Education, Adoption of Innovations and Individual Modernity

A Study of Two Developing Societies*

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The social science literature on the impact of education upon a set of values, attitudes and beliefs generally known as "individual modernity" has been gradually increasing during the last decade. A number of investigations (Armer and Youtz [1971], Briones and Waisanen [1967],...

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1 Individual modernity is a relatively new and controversial construct, generally referring to a complex, personality syndrome embracing a wide gamut of attitudes, values and behavioral orientations which are assumed to be related to the emergence and functioning of a modern industrial society. Although total unanimity among the modernity theorists about the precise number and structure of the components of the syndrome is yet to be realized, the variables which are generally mentioned in the literature include change-orientation, empathy, trust, scientism, non-authoritarianism, high educational and vocational aspirations, planning orientation, deferred gratification, mass media credibility and secularism.

The ideal types of traditional and modern men are supposed to differ with respect to these variables: modern men are high and traditional men low on these variables, scored both individually and collectively. To be sure, traditional and modern men are not supposed to represent discrete polarities but rather points on a continuum. Modernity theorists have constructed scales to measure the levels of individual modernity. The scales developed by Smith and Inkeles (1966), Inkeles and Smith (1974), and Kahl (1968) deserve special mention in this connection. Whether the concept of "individual modernity" is theoretically viable or not is open to argument (Armer and Schnaiberg, 1973). We are not committed to an affirmative position on the matter.
Cunningham [1973], Holsinger [1973], Inkeles [1969], Inkeles and Smith [1974], Kahl [1968], Klineberg [1973], Sack [1973], Suzman [1973], Waisanen [1971], and Waisanen and Kumata [1973], to mention a few, have been undertaken on this subject utilizing data from many developing nations. These data have shed light on the intricate relationship between education and individual modernity, and have generally supported the hypothesis that education, directly or indirectly, contributes to the modernization of values, attitudes and beliefs of people.

The main objective of the study reported here is to examine the relationship between education and individual modernity, utilizing data from two developing nations, India and Costa Rica.

While the data available do not permit adequate test of a formal, processual model, our theoretical interests and analytic procedures were organized in the manner shown in Figure 1. There are five variables at issue.

![Fig. 1. The Variables at Issue.](image)

The first variable is the formal educational attainment of the individual, treated as an independent variable.

The second and third variables are communication exposure and urban exposure. We assumed that these two variables were positively related to each other and to formal education.

Innovative behavior is the fourth variable. We assumed both direct and indirect relationships between education and innovativeness. In the indirect path, communication and urban exposure serve as intervening variables.

The last variable is individual modernity. Again we assume direct and indirect relationships between this variable and formal education, with communication exposure, urban exposure and innovativeness as interviewing variables.

This exploratory and informal ordering of variables is not intended to serve as path model to test a general process of individual or societal change. That possibility is precluded by scope limitations of several kinds: (1) The research population is composed of adults who have completed their formal education;