

DIMENSIONS OF DIFFERENCE AMONG CULTURES

Association for Moral Education 2000, Glasgow

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In recent decades, the cultural composition of countries has changed dramatically, partly as a result of immigrants who have arrived in search of economic opportunities. In many Western countries, the number and size of ethnic groups are growing. Although it is often assumed that members of the same group will hold similar values, this is frequently not the case. Instead, there are wide spectrums of differences due to factors such as varying pre-immigration experiences, acculturation levels, and cultural identities (Abe, Zane, & Chun, 1994; Clark and Hofstede, 1998; Nguyen, Messe, & Stollak, 1999, Tsai, in press; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, in press). Because of this increasing diversity, more attention is being paid to how cultural perspectives affect social functioning and moral behavior.

Most research on interculturalism has focused on intercultural competence and skills in communication rather than on specific moral values or moral development. However, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (Kluckhohn, F., & Strodtbeck, F. (Variations in value orientations. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, & Co, 1961) did a cross-group analysis of specific value orientations about human nature, the relation between nature and human beings, concept of time, concept of human activity, nature of relationships among human beings. The Dimensions of Difference instrument uses the value list from Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (human nature, the relation between nature and human beings, concept of time, concept of human activity, nature of relationships among human beings) and adds: relationship to things, self concept, attitudes toward the body, morality. Developed by Darcia Narvaez in 1997 as a classroom tool, the Dimension of Difference instrument was used designed initially as an interview to be used in multicultural classes, for the purpose of starting a dialogue between two people from different cultural backgrounds.

Measures

The Dimensions of Difference Questionnaire consists of 136 statements that assess specific attitudes. (See the Western Scale for sample items.) The individual is asked to complete same questionnaire twice, once according to what the individual thinks 'most people' believe (MPQ) and a second time according to what they believe personally (IPQ). On a scale from 1-7, participants rated how much they agreed with the statement (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). Several pilot studies were conducted as the questionnaire was revised for data collection. In this study we examined the DOD's IPQ Western Scale (Cronbach's alpha = .71). The Western Scale consists of the following items.

3. Friendships can be expected to last a few years based on where people are living and working.
7. Financial independence from family and friends is important.
8. Psychological independence from family and friends is important.
14. Helping strangers is important.
22. It is alright for a female to act like a male.
52. People should try to improve their lives and themselves.
60. There is always room for improvement of things.
76. A significant amount of time should be spent making scientific advances.
86. It is most rewarding to pursue one's own goals.
108. It is all right to feel alone.
125. Progress is technological advances.
21. It is alright for a male to act like a female

.In this study, the participants took several measures to be used as independent variables:

(a) Multicultural Experiences Questionnaire (MEXQ) is a measure of multicultural experience and openness to diverse groups. It includes questions on international travel experience, diversity of friends, efforts to counter personal bias, attitudes towards specific groups.

(b) The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is a measure of intercultural sensitivity development, or "'the development of consciousness' with regard to one's behavioral, affective, and cognitive responses to difference" (Paige, Cassuto, Yershova, & DeJaeghere, 2000). The instrument, developed by Hammer and Bennet (1998), is based on Milton Bennet's (1986, 1993) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. The theory behind the IDI is developmental in nature and consists of six stages: (1) denial, being indifferent, disinterested, or avoiding other cultural groups, (2) defense, characterized by recognition and negative evaluation of differences, (3) minimization, emphasizing the similarities among humans and de-emphasizing any differences, (4) acceptance, appreciating cultural differences in a cultural relativistic manner, (5) cognitive adaptation, characterized by conscious attempts to take other cultural perspectives into account, and (6) behavioral adaptation, internalizing more than one cultural worldview and having an identity that not only includes, but transcends, multiple cultures. The instrument has shown to be both reliable and valid, with little or no social desirability (Paige et al, 2000). The IDI produces two types of scores: developmental and perceived. The perceived score reflects the individual's perceived intercultural strengths. The computation of the score assigns no negative weight to ethnocentric stages (the first three) and does not take into account all six stages. The developmental score, on the other hand, takes all of the stages into account, assigns a greater weight to the larger theoretical gap between minimization and acceptance stages, and negatively weights the ethnocentric scores. The developmental score is intended to capture where the individual is actually situated on the developmental continuum of the six intercultural sensitivity stages.

(c) The Defining Issues Test (DIT) is an objective, paper-and-pencil measure of justice-based moral judgment that presents six moral dilemmas. After reading each vignette, the participant rates the importance of a list of concerns one might have in that particular situation and then ranks the four of most concern. The Postconventional or "P" score is the most widely-used index on the DIT (Rest, 1993), a weighted sum of the postconventional reasoning preferred by the participant. The maximum score is 95. Test-retest reliability for the DIT ranges between .70 and .80 for the P-score. Internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's Alpha has the same range, .70 -.80, in various studies (Rest, 1993). "N2" is a new score that takes into account both the postconventional items preferred and rejected personal schema items. Validity of the DIT is well established (see Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999, *Postconventional moral thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian approach*).

RESULTS

Because it was a small sample, only correlations are reported and no conclusions can be drawn.

	Correlation with DOD "Western C" Scale		Political conservatism	
		<i>p value</i>		<i>p value</i>
IDI Perceived Score	.410	.065#	-.079	.179
IDI Developmental Score	.298	.190	-.346	.106
MEXQ Experience Score	.447	.042*	-.450	.031*
MEXQ Attitude Score	.156	.499	-.347	.104
Maintaining Norms reasoning	-.497	.026*	-.107	.637

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Participants: 23 undergraduates

Tests taken in this order:

DOD-Individual perspective
Multicultural Experience Questionnaire
(DOD- 'Most people' perspective)
Intercultural Development Inventory
Defining Issues Test

RESULTS

Small sample. Only correlations examined.

DOD Western Scale is related positively to IDI Perceived score and the MEXQ experience and negatively to Maintaining Norms reasoning.

MEXQ Exp is related positively to IDI perceived score, Western scale, and is negatively related to political conservatism.

MEXQ Att is related positively to both the IDI perceived score and the IDI developmental score.

	Correlation with DOD "Western C" Scale		Political conservatism	
		<i>p value</i>		<i>p value</i>
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MEXQ Experience Score	.447	.042*	-.450	.031*
MEXQ Attitude Score	.156	.499	-.347	.104
Maintaining Norms reasoning	-.497	.026*	-.107	.637

	Correlation with item 21: <i>It is all right for a male to act like a female.</i>	
		<i>p value</i>
IDI Perceived Score	.096	.672
IDI Developmental Score	.558	.007*

	MEXQ Experience Score		MEXQ Attitude Score	
		<i>p value</i>		<i>p value</i>
IDI Perceived Score	.664	.001*	.570	.005*
IDI Developmental Score	.330	.12	.484	.019*

INSTRUMENTS

Dimensions of Difference (DOD)

Multicultural Experiences Questionnaire (MEXQ)

Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

Defining Issues Test (DIT)

Participants: 23 undergraduates

Tests taken in this order:

DOD-Individual perspective

Multicultural Experience Questionnaire

(DOD- 'Most people' perspective)

Intercultural Development Inventory

Defining Issues Test

	Correlation with DOD "Western C" Scale		Political conservatism
		<i>p value</i>	
IDI Perceived Score .179	.410	.065#	-.079
IDI Developmental Score .106	.298	.190	-.346
MEXQ Experience Score .031*	.447	.042*	-.450
MEXQ Attitude Score .104	.156	.499	-.347
Maintaining Norms reasoning .637	-.497	.026*	-.107

	Correlation with item 21: <i>It is all right for a male to act like a female.</i>		<i>p value</i>
IDI Perceived Score	.096		.672
IDI Developmental Score	.558		.007*

	MEXQ Experience Score	<i>p value</i>	MEXQ Attitude
	Score	<i>p value</i>	
IDI Perceived Score .005*	.664	.001*	.570
IDI Developmental Score .019*	.330	.12	.484

