

THE VALUE ORIENTATIONS OF GUATEMALAN
SUBSISTENCE FARMERS: MEASUREMENT
AND IMPLICATIONS* ^{1 2}

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A. INTRODUCTION

The study of values both intraculturally and crossculturally has a long, and, in our impression, distinguished history. Albert and Kluckhohn (1), for example, tell us that between 1920 and 1960, 1991 volumes and articles dealing with values were published, and interest in the area seems to be increasing—an impressive comment on the heuristic aspect of the value concept. However, while definitions of and classificatory systems for the values of various groups have proliferated, attempts to relate values to other important personal, social, and cultural phenomena have not kept pace with the importance attributed to values in the total functioning of the individual. It is the purpose of this paper to report an attempt to relate the value orientations of subsistence farmers from isolated rural communities in Guatemala to several important manifestations of successful coping behavior. It was our hypothesis that the value orientations of relatively successful, coping farmers would differ in interpretable ways from the value orientations of unsuccessful, poorly coping farmers.

B. METHOD

1. *Values Questionnaire*

The instrument used to assess the major value orientations of our subjects (Ss) was the Values Orientation Schedule used by the Harvard group in

* Received in the Editorial Office, Provincetown, Massachusetts, on December 29, 1971, and given special consideration in accordance with our policy for cross-cultural research. Copyright, 1972, by The Journal Press.

¹ The authors wish to express their appreciation for the contributions of Dr. Victor Mejía Pivaral in adapting the Values Orientation Schedule; Mr. Stephen Sellers in the constructing of the Coping Effectiveness Index, and Miss Maricella Ochoa in the data collection.

² This study was supported in part by Contract No. PH43-65-640, from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the Bio-Medical Fund of the Department of Social Relations, Harvard University, and The Comparative International Program.

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their studies of cultures in the American Southwest. The complete schedule and a Spanish translation are published in the volume reporting the results of that study (2).

The rationale for the original study was based on C. Kluckhohn's assertion that all members in a cultural group, and in a sense the culture itself, must orient to one of a finite set of alternative modes of thinking and behaving to each of five pancultural, human problems. Given this rationale, the Harvard group developed a questionnaire designed to illustrate each of the problem dimensions concretely and to reflect an individual's choice amongst the range of alternative modes of response.

The original test is 22 items in length. Each item is a description of a situation and/or person. *S* indicates a preference for the person or one of several solutions to the situation. The items are designed to provide information as to the way in which the *S* would characteristically resolve four of the five pancultural questions considered by the Harvard group to underlie value orientations. These questions deal with man's relationship with other men, his relationship with nature, and his major time and activity dimensions. Man's relationship to other men may be either lineal, collateral, or individualistic; he may either feel subjected to, in some control of (over), or part of (with) nature; he may place most importance on the past, present, or future; he may stress activity and productive work (doing) or stress being at ease and doing what one wants (being).

The fifth major problem area, that of the basic nature of man, was not included either in our adaptation of the Schedule or in the original Schedule. Each of the problem areas and alternative resolutions represents major value orientations and is reflected in the items of the Values Orientation Schedule.

It was our original plan to use the Spanish translation of the test, without change, to assess the value orientations of our Spanish speaking Ladino *Ss*. We felt that if the test was successfully employed in the Spanish-American community in the American Southwest study and in a translated form with relatively isolated Navahoes, our Ladino *Ss* should have little difficulty comprehending the material.

Pretesting indicated that considerable adaptation would be necessary. We found our *Ss* were frequently unable to follow the lengthy descriptive situations or the two or three alternative responses comprising the original items. Additionally, when asked, as in the original format, for a second choice and the probable choice of others, our *Ss* seemed unable to respond meaningfully. Finally, the time required to complete the original test, administered in inter-

view form by a trained interviewer, took well over three hours, an unconscionable time burden for our hardworking Ladino Ss.

Consequently, on the basis of consultation with an experienced local anthropologist and extensive pretesting, we drastically curtailed and abbreviated the original translation. The form of the test used in this study, while retaining the essence of the descriptive situations and the alternative responses, is very much shortened and idiomatic for the area. Further, we asked only for the S's first choice of alternative responses, requesting him to respond by repeating the sense of the alternative rather than its ordinal position. We also eliminated questions asking S to guess the choice others of his group would have made.

These modifications were dictated by our recognition of the distortions in response patterns attendant upon excessive time impositions in testing situations and our choice of statistical techniques which do not rely on the complicated procedures used by the Harvard group.

2. *Subjects*

The study was conducted in a small village 58 kilometers northeast of Guatemala City in the plateau regions of that country. As in most rural villages of northeast Guatemala, the population of between 800 and 900 is culturally descended from the Spanish. Life style is fairly homogeneous, almost all male heads of households being small farmers who cultivate by hand the major crops of corn and beans. The Ss in the study were couples with children between 6-14 years of age, who had the nine highest and nine lowest overall ratings on the four variables of a sociopsychological index which, in total, we construe as a coping effectiveness index. The Coping Effectiveness Index was developed by ranking each household as above or below the median of total income (median: \$250), amount of land worked (median: 30,000 sq. varas), style of house (a median of 2 on a pooled 1-4 field rating judgment of the kitchen, dining area, bedrooms, and living area in accord with "local standard"), and literacy (one or both parents as literate was above the median, neither below). The four variables were scored by giving a 2 for being above the median and 0 below, yielding a potential range on the index of 0-8.

In our final sample we interviewed the man and woman in the highest and lowest ranked households that included children between 6-14. The mean total score of the low group on the Coping Effectiveness Index was .55 ($SD = .838$) and for the high group 5.77 ($SD = .628$). We restricted ourselves to households with children between 6-14 for purposes of another study in preparation which inquires into generational differences in values.

C. RESULTS

The data are presented in two parts: first a description of the value orientations of subsistence farmers in Guatemala and then the manner in which independently derived measures of coping behavior relate to individual differences within the general cultural pattern of value orientations.

Table 1 and Figure 1 present the value orientations of Guatemalan subsistence farmers. The results reveal that the major value orientations of these *Ss* reflect attitudes of being subjected to the whims of nature, a tendency to prefer individualism in interpersonal orientations, a primary focus on the present as opposed to the past or the future, and a marked stress on constructive activity.

It is important to note that in spite of the extensive revisions made on the original schedule, our data yield a pattern of group responses generally similar to that of the Spanish-American group in the Harvard study. This is encouraging in that one expects a certain consistency of value orientations concomitant with a similar cultural heritage. However, there is a major difference in value orientations between our Ladino *Ss* and the Spanish-American *Ss* in the original study with respect to values concerning work and leisure.

TABLE 1
VALUE ORIENTATIONS OF LADINO FARMERS

Value orientations	Total males (<i>N</i> = 18)	Group Total females (<i>N</i> = 18)
Relationship to time (5 items)		
Future	23 ^a	24
Present	62	53
Past	5	13
χ^2	29.91***	13.74**
Relationship to nature (5 items)		
Over	27	16
Subjected	51	50
With	12	24
χ^2	13.32**	9.92**
Relationship to other men (7 items)		
Lineal	15	18
Collateral	41	49
Individual	70	59
χ^2	19.80***	18.04**
Relationship to activity (6 items)		
Doing	87	84
Being	21	24
χ^2	22.24***	18.04***

^a Numbers in each cell are the frequency with which each orientation was endorsed.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

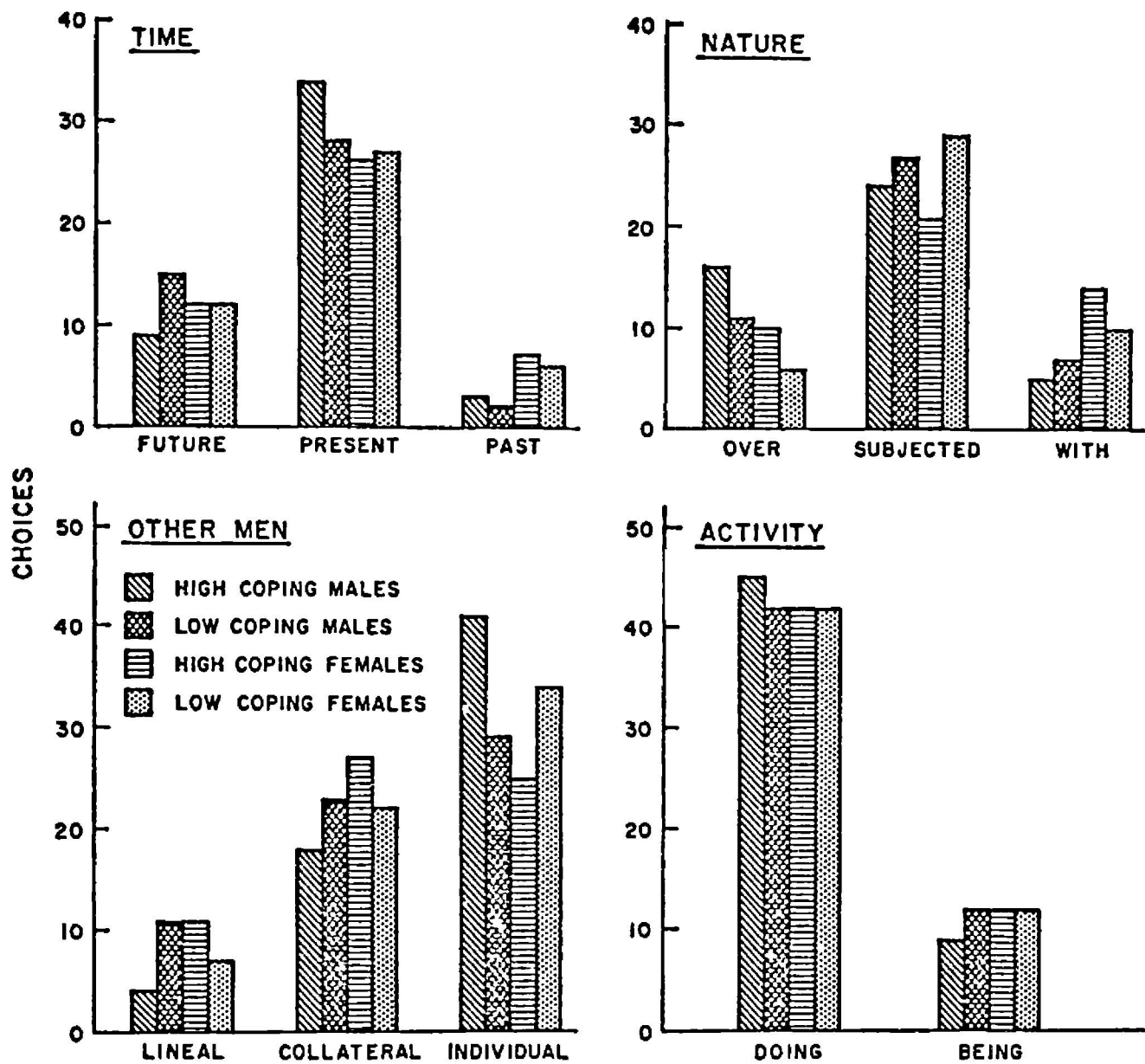


FIGURE 1
VALUE ORIENTATIONS OF LADINO FARMERS

Table 2 presents results pertinent to our second focal point, which relates an index of coping effectiveness to individual differences in value orientations. We find very little relationship between coping effectiveness and value orientation for the high and low coping female groups. In the male groups we note a significant relationship between coping effectiveness and orientation toward other men, with the high coping males expressing a more individualistic orientation than the low coping males. While they do not approach significant levels of relationship, a trend is apparent for the high coping males to choose alternatives that indicate a feeling of control over nature. One must be careful in placing too much stress on these trends. However, as one reviews the total table, the tendency for high coping males to differ from low coping males,

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF VALUE ORIENTATIONS FOR
HIGH AND LOW COPING LADINO FARMERS

Value orientations	Group			
	Males		Females	
	High coping N = 9	Low coping N = 9	High coping N = 9	Low coping N = 9
Relationship to time (5 items)				
Future	8 ^a	15	12	12
Present	34	28	26	27
Past	3	2	7	6
χ^2		2.91		.71
Relationship to nature (5 items)				
Over	16	11	10	6
Subjected	24	27	21	29
With	5	7	14	10
χ^2		1.43		2.94
Relationship to other men (7 items)				
Lineal	4	11	11	7
Collateral	18	23	27	22
Individual	41	29	25	34
χ^2		5.93*		2.76
Relationship to activity (6 items)				
Doing	45	42	42	42
Being	9	12	12	12
χ^2		.23		0

^a Numbers in each cell are the frequency with which each orientation was endorsed.

* $p < .10$.

who, in turn, appear very similar to both female groups, is unmistakable. Thus, even though the total picture seems to show that the entire sample can be characterized as having major value orientations that include a concentration on the present, the importance of activity and doing constructive things, a subjugation to nature and stress on individualism, high coping males deviate somewhat from their low coping counterparts in interesting directions.

D. DISCUSSION

One of the interesting findings in the study is the similarity of value orientations in our sample of Guatemalan Ladino farmers and the Spanish-American sample in the Harvard study. We note the preference of value orientations in these two samples is different only in the dimension of doing *versus* being. Our Ladino sample shows a marked preference for doing constructive work at all times, whereas the Spanish-American sample indicates a preference for attaining leisure and being at ease.

The disparity in the activity dimension between these two samples deserves comment. In the Harvard study the dominant being orientation is interpreted

woman in the nine highest scoring and nine lowest scoring households in the sample village comprising the subjects. Results are presented which reflect both the major value orientations of these subjects and demonstrate a relationship between values held and coping behavior. Finally, similarities and differences in value orientations between our subjects and an acculturating group of similar ethnic background are discussed.

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