



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1985 Volume VIII: The Measurement of Adolescents

Introduction

A cynical sort could borrow from Wilde to describe “The Measurement of Adolescence” as “incompetent instruction in an incomprehensible subject applied to an unendurable stage of life.” For a psychologist to attempt to join statistics with adolescence in a conceptually defensible way is to court disaster. Fortunately, the patience and ingenuity of the seminar members made the attempt interesting and provocative however far it fell short of conceptual integrity. The seminar treated of elementary statistics and of adolescence in roughly alternating fashion although, as we moved along, the major weight fell on statistics. Through class exercises, home exercises, and reading of texts, the seminar made its way through basic statistics up to correlational procedures. What distinguished the work was our shared attempt to present the necessary *ideas* about statistics in a form accessible to students who were not strong in mathematics, even those who feared symbolism and calculation. The success of our efforts can be assessed by a review of the teaching units that follow shortly. Some of the seminarists addressed substantive issues in the psychology of adolescence but always with at least a bow toward the collection and analysis of data. These ambitious essays, taken together, represent a first step toward a collection of lesson plans that will, one day, fulfill the promise of the seminar’s title.

The reader interested primarily in the teaching of statistics should turn first to the units prepared by Howell, Stern, Langan, and Fox. For statistics more generously wrapped in observations about adolescents, the first places to look are the units by Montagna, Hankin, and Trader. Burgess-Cummins present an extensively argued pedagogical theory and weave both adolescence and statistics into the pattern.

Statistics probably works best as a school-wide enterprise, pushing its nose into history, literature, social studies, science, even into gym. However, the home room of statistics will remain in mathematics departments where non-mathematicians interested in application of statistics will find willing instructors in the use of painless statistical techniques.

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