A profile-based approach for investigating the values-personality relationship

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between values and personality was examined with latent class cluster analysis (LCCA). This innovative method combines data exploration with the confirmation of hypothesized latent structures. In this study it isolated respondents with similar value orientations and adjusted the clusters for their personality traits. This resulted in a descriptive profile of each cluster's values-personality structure. Such profiles are theoretically meaningful with regards to the individual Self, which is espoused in values, and moderated by personality. Personality traits are psychologically superordinate, but unlike values are less cognitively transparent and useful for self-attributions. The study used a test publisher's archival dataset of 1500 respondents to two established measures of values and personality. The LCCA uncovered five latent clusters which were characterized as: Traditionalists, Maximalists, Intellectuals, Climbers, and Followers. The study describes their value-personality profiles and interprets their personal strengths and weaknesses.

1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale

Rokeach (1973) believed that values and personality are related, yet hierarchically different representations of the Self. To date, only few correlational studies have explored their relationship (Bilsky & Schwartz, 1994; Olver & Mooradian, 2003; Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002). However, previous studies have not provided a theory of Self to integrate both constructs, nor have they used proper methodology to explore whether personality moderates the expression of values. This study fills in these gaps and suggests a non-correlational, latent profile-based investigation of the relationship between values and personality traits.

In terms of the extensively used values taxonomy of Schwartz (1992), we know that agreeableness relates negatively to power and positively to benevolence; conscientiousness relates positively to achievement, security and tradition; openness to experience relates positively to stimulation, self-direction, and universalism; and extraversion relates positively to power and achievement (Parks, 2007). Also, it appears that the relationship between values and personality revolves around three clusters of values (Schwartz, 1992) which emphasize self-enhancement (power, achievement, and hedonism), self-transcendence (benevolence, universalism), and conservation (security and tradition).

This study argues for reexamining the values-personality relationship beyond the extant method of sample-based correlations. It conceives that values and personality position at different levels of a common source — one's Self (Hogan & Hogan, 1996). According to socioanalytic theory, when people respond to personality inventories they consciously think of how to represent their idealized Selves to others (Hogan, 1995). Values might provide a more direct access to the Self and its motivations, effectively recreating the personality traits in a system of conscious practical goals (Rokeach, 1973). In essence, responding to values items makes the values salient to the Self because the individual needs to order them in importance with regards to goal-motivated behavior.

Conceiving values from the vantage point of the Self makes them strictly personal. Instead of suppressing the unique values-personality relationships of each person by averaging them out on a sample basis, the study examines the relationships within homogenous groups of similar individuals. As a result, more interpretative complexity results in the relationships because they can vary across these groups. For example, a group might be defined by complimentary pairs of values and personality traits such as the altruism-agreeableness one. Finding a group of altruistic, but disagreeable individuals is possible as well, and this might be a product of other values-traits pairs such as being ambitious and valuing hedonism. Isolating these groups and generating profiles of their values-personality relationships, however, is conditional on establishing an appropriate, non-correlational, methodological linkage between values and personality. Thus, based on the above arguments, the study has three objectives. First, to reexamine the

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values-personality relationship with regard to the Self. Second, to derive person-centered profiles of the relationship. Third, to examine these profiles in terms of extant values-personality research.

1.2. The values-personality relationship

Values can regulate the expression of traits by being representations of abstract, context-free, and consciously selected terminal goals (Roccas et al., 2002). For example, regarding the value of honesty, we should espouse it equally in the companies of honest or dishonest people, today, and years from now. This is because during the childhood socialization individuals learn honesty as something we should do in an all-or-none manner, regardless of the circumstances (Rokeach, 1973). Values also represent group and cultural forces, and are learned in stages during early human socialization (Kohlberg, 1971). Because of this process of inculcation and the enduring societal pressure, values are more stable than attitudes or interests. In public settings, what anthropologists have called "the social requiredness" and "the desirable" (Kluckhohn, 1951), makes people conform to dominant cultural values. In private life, values form and elaborate our internalized ideal Self. It sanctions our behavior by provoking guilt and shame, and thus ensures compliance with values. Being the most abstract layer of the conscious ideal Self (Wojciszke, 1989), values can activate behavior when the respective value is central to one's Self-concept (Verplanken & Holland, 2002). This process becomes apparent and verbally problematized in moral dilemmas (Lefkowitz, 2006).

In comparison to values, traits do not have prescriptive nature; they are dispositions to show endogenous patterns/temperaments of thoughts, feelings, and actions (McCrae & Costa, 1990). Whereas values are measured in relation to their importance to the Self, traits can indicate positive or negative adjustment. It is probable that individuals attribute valence to traits through their value orientations, which might temper the behavioral expression of traits (Parks & Guay, 2009). This is because of two reasons. First, traits are frequently conceptualized and measured in terms of specific behaviors, and, therefore, they are not used as elaborated justifications for goal-directed behavior. Second, some personality traits and their relevant behaviors are undesirable and kept in check (e.g. hostility) because our cultural and personal values (e.g. benevolence) require us so. A hostile person can choose to suppress their hostility and be benevolent and respectful to the well-being of others. Alternatively, this person can justify hostile behavior because he or she highly endorses other two values — power and achievement. Thus, when salient to the Self, values provide for the conscious attribution and explanation of behavior, but in actuality the less salient to the Self personality traits might be driving automatic everyday behavior.

1.3. A profile-based approach for the values-personality relationship

The desired profile-based approach depends on establishing reliable psychometric procedures that guarantee that responses reflect the values hierarchy of the Self and its relationship to personality. Specifically, the procedures have to guarantee not only that 1) reported values relate in various strength to the Self, but also that 2) a method exists for the statistical profiling of values and personality. Regarding the first requisite, Rokeach (1973) assumed that individuals respond to values items by comparing them for concordance with their Self-image. As a result, two measurement issues have risen regarding the responding to values items. First, some social desirability is expected but latest research indicates that it is not equivalent with error variance and can have substantive meaning depending on the examined value (Fisher & Katz, 2008). Second, ranking values on their importance in one's life, might provide better differentiation and validity over rating each value for its own importance in one's life (Krosnick & Alwin, 1988). However, current research is much less conclusive on the preferable approach (Maio, Roese, Seligman, & Katz, 1996).

The second requisite is to statistically operationalize the profile-based approach. When values scores are sample-centered (that is, averaged across all respondents) they are converted into ethno-cultural values and the value hierarchy of each respondent is lost. Sample-centering might be justified for cross-cultural and exploratory research, but might not be optimal for explaining individuals' values-personality relationships. Values and personality "meet" at the individual level because of their shared relationship to the Self and how it wants to represent itself to others. Therefore, unique personality traits might relate to unique value hierarchies, and the values-personality relationship should be examined through homogeneous groups of respondents with similar value orientations.

An alternative to sample-centering could be a fairly new method gaining strength in the management and occupational health literatures where personalized development trajectories are of prime interest. It is called *latent class cluster analysis* (LCCA) and is a model-based clustering method which assumes that the latent/independent variable is nominal and the dependent/indicator data are generated by a mixture of underlying probability distributions (Vermunt & Magidson, 2002). In standard *latent class analysis* (LCA) class solutions are based on the locations/means of the observed dichotomous variables within each class, whereas in LCCA the cluster solutions are based on variances and covariances which allow for different homogeneity of responses within each cluster. Moreover, LCCA extends LCA for continuous data (also known as latent profile analysis) because it allows for mixed-mode indicators (nominal, ordinal, and continuous) and covariates in the model (thus making it similar to the MIMIC model in factor analysis; Vermunt, 2010). LCCA produces fewer clusters because it allows for local dependencies between pairs of indicators (e.g. power and achievement values forming a self-enhancement group of values). This dependency between indicators results in better classifications within clusters because the shared information between indicators is retained, which with regards to this study means that the values clusters will not be dominated by only one value.

In essence, the proposed LCCA method might: 1) adjust for continuously measured values items, 2) derive discrete latent clusters of respondents with similar value hierarchies, 3) limit the possibility of one value dominating each cluster, and 4) allow for including personality as a regression-based covariate in the estimation of the cluster solutions. The inclusion of personality covariates recognizes the assumption that personality is the nomologically superordinate psychological factor that is reflected in one's espoused personal values. For example, a sample-centered design might show that the value of power correlates negatively with agreeableness and positively with assertiveness across all personality factors and facets (e.g., Roccas et al., 2002). This unsurprising finding, however, might be "what is left" of the individual values-personality relationships after they are sample-averaged. For example, with LCCA we might uncover a latent cluster characterized by respondents valuing high power, but also high tradition and affiliation. These individuals would disprove the correlational approach finding that people valuing power have elevated disagreeableness. Therefore, profiling with latent clusters is essentially a typological approach that aims at an alternative and more conceptually rich scheme for personality assessment.

2. Method

2.1. Sample

Hogan Assessments allowed the author to use for research-purposes a dataset of 1500 US individuals who responded to two instruments: the Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory (MVPI; Hogan & Hogan, 1996) and the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI; Hogan & Hogan, 1995). The sample was 30% female and 39.6 years (SD = 10.98) old on average. Schwartz and Rubel (2005) uncovered gender differences among values but they were of low effect size and varied across cultures. Given that