Western and Eastern cultures which may approximate the U.S.A. and Thailand.

The present study attempted to measure the correlation between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem in Nigeria,
specifically among the Idoma, the Igala, and the Tiv tribes. Since the subjects in this study were all familiar with English language (although they differed in other of their languages) problems of instrument translation were greatly reduced from the problems faced by Subhadhira in translating English into Thai.

A sample size of 248 was obtained from five secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. All the subjects were distributed by tribe, sex, and two SES levels—the latter according to the head of the household's occupation.

Each of the three tribes studied had distinct cultural characteristics, a tremendous sense of pride, and a different period of contact with formal education. Available literature also suggests that each tribe is class-conscious. All these variables, it was hypothesized, would differentially affect the correlation between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem for each tribe. The status of women in the three tribes (with the possible exception of Idoma) has and is traditionally oriented in its emphasis on male dominance. The presence of polygamy among each tribe illustrates this phenomenon. Five general hypotheses (p. 13) were tested, four of which were found to be statistically insignificant at the .05 level.

The operational definition of self-esteem used in this study was developed by Rosenberg (1965). Rosenberg defines self-esteem as a positive or negative attitude toward the self. High self-esteem connotes that the person feels "very good" about him or
herself, while medium and low self-esteem connote respectively a feeling of being "good enough" or "inferior."

Self-esteem is an important hypothetical construction in the social sciences. Robinson and Shaver (1969, p. 45) note that there are approximately 200 scales in the literature purporting to measure self-esteem (see Walsh, 1975). This study is a contribution to the attempts being made to clarify the subject matter of self-esteem particularly as defined and assessed by Rosenberg (1965).

The general theory underlying the present study was derived from the symbolic interactionism perspective which sprang from the work of George Herbert Mead (1934). Mead considered variations in human performance to be defined as a function of self-concept of ability with respect to a given task. Blumer's (1969) defining characteristics of symbolic interactionism are relevant in the present study in showing that one's conception of intellectual ability will be closely related to the meaning attached to it in one's culture.

Self-concept of intellectual ability was measured by use of Michigan State Self-Concept of Academic Ability Scale (MSSCAA), while self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale. Both scales were used because of the high reliability and validity obtained on them over a wide area of testing. The correlation between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem was indexed by the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r). This measure is suitable for interval-level variables and serves as a
measure of the "goodness of fit" between the predicted and the observed rankings. The r values were standardized by use of the Fisher z transformation and tested for significance at the .05 level. Results showed that the correlation coefficients for the three ethnic groups were relatively low at both the upper and lower SES levels. When analyzing for gender differences, however, significant correlations were obtained, although the differences were not as hypothesized.

There were no differences between men and women of low and men and women of high SES level, however, men and women of high SES level exhibited a higher correlation of self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem (-.26) than did men and women of the lower SES level (.01). This difference was not as hypothesized. The upper SES men and women tended to have high self-concept of intellectual ability associated with low self-esteem, while the lower SES men and women tended to exhibit no association between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem (.01).

In summary, the findings of this study do not support the hypothesized differences in associations between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem under the varying conditions of tribal identity, SES level, and gender.

Conclusions

The summary of the predictions, tests, and observations made in the present study is given in Tables 4-1 and 4-2. Implications of
the findings for theory, society, and further research are also given below.

Table 4-1

Summary of Differences in Correlation Between Self-Concept of Intellectual Ability and Self-Esteem in Nigeria, Analyzing for Socio-Economic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Predicted Rank</th>
<th>Observed Rank</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Predicted Rank of SCA X SE</th>
<th>Observed Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Igala</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idoma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiv</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in the above table the observed ranking of the tribes does not match their predicted rankings as measured by the magnitudes of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. These findings are discussed in the "Implications" section of the study.

As can be seen in Table 4-2, the observed rankings of men and women are the same as measured by the magnitudes of the correlation coefficients for both sexes.

The findings of this study seem to suggest that for the Nigerian population neither gender, ethnic identity, nor socio-economic status level is associated with high self-concepts of intellectual ability being in congruence with high self-esteem. In fact, for the upper SES men and women high self-concept of intellectual ability is
associated with low self-esteem.

Table 4-2
Summary of Differences in Correlations Between Self-Concept of Intellectual Ability and Self-Esteem in Nigeria, by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Predicted Rank</th>
<th>Observed Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men (N = 191)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (N = 57)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implications for Theory

The five general hypotheses which guided this study were tested and no significant correlation in the direction hypothesized was obtained between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem under conditions of tribes, socio-economic status, and gender.

One major reason could be presumed constancy of SES levels across cultures. Self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem were highly correlated across SES levels in Thailand, less correlated (if at all) in Nigeria as seen in the present study. It could be the case that socio-economic status as measured typically by western social scientists does not necessarily equally apply across cultures in explaining associations between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem. One can conjecture that, for the Nigerian society, people do not value themselves in terms of
high self-concept of intellectual ability. Other subtle but important variables like family life relationships with one's neighbors and community and religious values might be more highly correlated with one's feeling of high self-worth and high self-concept of intellectual ability than SES levels and gender as defined and used in this and other studies. This discovery therefore is interesting as it begins to question the widely accepted relevance and constancy of SES levels across the various cultures.

At present a majority of the people in Nigeria are functionally illiterate—a condition which perpetuates their lower social status. For the children of such people, the influence of some "significant other" person may not be academically oriented. Lower-class parents may not see high academic attainments as a possibility for their children and so may not be inclined to sanction and reinforce high academic behaviors as much as do middle- and upper-class parents (Brookover & Erickson, 1975). However, this study analyzed for social status and found, contrary to this view, no significant hypothesized correlation between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem, when controlling for SES in Nigeria. That is, the Nigerian tribes studied seem to be fundamentally different from populations drawn from the United States of America and Thailand.

It was hypothesized that for each SES level, the Igala tribe would exhibit higher positive correlations between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem than the Idoma or Tiv tribes.
because of Igala's traditional emphasis on knowledge. The Tiv tribe with its traditional emphasis on family size rather than intellectual aspirations was predicted to show the least positive correlation coefficient of all the tribes. The results reported in Table 3-1 do not support the prediction. These findings are not in accord with Subhadhira's (1979) earlier findings in the United States that lower socio-economic status students were as likely to exhibit a positive correlation between self-concept of academic ability and their general self-esteem as were higher socio-economic status students. One might reason that in a fast-developing nation like Nigeria, socialization to value upper class mobility is not often emphasized or strongly reinforced. Students may interact primarily on the basis of peer groups, family relations, and religious values rather than in regard to their SES mobility or status values. This may be a healthy situation for Nigeria as such values may lessen hatred and prejudice so often associated with highly fixed stratified society.

There are other possible reasons for the lack of positive correlations between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem across SES levels. Perhaps cultural values in Nigeria are fundamentally different from those in Thailand or the U.S.A. It might be the case that self-esteem is enhanced more by one's extended relations in terms of family size and cohesion rather than by academic achievement. Academic achievement, although it may be increasingly emphasized in the larger society, may represent only a minor force for assessing one's self-esteem.
Also, one might conjecture an explanation in terms of the homogeneous nature of the three ethnic groups studied. That is, although the three groups—Idoma, Igala, and Tiv—represent different cultures, they seem, in the studies, to share certain basic characteristics in the sense that they share a common lack of strong positive associations between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem.

In the past Nigerians tended to identify themselves with tribal groups rather than with national goals such as academic achievement for the masses. The formation of local unions based on tribal affiliations (Ikejiani, 1965) tended to breed tribalism with its attendant ills of bribery, suspicion, job discrimination, low productivity, and general social discontent, which culminated in the civil war of 1967. It would be expected that one's identity with one tribe or another would be highly predictive of one's feeling of being "very good." The low positive correlations between self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem across tribes suggest that national goals for academic achievement for the masses still has not been widely accorded high value in Nigeria. In one sense this augurs well for the country in that it cuts across tribal ethnocentrism, so divisive a force in Nigeria and in fact other developing nations. On the other hand, there is—if the results of this study hold—much work to be done if national goals for academic achievement for the masses is to be realized.

Studies in other cultures have linked sex differences with career choices in life (Kaminski, 1975), achievement orientation
(Rogers, 1969), and behavioural dominance (Rosenberg & Sutton-Smith, 1972), among others. These studies—with a few possible exceptions—tend to examine male dominance and female passivity as biological and social givens responsible for differential achievement orientation of both sexes. In Nigeria where male dominance clearly exists (the presence of widespread polygamy for example) one would expect to find a greater correlation coefficient for men than for women. This study controlled for gender and found the magnitudes of the possible correlation between self-concept of intellectual achievement and self-esteem were not different.

However, lack of positive correlations between self-concept of intellectual achievement and self-esteem among both the Nigerian men and women shows that for them high intellectual abilities is not associated with high self-image. This observation is interesting in light of this condition of social disapproval for women achievers in Nigeria and elsewhere (Rogers, 1969). In the case of Nigeria there is a predominantly larger number of men in all academic institutions and other spheres of public life. Until recently, education for women seldom went beyond a secondary school level. Marriage and family have been, and still are, to some extent, considered a woman's priority and, hence, perpetuates male dominance. Thus it might be expected to produce less relevance for intellectual ability for men than for women. However, this was not the case in this study. Both men and women equally devalued self-concept of intellectual ability in the production of their self-esteem.
Implications for Further Research

The conclusions reached in this study should be treated as tentative. Further research is needed in the area of self-concept of intellectual ability and self-esteem in Nigeria before any conclusive statements should be made.

The present study had a few limitations that need to be mentioned for purposes of further research. Most of the related research in Thailand and the U.S.A. was also provincial—a limitation which made comparison difficult. Also, the sample size of 248 in this study was small and selective, so that generalization to the larger Nigerian population should only be tentative awaiting further research with other samples. Furthermore, the variable of socio-economic status was categorized into only two levels owing to the small sample size. Different correlations might have been observed if there were more SES levels employed. And finally, there were more subjects in the lower SES than in the upper SES levels. It might be that occupational prestige is not a suitable measure for socio-economic status. Thus the present study was unavoidably subjected to many of the limitations experienced by Subhadhira (1979) in her study of Thailand and the U.S.A.

Other research should be conducted on other cultures similar to those of the United States, Thailand, and Nigeria. Variables like religion, age, or family size should be used in this further research on self-esteem. Instruments other than the ones used in this study for measuring respectively self-concept of intellectual
ability and self-esteem should also be employed. Michigan State Self-Concept of Academic Ability Scale and Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale were used in the present study because of the high validity and reliability and because of extensive use across varying cultures. Further research may also focus on the presumed relevance of socio-economic levels across cultures. These and related issues need to be dealt with in further research of conditions affecting the relationship of self-concept of intellectual ability with self-esteem.
REFERENCES


Armstrong, R. G. The Idoma-speaking peoples. See Forde et al., 1955.


APPENDIX

STUDENTS’ BACKGROUND

SELF-CONCEPT OF INTELLECTUAL ABILITY SCALE

SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

42
DIRECTIONS -- We are trying to learn more about students and their work in schools. We would like for you to respond to the following questions. This is not a test of any sort and will not affect your work in school. Your teacher and your principal will NOT see your answers. There are no right or wrong answers, we simply want you to tell us your answer to each question.

PLEASE PRINT

1. Name of your school ______________________________________

2. How old are you? _________________________________________

3. Are you a boy or a girl?
   ____ boy
   ____ girl

4. What is your race or ethnic background?
   ____ White
   ____ Black
   ____ Other (Specify)

5. What is your tribe?
   ____ Idoma
   ____ Igala
   ____ Tiv
   ____ Other (Specify)

6. If your parents work, what kind of jobs do they have? Tell us what kind of work they do rather than what company they work for.
   Father ________________________________________________
   Mother ________________________________________________
SELF-CONCEPT OF INTELLECTUAL ABILITY SCALE

1. We would like to know what you think about your school work. Pick one answer. Put a check next to your answer.

   ___ 1. among the poorest
   ___ 2. poorer
   ___ 3. the same
   ___ 4. better
   ___ 5. among the best

2. Think of the students in your class. Do you think you can do schoolwork better, the same, or poorer than the students in your class?

   ___ 1. among the poorest
   ___ 3. the same
   ___ 5. among the best

3. When you graduate from secondary school, do you think you will be among the best students, average students, or below average students?

   ___ 1. among the poorest
   ___ 3. average
   ___ 5. among the best

4. Do you think you could graduate from the University?

   ___ 1. no
   ___ 3. not sure
   ___ 5. yes, for sure

5. If you went to the University do you think you would be one of the best, average, or poorest students?

   ___ 1. among the poorest
   ___ 3. average
   ___ 5. among the best

6. If you want to be a doctor or a teacher, you need more than four years of University education. Do you think you could do that?

   ___ 1. no
   ___ 3. not sure
   ___ 5. yes, for sure
7. Forget how your teachers mark your work. How good do you think your own work is?

   1. poor
   2. below average
   3. average
   4. very good
   5. excellent

8. What marks do you think you really can get if you try?

   1. mostly F's
   2. mostly D's
   3. mostly C's
   4. mostly B's
   5. mostly A's
SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal place with others.
   ____ 1. strongly agree   ____ 2. agree
   ____ 3. disagree   ____ 4. strongly disagree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
   ____ 1. strongly agree   ____ 2. agree
   ____ 3. disagree   ____ 4. strongly disagree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
   ____ 1. strongly agree   ____ 2. agree
   ____ 3. disagree   ____ 4. strongly disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
   ____ 1. strongly agree   ____ 2. agree
   ____ 3. disagree   ____ 4. strongly disagree

5. I feel I do have much to be proud of.
   ____ 1. strongly agree   ____ 2. agree
   ____ 3. disagree   ____ 4. strongly disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
   ____ 1. strongly agree   ____ 2. agree
   ____ 3. disagree   ____ 4. strongly disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
   ____ 1. strongly agree   ____ 2. agree
   ____ 3. disagree   ____ 4. strongly disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
   ____ 1. strongly agree   ____ 2. agree
   ____ 3. disagree   ____ 4. strongly disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.
   ____ 1. strongly agree   ____ 2. agree
   ____ 3. disagree   ____ 4. strongly disagree

10. At times I think I am no good at all.
    ____ 1. strongly agree   ____ 2. agree
    ____ 3. disagree   ____ 4. strongly disagree

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