

A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF THE ACTIVE-PASSIVE DIMENSION OF SOCIAL ATTITUDES

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The concept of social cultural premises as stated by Díaz Guerrero (5, 6) has provided a stimulating framework for cross-cultural research. Díaz Guerrero defines a socio-cultural premise as follows:

. . . let me perceive a socio-culture as a system of interrelated socio-cultural premises that norm or govern the feelings, the ideas, the hierarchization of the interpersonal relations, the stipulation of the types of roles to be fulfilled, the rules for the interaction of individuals in such roles, the where's, when's, and with whom and how to play them. All of this is valid for interactions within the family, the collateral family, the groups, the society, the institutional super structures: Educational, religious, governmental, and for such problems as the main goals of life, the way of facing life, the perception of humanity, the problems of sex, masculinity and femininity, economy, death, etc. . . . a socio-cultural premise is a statement . . . that seems to provide the basis for the specific logic of the group.

It is apparent that socio-cultural premises have a profound effect on culturally determined attitudes which, in turn, influence behaviors that can be identified as representative of a given culture.

The socio-cultural premises relating to the active-passive dimension have been of considerable interest in cross-cultural comparisons between Anglo and Latin cultures (7, 8). The active-passive dimension in particular has been used to investigate cultural differences between Mexicans and Northamericans in such areas as coping styles, interpersonal relationships, cognitive control, and attitudes toward education (1, 2, 3, 4, 10).

The present study is an investigation of the active-passive dimension between the Mexican and U.S. culture in the area of social attitudes. If the characteristic activeness or passiveness of the members of a given culture is based on a pervasive socio-cultural premise, then this behavior should be apparent in a variety of situations, including social attitudes. In addition, the present study investigates the difference between self-perception and the ideal-self of the subjects involved; a sample of Mexican and U.S. school children.

The instrument used consisted of sixteen items from the Social Attitudes Inventory developed from a scale by Lucas and Horrocks (9) for use in an ongoing research project, "Coping Styles and Achievement: A Cross National

Study of School Children."¹ Eight of the items were selected as representing active social attitudes and the other eight represented passive social attitudes. Each item is arranged in such a manner that the child can respond in terms of his self perception and also in terms of his self ideal. An example of an item from the inventory is as follows:

Andy decides for himself how to use his time.	YES	NO
Am I like him?	()	()
Do I want to be like him?	()	()

Each item consists of two statements concerning hypothetical adolescents, and is of two forms, one for males and one for females. The subject responds to the statement in two ways, whether he is like the hypothetical boy or girl and whether he wants to be like the boy or girl. His response indicates both his perception of self and of his ideal self. To a given situation (item), his response can be one of four ways. They are: 1) "Yes, I am like him," and "Yes, I want to be like him"; 2) "No, I am not like him," and "No, I don't want to be like him"; 3) "No, I am not like him," and "Yes, I want to be like him"; and 4) "Yes, I am like him," and "No, I don't want to be like him."

If he answers Yes-Yes or No-No, he perceives his self and ideal self as equal. If he responds Yes-No or No-Yes, he perceives his real self as different from his ideal self. The interpretation of these possible four responses is largely dependent on the item being responded to. In general, a Yes-Yes response indicates wanting and achieving a certain behavior, a No-No is rejection of a certain behavior, a No-Yes is nonachievement of a desired behavior, and a Yes-No is the achievement of a non-desired behavior.

The items used in the present study were:

Active

1. Ernie tries to make his parents change their minds by proving to them that they are wrong.
2. Paul often says that he isn't afraid of anything.
3. Andy decides for himself how to use his time.
4. Johnny was afraid to talk in front of the class, but he did it anyway.
5. When the teacher scolded Bill for not knowing the answer to the problem, Bill talked back to her angrily.
6. Stephen makes friends quickly wherever he goes.
7. After missing some questions on the arithmetic exam, Ralph went home and practiced working problems.
8. Eddy's mother scolded him because he didn't watch after his little brother, so Eddy hit his brother when he got the chance.

¹ This project, from which the data for the present paper were obtained, is supported by the U. S. Office of Education.

Passive

1. Gary is not afraid of nightmares because he knows his parents are nearby.
2. Tim would rather have his teacher help him with his arithmetic problems than to do them by himself.
3. Even though he hates it, Mark puts up with his little sister's meanness because he knows she is younger than he is.
4. Jerry was really afraid of swimming in deep water, but he said he did not want to swim because he was tired.
5. When his teachers get upset with him, Don gets very sad.
6. Peter pretends that he does not understand when his teacher calls on him and he doesn't know the answer.
7. Earl does nothing when his older brother hits him.
8. Since the box Dean had to carry was large, he waited for somebody to come and help him.

A total of 100 subjects were used, fifty U.S. school children and fifty Mexican school children. The two samples were comparable in terms of age (modal age 14 years for both groups) and all subjects were from the upper-middle socio-economic level. Each group consisted of 25 boys and 25 girls. The Mexican sample was drawn from preparatorias in Mexico City; the U.S. sample was from junior high schools in Austin, Texas. The two groups were approximately matched in terms of their fathers' education and occupation, all selected from the upper-middle class level. The Social Attitudes Inventory was administered during regular class sessions in the school room.

The responses of the subjects to the 16 items were given a code number of one to four. One was given to a Yes-Yes answer, two to a No-No, three to a Yes-No, and four to a No-Yes answer. The two questions, "Am I like him?" and "Do I want to be like him?" were separated in order to obtain a rating for self and ideal perceptions with self perception corresponding to the "Am I like him?" response. The two questions were always in the order as shown in the previous example. All "Yes" answers having a code number of 1 or 4 were given the number one. All "No" answers with a code of 2 or 3 were given a zero. For example, if the subject answered No-Yes (Code 4), then a "0" was given for his self rating and a "1" for his ideal-self. If he answered yes to both questions (Code 1), a "1" was given for his self rating and a "1" for ideal-self.

The scores for the subjects in each group were summed and used as the dependent measure in an analysis of variance. The sources of variance were country (Mexico-United States), active-passive, and self-ideal.

The results of the analysis of variance are presented in Table 1. Of the main effects only the active-passive dimension resulted in a significant F. In

TABLE 1
Results of Analysis of Variance

	df	MS	F	p
A Country (Mexico-U.S.)	1	9.30	3.87
Error a	98	.77		
B Active-Passive	1	155.00	44.89	.001
C Self-Ideal	1	5.52	3.71
B × C	1	11.23	2.41
A × B	1	30.80	8.92	.01
A × C	1	.72	.48
A × B × C	1	.44	.09
Error b	98	3.45		
Error c	98	1.94		
Error bc	98	4.66		

the interactions effects, only the two-way interaction between Mexican-American and active-passive showed significance.

The lack of significance of the main variable Mexican-American is most easily interpreted as no difference in response-set to either yes or no between the two cultures when active-passive or self-ideal dimensions are not considered. Similarly, the non-significance of the self-ideal variable indicates no difference between the self and ideal responses for the group as a whole when the active-passive dimension is not considered.

The significance of the active-passive variable as a main effect indicates that there is a tendency regardless of country or of self-ideal perception to respond more often with a "yes" to active than to passive items. Various possible explanations for this result suggest themselves. The social attitude items themselves may be biased in favor of activity, i.e., the active items may be more attractive than passive items. The more likely explanation is the composition of the sample, characterized by adolescence and upper-middle-class affiliation. It seems possible that children of this age and social class are more likely to have an active orientation in any culture as compared to the population as a whole.

The interaction between Mexican-American and active-passive supports much of the theorizing and previous research dealing with Mexicans and Americans, i.e., the U.S. sample was more active; the Mexican sample more passive. A closer look at the scores in the various cells, however, suggests that these results are not quite so simply explained. The U.S. sample preferred active over passive responses in a ratio of nearly two to one, while the responses of the Mexican sample were nearly evenly divided between the active and passive

items. A more precise interpretation of these data would be that the U.S. sample tends to prefer active social attitudes, whereas the Mexican sample shows much more variability in this regard, choosing both active and passive social attitudes. If an inference can be drawn from these results as to actual behavior, it would be anticipated that the U.S. school child would be likely to respond to social situations in an active manner whereas the Mexican school child would exhibit both kinds of behavior, sometimes active, sometimes passive.

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ABSTRACT

School children from Mexico City and Austin, Texas, were compared on their responses to active and passive items drawn from the Social Attitudes Inventory. There were 50 children in each group, equally divided as to sex.

All subjects were of approximately the same age (14 years) and all were from the upper-middle socio-economic level. The Social Attitudes Inventory permitted not only measurements on the active-passive dimension, but also in terms of self perception and self-ideal. The results of an analysis of variance showed no difference in the main effects of the country (Mexico-U.S. variable) or the self-ideal factor. The combined sample did show a significant preference for active responses, which is probably best explained in terms of their developmental stage, adolescence, and their upper-middle social class affiliation. The interaction between country and the active-passive dimension was also significant with the U.S. sample having higher active scores than the Mexican sample. A closer examination of the data indicates that this difference is not explained by the simple statement that Northamericans are active and Mexicans are passive. A more precise explanation suggests that the U.S. sample does prefer active responses, but the Mexican sample uses both active and passive responses in approximately equal number.

RESUMEN

Se compararon niños en edad escolar de Ciudad de Méjico y Austin, Texas en base a sus respuestas a ítems pasivo y activo sacados del Inventario de Actitudes Sociales. Había 50 niños en cada grupo. La mitad eran niños y la otra mitad niñas. Todos los sujetos eran aproximadamente de la misma edad (14 años) y todos de un nivel socio-económico de alta clase media. El Inventario de Actitudes Sociales permite no solo medir la dimensión pasivo-activa sino también la auto-percepción individual y el factor ideal personal. La muestra combinada demostró una preferencia muy significativa por las respuestas activas, lo que probablemente se explica mejor en términos de su etapa de desarrollo, la adolescencia, y su afiliación a una alta clase media. La interacción entre países y la dimensión activo-pasiva fué también muy significativa dentro de la muestra de los Estados Unidos. Los puntajes activos fueron más altos que en la muestra mejicana. Un examen más cuidadoso de los datos indica que esta diferencia no se explica por el simple hecho de que los norteamericanos son mas activos y que los mejicanos más pasivos. Una explicación más precisa sugiere que la muestra norteamericana prefiere respuestas activas, pero que la muestra mejicana usa tanto las respuestas activas como las pasivas con igual frecuencia.

RESUMO

Respostas a ítems passivos e ativos do Inventário de Atitudes Sociais de escolares da Cidade do México e de Austin, Texas foram comparadas. Cada grupo era formado de 50 escolares, metade de cada sexo. Todos os sujeitos tinham aproximadamente a mesma idade (14 anos) e provinham do nível

sócio-econômico de alta classe média. O Inventário de Atitudes Sociais permite além de medida da dimensão ativa-passiva aspectos de auto percepção e de eu-ideal. Os resultado de uma análise de variância não mostrou diferenças quanto a variável país (México—EE. UU.) e nem quanto ao fator eu-ideal. A amostra combinada apresentou uma preferência significativa por respostas ativas o que é provavelmente melhor explicado em termos do estágio de desenvolvimento em que o escolar se encontra, a adolescência e da sua afiliação a classe social alta média. A interação entre país e a dimensão ativa-passiva também foi significativa apresentando a amostra norteamericana escores mais elevados do que a amostra mexicana. Um exame mais pormenorizado dos dados indica que essa diferença não se esclarece dizendo simplesmente que os primeiros são mais ativos e os segundos mais passivos. Uma explicação mais precisa sugere que os escolares da amostra norteamericana preferem respostas ativas mas que os da amostra mexicana usam respostas ativas e passivas aproximadamente com a mesma frequência.