

Semantic differential as a method in empirical investigation of Self-Image as father

Robert Manerov¹, Kristina Manerova²

¹Department of Psychology and Pedagogy, University of Emercom, Russia

²Department of German Linguistics, Saint Petersburg University, Russia

<https://doi.org/10.36505/ExLing-2016/07/0024/000283>

Abstract

In our current study psychosemantics principles are used in the development of own method “Father Image”, based on the method of semantic differential of Ch. Osgood. Following images are conceptual constructs in the study: Father Image, Self-Image as a father, Real Self-image as a father, Constructive Self-image as a father. The semantic differential provides a measure of 47 signs of the “Father Image”, expressed by bipolar seven-point scale. The 47-sign scales are named with antonym pairs of Russian adjectives and contradictional propositions, which were composed by the modified method of M. Kuhn and T. McPartland and then evaluated by groups of single and married male probationers with and without kids

Key words: semantic differential, self-Image, father Image

Introduction

The study was based on the psychosemantic approach (cf. V. Petrenko, A. Shmelev, Ch. Osgood, J. Kelly et al.). We used psychosemantic principles to develop our own method called “Father image’ semantic differential” and to interpret the findings. Currently, the main goals of the psychosemantic approach include building and reconstruction of the individual value system through which the subject perceives the world, other people and himself. Our own “Father image’ semantic differential” method was based on Osgood’s semantic differential, which is a part of experimental psychosemantics.

Methodology and results

The object of study was evaluated by subjects based on 47 bi-polar seven-point scales (Table 1). Each scale was built on the principle of opposition of a pair of antonyms. The concepts of our study:

Father image – a set of views on paternal roles, functions and qualities that reflect the sociocultural, gender, age-related attitudes, traditions and stereotypes, as well as one’s personal experiences with one’s father.

Self-Image as a father – a set of man’s views on his own paternal needs, roles, functions and qualities that reflect the sociocultural, gender, age-related attitudes, traditions and stereotypes towards a man as a father.

Table 1. "Father image" semantic differential.

1	Intelligent	3210123	Unintelligent
2	Hostile	3210123	Friendly
3	Possessing authority	3210123	Lacking authority
4	Unsympathetic	3210123	Sympathetic
5	Caring	3210123	Not caring
6	Repulsive	3210123	Charming
7	Can be trusted	3210123	Cannot be trusted
8	Apathetic	3210123	Energetic
9	Teaches the child a lot of things	3210123	Does not teach the child much
10	Strict	3210123	Gentle
11	Decent	3210123	Indecent
12	Able to make sacrifices	3210123	Not able to make sacrifices
13	Insincere	3210123	Sincere
14	Supports the family	3210123	Does not support the family
15	Unfair	3210123	Fair
16	Worthy of emulation	3210123	Not worthy of emulation
17	Indifferent	3210123	Compassionate
18	Faithful	3210123	Unfaithful
19	Pessimistic	3210123	Optimistic
20	Loved	3210123	Hated
21	Insecure	3210123	Confident
22	Makes the child proud	3210123	Does not make the child proud
23	Rude	3210123	Gentle
24	Raises the child	3210123	Does not raise the child
25	Unhappy	3210123	Happy
26	Close	3210123	Distant
27	Vicious	3210123	Virtuous
28	Children love him	3210123	Children don't love him
29	Irritable	3210123	Cool-headed
30	A family man	3210123	Not a family man
31	Passive	3210123	Active
32	Able to protect	3210123	Not able to protect
33	Selfish	3210123	Altruistic
34	Considerate	3210123	Inconsiderate
35	Weak	3210123	Strong
36	Irresponsible	3210123	Responsible
37	His love has to be earned	3210123	His love does not have to be earned
38	Lazy	3210123	Hardworking
39	Educated	3210123	Uneducated
40	Despised	3210123	Respected
41	Reliable	3210123	Unreliable
42	Authoritarian	3210123	Democratic
43	Loving	3210123	Not loving
44	Sad	3210123	Cheerful
45	Determined	3210123	Free-floating
46	Angry	3210123	Kind
47	Spends much time with the child	3210123	Not spending much time with the child

Real Self-Image as a father – a set of man's views on his actual paternal needs, roles, functions and qualities, on what kind of father he actually is.

Constructive Self-Image as a father – a set of man's views on paternal needs, roles, functions and qualities which reflects what kind of father the man aspires to become and sees himself becoming in the future, as well as the obstacles to the achievement of the said.

Table 2. Factors of the real and constructive Self-Image as a father in men with different paternal and marital status.

SELF-IMAGE AS FATHER	#	Groups of men		
		Married fathers	Married men without children	Unmarried men without children
		Factors		
R E A L	1	Morality (factor power 0,178)	Syncretism (factor power 0,180)	Syncretism (factor power 0,181)
	2	The object of love (factor power 0,139)	Caring and trustworthy teacher (factor power 0,145)	The object of pride and love (factor power 0,158)
	3	Social Activity (factor power 0,097)	The object of love (factor power 0,124)	Strong Personality (factor power 0,137)
	4	Caring and trustworthy teacher (factor power 0,071)	Social Activity (factor power 0,089)	Social Activity (factor power 0,086)
	5	Kindness (factor power 0,057)	Mentor (factor power 0,065)	Democratic (factor power 0,055)
C O N S T R U C T I V E	1	Syncretism (factor power 0,220)	Syncretism (factor power 0,213)	Trustworthy Teacher (factor power 0,168)
	2	Morality (factor power 0,107)	Trustworthy Teacher (factor power 0,125)	Empathetic (factor power 0,166)
	3	The object of children's love (factor power 0,092)	The subject of love (factor power 0,114)	Defender (factor power 0,096)
	4	Social Activity (factor power 0,057)	Material support (factor power 0,102)	The object of pride (factor power 0,095)
	5	Integrity (factor power 0,047)	Morality (factor power 0,096)	Social Activity (factor power 0,081)
	6		The object of pride (factor power 0,079)	Material support (factor power 0,066)

In order to identify the structure of the real and constructive Self-Image as a father in men with different paternal and marital status, we

carried out factorization of semantic differential scales. The scales were arranged in semantic factor groups. The factorization was carried out separately for all three groups of subjects, consecutively for the real and constructive images (Table 2).

Conclusions

A comparative analysis of the six factor structures of real and constructive Self-Image as a father in three groups of men led us to the following conclusions.

In both groups of men without children the constructive image is more geared towards the child and the family than the real one. The constructive image, unlike the real image, includes the “Supports the family” characteristic, which is not pronounced in the real fathers’ group. It is likely that for most men who have not become fathers yet the issue of providing for the family becomes the central one in whether to have a child or not.

The real Self-Image as a father in married fathers is much more realistic and moderate than in the two groups of men without children, while the constructive (in many ways, ideal) father for them is a tentative model, distant from the real requirements and only partially realized in practice, as evidenced by the fathers’ real experience.

The application of linguistically determined semantic differential method with subsequent factorization and quantitative assessment is justified in psychological research.

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