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CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE VOCATIONAL BEHAVIORS

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Introduction

It is generally accepted that the individual as a member of various subcultures learns various forms of behavior and acquires the complex of distinct psychological traits (4). Psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists have investigated differences in the forms of behavior and psychological traits between different cultural groups (1). This paper will focus on how these differences influence the vocational behaviors of various cultural groups.

Three kinds of cultural grouping treated in this paper are: 1) grouping in terms of social classes, 2) grouping in terms of nationalities, and 3) grouping in terms of ethnic groups within the United States.

I. Social Classes and Vocations.

Social classes, as Murphy (13) points out, show distinct "psychological cleavage." Values, concepts, motivations, perceptions and other psychological characteristics of each class show significant differences from other classes. These differences are directly or indirectly reflected on the choice of and success or failure in vocations and, eventually, upward or downward social mobility.

Concepts held by individuals at different levels of the social classes were compared in the "Old City" study (6). It was found that the informant tended to form stereotyped concepts and attitudes towards the groups more remote from his own, while he can make finer distinctions within the classes nearer to his own. An interesting feature revealed by this comparison lies in the way in which members of each class described the characteristics of other classes. It was noted that the closer another class, the more hostility was projected. This tendency was especially marked in the case of the class one step higher rather than lower.

Educational attainment and academic success are closely related to vocational success and in turn to the upward social mobility. Bernstein (3) makes the criticism that many research workers have demonstrated correlations between subculture or class and educational attainments without presenting any unifying theory to explain the empirical relationships and discrepancies found between potential and actual attainment of working class children. He felt it important to understand what underlies the complex of attitudes favorable to educational and social mobility. That is, those factors which influence adversely working-class children who do less well at grammar school, leave early and fail to assimilate the grammar-school ethos. He proposes three important differences between middle- and working-class: 1) In an awareness of the

importance between means and long-term ends, cognitively and affectively regarded; 2) In a discipline to orient behavior to certain values but with a premium on individual differentiation within them; 3) In the ability to adopt appropriate measures to implement the attainment of distant ends by a purposeful means-end chain.

Bernstein suggests that the lower the social strata the greater the resistance to formal education and learning, the resistance being a function of the social structure of the strata. It was also suggested that resistance is a function of a mode of perceiving and feeling which is characterized by a sensitivity to the content rather than to the structure of objects. He maintained that the child in the middle-class and associative levels is discouraged to express his feelings directly. On the other hand, the working-class child has to translate and thus mediate middle-class language through the simpler language of his own class to make it personally meaningful. The school is an institution where every item in the present is eventually linked to a distant future, and there is no serious clash of expectations between the school and the middle-class children. Bernstein maintains that the most important factor that contributes to the modification of perception in different classes is the way in which the order of communication, the mode of expression of language, is unique to each class. Therefore, the role of gesture, facial expression, bodily movement, etc., in communication is considered as very important in forming different modes of perception in different classes. Difference in perception will be reflected on the adjustment to educational and vocational world.

Values held by a person seem to influence his interests and other vocational choice. A study by Beilin (2) is connected with this point. On the basis of a conclusion of the first Kinsey report (11) that the adolescent exhibits a pattern of sexual behavior characteristic of the educational (or social) group to which he will ultimately become affiliated rather than the group to which he belongs at present, combining with Ginzberg's suggestion that basic value differences exist between the upper and lower socio-economic groups and that the essence of the differences lies in the postponement of immediate gratifications, Beilin hypothesized that those male high school graduates from the lower socio-economic group who plan to go on to college will show a greater willingness to postpone immediate satisfactions than those who do not plan. The subjects were white males of the lower socio-economic status with Otis IQ's (or equivalent) of 110 or over. The senior level of high school is the point at which the individual must decide whether he will go on to college or work. Beilin used an open end questionnaire, the responses to which were content analyzed. It was concluded that the hypothesis was not verified. This led Beilin to conclude that the concept of postponement of need gratification with its implication of a conscious deferring process on the part of the college going boy from the lower socio-economic group is in need of modification. Instead, it appears that postponing is a phenomenon the observer introduces to explain apparent differences in behavior although the actors themselves do not perceive themselves as behaving in this manner. To the college youth from the lower socio-economic classes higher education involves the gratification of values he has developed rather than a relinquishing of valued behaviors.

Overstreet (14) stresses not only that occupations offer opportunities for satisfying

different values, but also that individuals are able to derive different values from similar occupations.

Viewing long-range planning as a type of cultural value, Brim and Forer (5) hypothesized that some sub-cultural groups would value life planning, that is, would believe that it is good to plan one's life because it is held to be of instrumental value to further ends. Other sub-cultural groups presumably would not possess this value to the same degree. The specific question on the length of life planning was: "How far in advance have you planned your life?" The responses were classified into three categories: few weeks or months; one to four years; five years or more. The sample consisted of adolescents of high school age and college undergraduates. For the college students, the specific question on life planning was "If someone asked you the question, 'How far ahead have you planned your life?' which of the following phrases would most probably represent the period of time you would give in your answer?"

There was a significant correlation between the length of life planning and both occupational and educational status of the respondents' fathers. Protestantism and Catholicism showed no reliable difference in their relation to the length of life planning when the effects of occupational status were controlled. The differences between respondents in the length of planning were explained by reference to two factors: 1) the possession of the value that life planning is good, and 2) the possession of social status which makes the future predictable, hence enabling one to plan.

Galler (7) assumed that a child seldom sticks to one occupational choice. He constantly shifts from one to another. Nevertheless, his choice of occupation at a particular time is an important index of his interests. His reasons for choosing the occupation also indicate the trends of his thought and his values. Galler's study was set up to determine to what extent social-class culture influences a child's choice of occupation and the reasons behind this choice. Two groups of children, one group of lower-class background and the other of upper-middle-class background, were compared. The most consistent difference in reasons given by upper-middle and lower-class children appeared in intrinsic reasons. Galler explains that probably more upper-middle-class adults find intrinsic satisfaction in their work than do lower-class adults. Consequently, upper-class children encounter this attitude toward jobs more frequently. Significantly more upper-middle-class than lower-class boys chose their fathers' occupations. The value scale was based on the one used by Havighurst and Taba (9). The result shows that, as a group, the upper-middle-class boys had higher value scores than the lower-class boys in every comparison. Younger boys did not differ in value scores from older boys in the same class. From this it was concluded that lower class boys will be motivated by extrinsic reasons rather than altruistic reasons to a much greater extent than are upper-middle-class boys.

II. National Comparisons.

An interesting comparison of vocational aspirations among elementary school children of Japan and the United States was conducted by Goodman (8). The materials were

obtained from essays written by children in four Japanese and eight American schools. The topic of the compositions was "What I want to be when I grow up, and why." Approximately 1250 Japanese living in Central Honshu and 3750 American children of the Northeastern United States in grades one through eight participated. In both countries these were children of urban or suburban residence, and most were of middle-class family background. It was found that the children of this study were aware of a phenomenal range and variety of vocations and could express value judgments and attitudes in equally great profusion.

Among the American children, however, there was notably greater sophistication concerning vocations characteristic of an extremely urban-technological society. Some of these, e. g., laboratory technician, physical or occupational therapist, interior decorator, did not appear at all among aspirations of Japanese children, and in general it was apparent that the Japanese children were less familiar with subspecialities (e. g., psychiatry and pediatrics within medicine).

Despite the traditional sharp sex role differentiation in Japanese society, boy-girl difference in occupational outlook was no less among American than among Japanese children.

The most striking aspect of boys' aspirations was a remarkable popularity of the professions in both countries, especially of medicine and other high in scientific-technical components, and an equally remarkable lack of popularity of business pursuits among American as compared with Japanese boys.

It was found from the occupational aspiration statements of Japanese children that they were under the strong influence of imported culture of the Western origin. Radical departures from tradition were evident in the aspirations of girls for roles in the professions, in politics and public office, and in other areas rarely accessible to women of Japan in the past.

The most striking of Japanese-American contrasts were found to be those having to do with the military and religious roles. It was suggested that the Japanese child conceives of a society dedicated to peace and peacetime pursuits exclusively, since he totally ignores all roles related to the military or to the national defence, and discusses national welfare solely in terms of health, peace, and prosperity. This was conspicuously not true of the American children, among whom 7.5 per cent of boys and almost 1 per cent of girls exhibit a lusty enthusiasm for the armed services and the activities they entail, along with vigorous nationalism and patriotism.

Another national comparison was conducted by Inkeles and Rossi (10) on large national samples with regard to occupational ratings in six modern industrialized countries, U. S. S. R., Japan, Great Britain, New Zealand, Germany and U. S. A. . Correlations between prestige scores (or ranks) of these nations reveals an extremely high level of agreement as to the relative prestige of a wide range of specific occupations, despite a wide range of sociocultural settings in which they were found (see Table I). Where disagreements occur, Inkeles and Rossi attributed these differences to the length and "maturity" of industrialization in various countries and also to the differentiations in sociocultural systems which may well be relatively enduring. The types of occu-

pation which generated the greatest amount of disagreement were highly variant and unstandardized or difficult to assimilate to the industrial structure.

TABLE I. Correlations between prestige scores (or ranks) given to comparable occupations in six countries. (Inkeles, A. and Rossi, P. H., 1956)

	<i>U.S.S.R.</i>	<i>Japan</i>	<i>Britain</i>	<i>N.Z.</i>	<i>U.S.A.</i>	<i>Germany*</i>
U.S.S.R.74	.83	.83	.90	.90
Japan92	.91	.93	.93
Great Britain97	.94	.97
New Zealand97	.96
U.S.A.96
Average		.84	.89	.93	.93	.94

III. Ethnic Groups within the United States.

Jewish and Italian immigrants in the United States were compared by Strodbeck (16) in terms of status mobility. Although the similarity in the economic and occupational characteristics of Jewish and Italian immigrants was much greater than is usually recognized, it is an established fact that Jews today occupy disproportionately higher positions in the status hierarchy. American Jews are concentrated in four vocational categories: commerce, the professions, white-collar work, and industry. In contrast, the Italian group has shown markedly slow social mobility.

Strodbeck (15) reviewed many studies and chose those values which appeared most likely to have accounted for the difference in occupational achievement after those two groups came to the United States. Based on these values, the investigator developed a questionnaire and a value-scale to analyze the result. A large sample of students, 14 to 17 in age, in the New Haven public and parochial schools and their families were studied. It was found that these groups showed significant differences in those values that are considered as important for occupational achievement in the United States in general.

McClelland (12) proposes that one of the major weaknesses with current talent research is its neglect of those cultural or value factors which may predispose some persons toward occupational achievement or toward a certain type of occupation. A study of cultural differences among differentially achieving groups should yield a rich return in discovering which values are likely to be associated with talent development.

IV. Concluding Remark.

There are several viewpoints from which vocational behaviors are observed and explained. It is an important objective, in the psychology of careers, to determine what specific factors influence vocational preferences and other subsequent behaviors.

Vocational behaviors are the results of many influences and no one influence has yet been shown to be invariably most important. Economic advancement has been stressed by economists; role of needs, by psychoanalytically oriented individuals; class

* All figures are product-moment correlations, with the exception of those involving Germany, which are rank-order coefficients.

and status factors, by sociologists; motives, individual differences in traits and other psychological attributes, by psychologists. Family background, personality factors, interest patterns, values and intelligence are also considered as important factors influencing a person's vocational behaviors.

Several general theoretical points of view concerning vocational behaviors have been developed, but differences among them seem to be due to the individual orientation and background of each theorist. All of these points of view have certainly contributed something to the understanding of the field, but it seems to be necessary for someone to provide a theory of vocational behaviors with a broader frame of reference.

In this review of literature, some aspects of cultural influence on the vocational behaviors are discussed. Culture is a broad concept. It includes many fragmental influences that have so far been taken up individually in the study of vocational behaviors. The most recent theories of vocational behaviors recognize that occupational choice is a long-term process*. Considering the fact that culture is the basic determinant in forming the individual's value system over a long period of time, and that values possessed by a person have profound influences upon his vocational behaviors, it seems to be fruitful to analyze various aspects of vocational psychology with the cultural frame of reference.

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