Site under Construction: An Ethnopsychological Representation of the Mexican Self Concept
Sociedad Interamericana de Psicología
Austin, Organismo Internacional

Available in: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=28439208
An Ethnopsychological Representation of the Mexican Self

Rolando Diaz Loving
National Autonomous University of Mexico

Abstract
The relevance of psychological constructs can only be evaluated if the validity, reliability and cultural sensitivity of the concepts are established. Individual attributes and social behaviors stem from a life long dialectic of personal and social identity. The cultural norms and settings and each individual's bio-psychological tendencies. In this paper, the historical and cultural foundations of Mexican Identity are presented, followed by the universal conceptualization of the self and ending with the ethnopsychological research conducted to depict and understand the components that express, and the processes responsible for, the evolution, development and consolidation of the concept of the self in Mexican people. Clearly, the Mexican self describes a highly socio-emotional being.

Keywords: Self-concept; ethnopsychology.

Sitio en Construcción: Una Representación Entopsicológica del Auto-Concepto del Mexicano

Compendio
Referente al desarrollo de la personalidad, se puede afirmar que se deriva de una dialéctica permanente de las premisas histórico-socio-culturales de un pueblo, el ecosistema en el que se desarrollan los individuos y sus tendencias y necesidades bio-psíquicas. Para el presente trabajo se inicia con las bases históricas y culturales de la identidad del mexicano, seguido de la conceptualización del auto concepto presentada en el centro del proceso, y terminando con la investigación entopsicológica realizada para describir los componentes que expresan los procesos responsables de la evolución, desarrollo y consolidación del yo entre mexicanos. Se debe adelantar, que el resultado es un auto concepto profundamente enraizado en aspectos sociales y emocionales.

Palabras clave: Autoconcepto; etnopsicología.

The concept of "self" as a human endeavor has an ancient history. In fact, many great philosophical writings cover its components and processes. Plato compares the self to the soul while Aristotle makes a systematic description of its nature; Saint Agustín gives us a first glimpse at an introspective self and Saint Thomas gives a theological interpretation of the concept; after renaissance, Francis Bacon introduces a positivist perspective and Nitch offers an existential account of the self (Onate, 1989). In fact, questions as to how we perceive ourselves, how we see ourselves through the eyes of others, if we behave different or consistent according to the characteristics of the situations, how we see ourselves with the change of age and the expectations of others, and the "self" emerges and is constructed as a result of his/her interaction with others. Following, Mead's (1990) social interaction theory, the self is seen as emerging from a process that uses time with contact with others, in social communication.

The path of the self as the principal topic in psychology has continued throughout the twentieth century, as it influences all scopes of human behavior. According to Allport (1976) the self is implicated in all human conduct, and influences the attitudes, feelings and tendencies of the human being. In other words, because the "self" is so important in human life, it is defined as the unifying force of all habits, characteristics, confidence, judgment, memory, reference frame, aptitude for learning and all other motivational aspects.
self concept would be incomplete without a specific mention to the impact that cultural and ecological variables have on the definition, development and processes related to the self (Triandis & Suh, 2002).

With respect to the importance the socio-cultural context, in 1901, Ezequiel A. Chavez, an influential Mexican academic, wrote the following lines:

“Character varies across ethnic groups, and thus, the most relevant human endeavor is lodged in the study of the ethnic character of people. Not considering this cardinal rule has induced many to fall victims to the absurdity of attempting the direct transplant of educational, repressive or political institutions, without even reflecting on the possible incompatibility of intellect, feelings, and will, of the people who they intend to improve, offering a beautiful, although inadequate reality. . . . It is not enough for laws to satisfy intelligence in the abstract, it is indispensable that they concretely adapt to the special conditions of the people they were created for. Ideas and programs may seem very noble, however, a sad reality is lived too often in Latin American countries, when marvelous plans are traced on paper, harmonic constitutions are advanced, and like Plato’s dreams, they crash against the crudeness of practice and reality.” (p. 84)

This fragment offers us at least two major considerations. On the one hand, the cardinal role of culture in the construction of reality, on the other, the historic preoccupation of the Mexican people with the roots and reaches of their identity. Understanding identity and self concept in a valid, reliable and culturally sensitive form requires dwelling into the historical, geographic, cultural and psychological evolution of a group of people. This paper turns now to a brief depiction of the historical and cultural bases, and moves on to the ethno-psychological research conducted with regards to the Mexican self.

Before the Spaniards arrived in Mexico in the fifteen hundreds, Mesoamerica was a thriving and culturally diverse region. Only on the valley perched among the mountains, over one hundred thousand inhabitants populated a bustling Tenochtitlan. The Aztecs were a powerful warrior people who had many enemies. Among them, the Tlaxcaltecas contributed with over 12,000 fighters in the Spanish attack on their city. Many other cultures developed in equally distinct geographical ecosystems of the area, as is the case of the Mayans, the Olmecs and others. Each Pre-Columbian ethnic group contributed its biological and cultural heritage across three ethnic identity became rampant. ¿Should they side with liberal or clerical political concepts, roots akin to a European Monarchy or a Republic led by the children of Spanish men and women? What was the role and place of the indigenous who had walked these lands before the Spaniards? In consequence, who did the Mexicans identify with? What were they? What was their character?

The emergence of the twentieth century brought new battles, the passage of the United States of America into Mexican soil, a French intervention, later, a Reform movement to set up a free state, and finally, 40 years of dictatorship.

The movement. In its aftermath, Jose Vasconi, a political, a thinker, promulgated the coming of one which extracted its strength from its’ measuring stick for the ethnic identity was now indigenous. However, a few years later, in the 1930s, the Mexican philosopher, extracted the interplay between biology (psychological structure) and proclivity, it seems inevitable to study all personality traits, by paying close attention to Chavez’s postulates and James’s constutions are advanced, and like Plato’s dreams, they crash against the crudeness of practice and reality.” (p. 84)

Given the attention the self has engaged, it seems fair to ask before continuing, if the self is a simple psychological, or if it can be rescued as a human socio-cultural and eco-systemic effects and formula. The answer may lie in a synthesis of psychological perspective of the self.
socio-culture offers a system of interrelated premises that are internalized by individuals in such way that they norm the feelings, ideas and behaviors by stipulating the types of social roles, the interaction of the individual in those roles, and the where, when, and with whom and how to play them. As a result, the self of the Mexican is embedded in a social developmental process that depends on socialization and enculturation practices. Based on this line of research, Díaz-Guerrero (1979) proposed a typology of the Mexican prototype, in which 8 personality structures emerged. Given the strength an inclination of the socio-cultural premises in the development of personality, 4 of these types describe over 90% of the population. True to the emphasis destined in the Mexican socio-culture to collective, social, and relational activities, the most widely spread character, over 75% of the population, was an affiliative obedient type who acted affectionately, dependently, and agreeably, as well as controlled and showed high need of social approval and support. A smaller percentage of the population would rebel against the dictates and norms of the society, producing an actively self-affirming orientation, which would translate into autonomous, independent, impulsive, dominant, rebellious and intelligent characteristics, very similar to the typical profile found in instrumental hierarchical individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1994). From the combination of the traditional premises and a moderate self actualizing tendency, another small portion of the population would develop an active internal control which would be shown by affectionate, thoughtful, rational, flexible and capability traits. Finally, constructing from the negative emotional component of every bio-system and the traditional socio-emotive norms, a passive external control type would appear, engulfed in authoritarian, aggressive, corrupt, impulsive, pessimist, uncontrolled and servile orientations.

The psycho-socio-cultural tracing of the Mexican Self was initiated with the research conducted by Díaz-Guerrero (1982) using Osgood's Semantic Differential technique with Mexican adolescents in the nineteen sixties. In a comparison of the evaluative, power and dynamism scores of the self, Mexican teenagers consistently scored lower in evaluation and power than their cohorts from 16 other cultures. The activity scores father, mother and friends within the Mexican Self Concept (Díaz-Guerrero, 1982). Construing the Mexican Self Concept has definitely had an impact on the research. A reanalysis of the events showed that the self is exalted, or the social core of the self, is proper.

From a deeply indigenous perspective, Díaz-Loving (1991) set out to explore the make up of the self concept of Mexicans. Using exploratory qualitative methodologies, the respondents described the self concept of the Mexican self have been carried out by Valdez (1994) and Lagunes (1999). Using semantic networks as a methodological tool and role depictions of the self, they asked subjects to give words that best defined their selves as friends and in different roles, the interaction of the individual in those roles, and the where, when, and with whom and how to play them. As a result, the self of the Mexican is embedded in a social developmental process that depends on socialization and enculturation practices. Based on this line of research, Díaz-Guerrero (1979) proposed a typology of the Mexican prototype, in which 8 personality structures emerged. Given the strength an inclination of the socio-cultural premises in the development of personality, 4 of these types describe over 90% of the population. True to the emphasis destined in the Mexican socio-culture to collective, social, and relational activities, the most widely spread character, over 75% of the population, was an affiliative obedient type who acted affectionately, dependently, and agreeably, as well as controlled and showed high need of social approval and support. A smaller percentage of the population would rebel against the dictates and norms of the society, producing an actively self-affirming orientation, which would translate into autonomous, independent, impulsive, dominant, rebellious and intelligent characteristics, very similar to the typical profile found in instrumental hierarchical individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1994). From the combination of the traditional premises and a moderate self actualizing tendency, another small portion of the population would develop an active internal control which would be shown by affectionate, thoughtful, rational, flexible and capability traits. Finally, constructing from the negative emotional component of every bio-system and the traditional socio-emotive norms, a passive external control type would appear, engulfed in authoritarian, aggressive, corrupt, impulsive, pessimist, uncontrolled and servile orientations.

The psycho-socio-cultural tracing of the Mexican Self was initiated with the research conducted by Díaz-Guerrero (1982) using Osgood's Semantic Differential technique with Mexican adolescents in the nineteen sixties. In a comparison of the evaluative, power and dynamism scores of the self, Mexican teenagers consistently scored lower in evaluation and power than their cohorts from 16 other cultures. The activity scores
those reported by La Rosa and Diaz-Loving (1991). However, they report separate positive and negative evaluation factors, which is not the case in the previous studies. One possible explanation for the differential pattern is that in the studies conducted with the semantic differential technique, the factors were bi-polar and included both the positive and negative poles. Using bi-polar scales rather than independent scales seems to have masked some of the negative aspects of the self that can develop in the culture.

Results and Discussion

Separate psychometric analysis by site, sex and age yielded generally congruent and similar factor structures. Analysis of the total set of participants by location, is consistent with previous theoretical and empirical robustness to ethnopsychological research. Congruent with the expectation of an interdependent emotional self, out of the 7 highly significant factors which explain 48.37% of the total test variance, above three and factor weights over .40 for each item) six variables were included and set on seven point pictorial likert type scale. Subjects were to select the square size that best indicate the amount that each attribute described them.

Method

Participants

AWARE of the ecosystem constraints of research conducted in Mexico City (the urban area has over 22 million inhabitants), in attempting to generalize to the Mexican population (90 million in 2000); we set out to test an indigenous measurement instrument in four distinct Mexican Samples. Included were Mexico City and Toluca as representative of large and medium urban populations in the central mountains of the country, Hermosillo in the Northwestern cost, and Merida in the Southeastern Peninsula of Yucatan. Each of these sections boasts a unique group identity and evolved from distinct indigenous populations. Mexico City is a cosmopolitan melting pot, Toluca is a medium industrial city with an Aztec ancestry and a mestizo overtone, Hermosillo is Yaqui country combined with an individualistic outlook, which is congruent with its closeness to the United States of America, and Yucatan is deeply entrenched in its traditional Mayan heritage (Diaz-Loving, Reyes-Lagunes, & Rivera Aragon, 2002). To insure a representative sample of these four populations, 2270 subjects were selected to equally represent males and females of four age groups (17-21, 22-27, 30-35, 40-45), in total 1078 were males and 1192 females, with an age range between 16-44 years and a mean of 28.33 years. Thus, the measures were distributed to subjects in each ecosystem, insuring equal size samples of males and females who were divided by age. One fourth was between 16 and 21 and represented the youth who are confronting the socio-culture in the development of their unique items form the instruments developed by Diaz-Loving (1991) and by Valdes (1994). These unique items form the instruments developed by Diaz-Loving (1991) and by Valdes (1994).

Results and Discussion

Separate psychometric analysis by confidence yielded generally congruent and similar factor structures. Analysis of the total set of participants by location, is consistent with previous theoretical and empirical robustness to ethnopsychological research. Congruent with the expectation of an interdependent emotional self, out of the 7 highly significant factors which explain 48.37% of the total test variance, above three and factor weights over .40 for each item) six variables were included and set on seven point pictorial likert type scale. Subjects were to select the square size that best indicate the amount that each attribute described them.

Method

Participants

AWARE of the ecosystem constraints of research conducted in Mexico City (the urban area has over 22 million inhabitants), in attempting to generalize to the Mexican population (90 million in 2000); we set out to test an indigenous measurement instrument in four distinct Mexican Samples. Included were Mexico City and Toluca as representative of large and medium urban populations in the central mountains of the country, Hermosillo in the Northwestern cost, and Merida in the Southeastern Peninsula of Yucatan. Each of these sections boasts a unique group identity and evolved from distinct indigenous populations. Mexico City is a cosmopolitan melting pot, Toluca is a medium industrial city with an Aztec ancestry and a mestizo overtone, Hermosillo is Yaqui country combined with an individualistic outlook, which is congruent with its closeness to the United States of America, and Yucatan is deeply entrenched in its traditional Mayan heritage (Diaz-Loving, Reyes-Lagunes, & Rivera Aragon, 2002). To insure a representative sample of these four populations, 2270 subjects were selected to equally represent males and females of four age groups (17-21, 22-27, 30-35, 40-45), in total 1078 were males and 1192 females, with an age range between 16-44 years and a mean of 28.33 years. Thus, the measures were distributed to subjects in each ecosystem, insuring equal size samples of males and females who were divided by age. One fourth was between 16 and 21 and represented the youth who are confronting the socio-culture in the development of their unique items form the instruments developed by Diaz-Loving (1991) and by Valdes (1994).
is extracted from the internalized emotional intelligence factor which covers the virtues of being calm, stable, obedient, peaceful, relaxed, serene, tolerant and tranquil. A traditional Mexican saying asks, *Why are you jumping so much if the ground is so flat?* The appearance of this dimension shows the impact of socio-cultural premises built around enduring social interaction in a pleasant and constructive manner, in the practice of interpersonal relationships. In fact, the strength of emotional self control training, derived from the present affiliative and obedient parenting strategies, prevalent in the socialization of norms, which indicate that children should always respect and obey their parents, who in turn always love and protect their children, replicates the findings of an array of research into the psychology of the Mexican (Vigano La Rosa & Diaz-Loving, 1990).

The next two socially desirable socio emotional factors to appear stress the importance of good and happy interpersonal relationships with friends, family and lovers. The first one, denominated social affection, explodes on the core of intimacy and closeness and is composed by items like affectionate, loving, caring, tender, romantic, generous, sentimental, noble, kindhearted and considerate. The internal consistency for the scale is Alpha .94 and the mean for all subjects is 5.3. The second dimension, coined Mexican style sociability and extraversion, is composed by items like being a joker, jovial, sociable, friendly, talkative, fun, animated, pleasant, merry, and of course, *simpatico*. The internal consistency is .95 and the mean for all subjects is 5.2. These two factors replicate two of the factors reported by La Rosa and Diaz-Loving (1991), and fill in the need for healthy and constructive social relationship as well as open communication and closeness. It is clear that the *simpatico* schema is not only about courteousness and a conciliatory demeanor; the self must also be happy and transmit this joy into its relationships. Furthermore, when these relationships enter the realm of romance, they are intrinsically devoted by tenderness, flirtatiousness, sentimentalism, and generosity, which equal data reported by Diaz-Loving and Sanchez-Aragon (2002) for intimate relationships among Mexican couples. It is thus that Self modification and the pursuit of the well being of others encompasses acquaintances, friends, family and intimate partners,

conflicting, hypercritical, dominant, impulsive, stubborn, rebellious, rancorous tendencies. This factor had an internal consistency of .85 and a scale mean of 4.2. These two negatively emotional self closely mirror the classic expressive and masculine expressive-instrumental internal control factor attests to this. Being constructive inclination towards power, a positive and socio emotional laden self. And even here, where the conflicts are absent, but it is only a fragment of a very differentiated psychological personal needs and strength of force or pertained weakness and according to one’s whims.

There is also a time to produce and show agency and instrumental qualities. The Mexican constructive inclination towards and instrumental internal control factor is active, intent, capable, efficient, self zealous, laborious, punctual, orderly, a part of the Mexican self (Reyes Lagunes, 1996). The scale mean of 4.2. These two negative aspects of the social tendencies. This factor had an internal consistency of .85 and a scale mean of 4.2. These two negatively emotional self closely mirror the classic expressive and masculine expressive-instrumental internal control factor attests to this. Being constructive inclination towards power, a positive and socio emotional laden self. And even here, where the conflicts are absent, but it is only a fragment of a very differentiated psychological personal needs and strength of force or pertained weakness and according to one’s whims.

From a universal perspective, the conceptualization to measurement and context of a common good.
Big Five Inventory, show consistently low but congruent correlations between agreeableness (good natured cooperative) and extraversion (talkative and sociable) with abnegation and the social emotional scales of the self concept. Other big five items did not merge or form understandable factors, such as urgency, conscientiousness and openness, and even as independent items did not show significant correlations with the Mexican measures. This leads of to affirm that the ethno-psychological approach is also deeply rooted in methodology, theory and empiricism; however, it is much better equipped to tangle with external validity issues. It is true that this line of reasoning is less rooted in the straight lines of internal validity, but it derives robustness from its ecological perspective and its multi method approach. There is a goal, part of it is the development of idiosyncratic theory and concepts, part is the pledge of allegiance to the consideration of cultural and ecosystem variables, part is the construction of a more vivid and mundane psychology (Díaz-Guerrero & Díaz Loving, 1996). The first steps have been taken; results show a consistent pattern of idiosyncratic and universal attributes. To follow the trend now requires further research which can complete the picture, indicating the antecedents, correlates and consequences of these selves.

References


