

PERSONAL VALUES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN MEXICO AND IN OREGON^{1, 2}

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ABSTRACT. The Simmons Value Survey, a 100 statement inventory developed through a survey of available systems for assessing personal values, was administered to students in the Preparatoria and Filosofía y Letras programs at the Universidad de Guadalajara as well as to students taking General Psychology at Oregon State University. Findings were: (1) the overall value priority systems of the groups were significantly correlated, even though there were many significant differences between groups in the valuing of specific statements; (2) there was no significant difference between groups in overall level of valuing; (3) correlation between male and female norms within national groups approximate reliability coefficients (i.e., .91 and .95), reducing any need to establish separate norms for each sex; (4) little support was gained for the active-passive syndrome distinction between Mexican and United States orientations, at least as far as the university students are concerned. Specific values characterizing and distinguishing the student groups are presented.

RESUMEN. El Simmons Value Survey, un inventario de 100 frases desarrolladas por medio de un estudio de los sistemas accesibles para tasar valores personales, fue aplicado a estudiantes en los programas de Preparatoria y de Filosofía y Letras en la Universidad de Guadalajara y, también, a estudiantes en psicología general en Oregon State University. Se observó que: (1) tenían una correlación significativa los sistemas de prioridad de valores de los estudiantes, aunque se observaron muchas diferencias significantes entre los grupos en la valuación de frases específicas; (2) no existía una diferencia significativa entre los grupos en el nivel de las valuaciones; (3) la correlación entre normas masculinas y femeninas dentro de grupos nacionales aproximaba los coeficientes de confiabilidad (es decir, .91 y .95), aminorando la necesidad de establecer normas separadas para cada sexo; (4) se logró poca justificación para la distinción entre los grupos mexicano y norteamericano (E.E.UU) en cuanto al síndrome activo-pasivo, por lo menos en estudiantes universitarios. Se presentan valores específicos caracterizando y diferenciando los grupos estudiantiles.

Attempts to understand differences in personal values within and between groups have generally pursued a reductionistic path. Possibly this follows naturally from the complexity of value systems and the consequent necessity to reduce the number of variables to a comprehensible level. One negative consequence of such reductionism is the oversimplification of value systems to the point that only differences are noted. Thus, contrasts among persons are maximized when in fact differences *and* sharing both occur. An example of reductionism is found in the Feldman and Newcomb

(1969) proposal that university student personal values be characterized by privatism, a tendency to emphasize personal health, family, career and leisure values over religious participation, community affairs and national/international betterment. While "charity begins at home" is an easily understood notion, research by Simmons (1972) on the personal values of students at Oregon State University suggests that the privatism notion oversimplifies a more complex situation. Interpretation of his research data led to a formulation of three levels of personal valuing: *core* (personal and family well-being); *intermediate* (personal development, education and positive work situations) and *peripheral* (national and international socio-political situations). Values can thus be conceived as falling along a continuum of *distance from the person*. Given the task of placing priorities on personal values most persons might be expected to emphasize those "closer" to them than others which are more impersonal or organizational. Privatism would thus be a natural consequence of certain values having more immediate relevance to the well-being of the person and, as such, would be characteristic of all persons, not just university students.

Another facet of reductionism is the existence of a variety of "narrow-band" systems of assessing personal values which are based upon constrained and/or limited conceptions of the component units of personal value systems. Through a sampling of many of these narrow-band systems Simmons (1972) was able to extend the range of component units for assessing personal values and thus to discover a number of things about Oregon State University students: (1) a remarkable homogeneity of values existed, the average correlation of students with normative profile being .61; (2) sex differences in values were minimal, the correlation between male and female normative profiles being .95; (3) humanitarian, intellectual, religious and aesthetic values received moderate ratings while the students seemed relatively neutral toward prestige, material and power values; (4) the students revealed a distinct preference for Far Eastern "ways to live" (Taoist, Buddhist) over the classical Hellenistic "ways" (Stoicism, Epicurean, Appollonian) while the heritage of the Middle East (Christian, Mohammedan) fell in between; (5) there was a relative lack of active concern for developing change and/or maintaining stability, reflecting perhaps a preference for a passive perceiving role in the world; (6) there was a preference for tranquility, calm diplomacy and a stable world over ecstasy, zealousness and an ever-changing world; (7) the students gave higher ratings to obedience-related values than they did to "justice," etc. Such findings suggest that a broad-band approach to the assessment of personal values may enhance understanding of group values without the necessity of reducing the number of variables involved.

During the 1930's there were a number of research studies directed toward descriptions of "national character," a line of research which seems to have died out. Recently, however, there has been an increase of research directed toward understanding cross-national *differences* in personal values (e.g., Sundberg, Rohila and Tyler, 1970; Varga, 1970; Manaster and Ahumada, 1971; Green, 1971), as well as studies directed toward diffusion of values across national borders (Peck and Diaz Guerrero, 1967) and changes in values in the second generation of groups immigrated to new nations (Papajohn and Spiegel, 1971). The existence of these latter studies seems to indicate that an interest in national character, per se, has declined but that research scientists feel there can be an enhancement of our understanding of the citizenry of nations through cross-national comparisons.

Diaz Guerrero (1968) has studied extensively the psychological orientation and characteristics of citizens of Mexico and has proposed a distinction between the Mexican orientation and the orientation of citizens of the United States which he calls "the active and the passive syndromes" (Diaz Guerrero, 1967). In the active syndrome we find the person coping with daily stress by doing something to modify the situation which created the stress whereas in the passive syndrome we find the person tends to accept the stressing situation and modifies himself or his own behavior. Diaz Guerrero associates the passive syndrome with Mexicans and other Latin Americans and he associates the active syndrome with the citizens of the more industrially advanced United States. While reducing complex responses to a more simple form, this formulation is consistent with some data gathered independently in Latin and North American cities (Manaster and Ahumada, 1971) yet not consistent with other data (Hereford, Selz, Stenning and Natalicio, 1967). One may wonder, however, whether there are other differences than this single syndrome, especially among university students who may by their relative uniqueness within their own nations reflect a difference in value orientation from the mainstream citizenry of Mexico and the United States.

The study to be reported below was conducted to explore the similarities and differences which exist between two Mexican university student groups and a United States university student group through the use of a wide-band inventory of personal values. Though not directed toward a test of Diaz Guerrero's active-passive syndrome, attention will be given to related variables.

METHOD

Subjects

Three groups of subjects provided the data for this study: (1) 78 male

and 33 female students in the Preparatoria program at the Universidad de Guadalajara, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico; (2) 41 students attending the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Guadalajara (many of these did not indicate their sex on the response sheet so no sex *ratios* are available); and (3) 99 male and 100 female students taking a General Psychology course at Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, U.S.A.

The Value Survey

All subjects were administered the Simmons Value Survey (Simmons, 1973), a 100 statement survey developed from a review of a variety of systems for assessing personal values. Statements were derived from Cantrel (1965), Flacks (1967), Morris (1956), Poe (1954), Rokeach (1968), Sampson (1967), Simmons (1969), and Tanzer (1968). The Survey was translated into Spanish for the Jaliscan students.³ The instructions requested that each statement in the survey be rated on a 7 point scale with 1 reflecting high valuing and 7 low valuing. The specific verbal anchors for each scale point were (with Spanish anchors in parenthesis):

- 1—extremely valuable to me (en extremo valioso);
- 2—quite valuable to me (muy valioso);
- 3—somewhat valuable to me (poco valioso);
- 4—of relatively neutral value to me (de valor relativamente neutral);
- 5—somewhat non-valuable to me (sin ningun valor relativamente);
- 6—quite non-valuable to me (realmente sin ningun valor);
- 7—extremely non-valuable to me (en extremo sin ningun valor).

Thus a low rating indicated a high valuing.

Analysis

Means and standard deviations for each statement for each group were computed as well as *t* tests between the Oregon and the Preparatoria student means and between the Preparatoria and Filosofía student means. Spearman rank order correlation coefficients (ρ), corrected for ties, were computed to determine how similarly the 100 items were ranked by the three groups. Similarity between the mean statement ratings by males and by females was determined by use of Pearson product moment correlation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sex Similarities

The Pearson product moment correlation between the mean item placements of the males and the females was .91 for the Universidad de Guadalajara Preparatoria sample and .95 for the Oregon State University sample. Since these approximate reliability coefficients, the data within each

group were merged without consideration of sex of subject on all further analyses to be described below.

Level of Group Similarity

When the statement means of the Guadalajara Preparatoria students were compared with the means of the Oregon State students (using the *t* test) 70 of the 100 tests were found statistically significant at the .05 level or greater, while 26 of the 100 *t* tests were significant when the two Mexican groups were compared.⁴ This initially suggests that the value systems of the two groups are quite different. However, the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient between the rankings of the values by the Oregonians and the rankings by the Preparatoria Jaliscans was .67, the rho between the rankings by the Filosofía y Letras group and the rankings by the Oregon group was .73, while the rho between the ranks of the two Mexican groups was .81. Thus, while value priorities of the two Mexican groups do have a higher correlation with each other than either does with the Oregon rankings, all three rhos are statistically significant. This could allow one to claim that all three groups are but sub-samples of the same population. The main conclusion one would seem to have to make from all these statistics is that the extensive differences between specific items clearly exist within the framework of an overall shared priority system of values.

Level of Valuing

Because it was also possible that the 70 significant *t* tests were the result of a tendency of one group to give generally higher ratings than another, the mean item placement for each group was determined. These were 2.33 for the Preparatoria students, 2.43 for the Filosofía y Letras students and 2.70 for the Oregon State students. The *t* tests between these means were all non-significant, ruling out the possibility that the groups differed in overall level of valuing.

Perspectives on the "Active-Passive Syndrome"

To assess the extent to which the university students in the two countries differed along the active-passive syndrome (Díaz Guerrero, 1967), five value statements were selected for attention. Two of these reflected a valuing of passivity: "feeling the comfort of having others maintain a good world for me" and "accepting circumstances for what they are." Three of the statements reflected a valuing of activity: "fighting for what I believe in," "developing new ways of living in the modern world" and "developing or discovering means to change the world in which we live."

Inspection of *t* tests for these items revealed a significant difference be-

tween the Oregonians and the Preparatoria students on all five values. The interesting finding, however, is that the Preparatoria students valued all five items more highly than did the Oregonians. The conclusion would thus have to be that these Mexican university students value passivity and activity more than do these U.S. students, i.e., this is a more significant dimension to them. When the item means were reviewed it was discovered that all three "active" items received lower ratings (meaning they were valued more) than the two passive items. Thus, to the extent that the five items actually do reflect Diaz Guerrero's active and passive syndromes, these Mexican university students are more active than passive.

Specific Value Emphases of Each Group

The Universidad de Guadalajara Preparatoria students seemed to place maximum value upon a positive integration of self into society via achievement and support of the family (e.g., high placements to "being successful in my work," "the opportunity to improve my standard of living," "continually and actively striving for some end," "developing and maintaining a career for myself," "being a decent normal person," "loving my parents," "having happy, healthy children") while they seemed to minimize power values, frivolity and ecstatic abandonment (e.g., low placements to "being in charge of the lives of others," "spending my time at parties," "floating along in a casual and carefree state of existence," "enjoying sensual experiences with relish and abandonment," "the state of ecstasy").

The Universidad de Guadalajara Filosofía y Letras students seemed to maximize values related to purposeful individuality as well as the abstract principles of truth, justice and wisdom (e.g., high placements to "being myself," "a closeness with my own inner self," "continuously and actively striving for some end," "fighting for what I believe in," "truth," "justice," "achieving wisdom") while they minimize power, prestige, economic and casualness values (e.g., low placements to "being in charge of the lives of others," "being part of political activities," "the opportunity to become a celebrity," "the hope of being wealthy," "floating along in a casual and carefree state of existence," "feeling the comfort of having others maintain a good world for me," "spending my time at parties").

The Oregon State University students seemed to maximize interpersonal relationships, personal maturity, and well-being (e.g., high placements to "experiencing true friendship," "being part of a happy family," "living in a world at peace," "being myself," "being a mature person," "leading a meaningful life," "having good health") while they minimized prestige, frivolity, political involvement and economic gain (e.g., low placements to "the opportunity to become a celebrity," "spending my time at parties," "float-

ing along in a casual and carefree state of existence," "being a part of political activities," "spending my time organizing and directing," "being the one who always brings about changes," "participating in the business life of the community").

Differences between Groups in Rank-Level of Specific Values

Turning to rank-differences between groups for item placements we find the major differences between the three groups to be as follows. The Preparatoria students were *more* concerned than the Oregon State students with being victorious, the opportunity to improve their standard of living, leading a disciplined life, maintaining the tried and true ways of living, and continuously striving for some end while they were *less* concerned with being open and receptive of others, being with others, being mature, resisting the pressures to violate personal values and being of service to others. The Filosofía y Letras students were *more* concerned than the Oregon State University students with being victorious, developing and discovering means to change the world, avoiding idleness, continually and actively striving for some end and making a contribution to basic knowledge while they were *less* concerned with being open and receptive of others, leading a comfortable life, being of service to others, living to a happy old age and establishing and maintaining a family. The Preparatoria students were *more* concerned than the Filosofía y Letras students with maintaining tried and true ways of living, being a decent, normal person, developing a career, establishing a family, and having happy, healthy children while they were *less* concerned about being with others, being mature, avoiding idleness, leading a life of freedom and thinking ideas and enjoying thoughts.

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SIMMONS

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FOOTNOTES

1. Revised from text presented initially in Descriptive Research Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 1, Center for Research on Student Life and Development, Office of Dean of Students, Oregon State University.
2. The author wishes to thank Dr. Angel Pulido and Dr. Albert Ladron de Guevara, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Guadalajara, for their assistance in making this study possible.
3. The 100 statements were translated into Spanish initially by a translator contacted through the Instituto Cultural Mexicano - Norte Americano de Guadalajara. This translation was then reviewed with Dr. A. Pulido, a professor teaching psychology at the Universidad de Guadalajara. The English and/or the Spanish versions are available on request by writing the author at the Department of Psychology, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon 97331, U.S.A.
4. Complete tabulated data (means, standard deviations and *t* tests) are also available from the author.