

## VALUES OF PSYCHOLOGY AND NONPSYCHOLOGY MAJORS

ANTONIO E. PUENTE, JOSEPH AWKARD, TERESA TESH,  
AND DANIEL SOUTHARD<sup>1</sup>

*University of North Carolina at Wilmington*<sup>2</sup>

*Summary.*—We investigated the value system of psychology and nonpsychology majors using a revised version of the Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey Study of Values. This abridged version of the test was administered to a heterogeneous sample of 125 undergraduates enrolled in a wide variety of psychology courses as well as 96 additional students enrolled in psychology sophomore and junior level psychological service courses. When students were more closely sampled for classes and rank, nonpsychology majors reported being more political than psychology majors on this instrument. However, limitations of sampling may have curtailed more robust differences. The importance of research on values for the teaching of undergraduate psychology is discussed.

Spranger (1928) postulated that human values can be classified according to specific categories: social, political, economic, religious, theoretical, aesthetic. Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey (1960) systematically translated this notion into an inventory that measured the valuing process. The instrument purports to measure this process using a set of values similar to those suggested by Spranger. These values have been defined by Hergenhahn (1981) as follows: *the theoretical*: searching for truth, *the economic*: practical application of knowledge, *the aesthetic*: artistic tendencies, *the social*: interpersonal relationships, *the political*: power and control, and *the religious*: unity and harmony.

Despite the acceptance of this instrument in early research on values, data are few on the value system of psychologists, in general, and students in psychology, in particular. What does exist is limited in scope and application for the instructor of psychology. For example, Terman's (1955) classic study suggests that scientists have a different set of economic and social values than nonscientists (e.g., lawyers). In a more recent effort, Krasner and Houts (1984) underscore the importance of a value system within the field of psychology in their comparison of behavioral and nonbehavioral psychologists. To obtain a better understanding of the value system of the psychology student, we explored the valuing process in psychology and nonpsychology majors enrolled in a broad spectrum of psychology courses.

<sup>1</sup>We gratefully acknowledge the technical assistance of Angela Valenti.

<sup>2</sup>Requests for reprints should be sent to Antonio E. Puente, Department of Psychology, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, NC 28403-3297.

## PHASE I

*Method*

A total of 125 undergraduates taking both lower and upper level psychology courses at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington volunteered for this study; 47 were psychology majors, 78 were not. Participants were administered a revised and abbreviated version of the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values (1960). The present test contained updated versions of the 15 multiple-choice questions from Part II of the Study of Values.

*Results*

As Table 1 indicates, means and standard deviations were tabulated across values for psychology and nonpsychology majors. *t* tests yielded no significant group differences ( $p < .05$ ) on any value, despite the fact that specific trends (e.g., psychology majors would be more theoretical) were anticipated.

TABLE 1  
MEANS OF PSYCHOLOGY AND NONPSYCHOLOGY MAJORS FOR  
EACH PHASE AND VALUE

Value	Psychology Majors		Nonpsychology Majors	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Phase I				
Social	2.00	1.74	2.35	1.42
Political	2.08	1.69	1.98	1.32
Economic	2.28	1.38	2.95	1.74
Religious	3.60	1.84	2.80	1.62
Theoretical	2.23	1.33	1.75	1.28
Aesthetic	2.15	1.21	1.60	1.44
Phase II				
Social	3.64	1.81	3.00	1.58
Political	1.50	1.85	2.35	1.36
Economic	2.05	1.68	2.74	1.69
Religious	3.32	1.25	2.74	1.70
Theoretical	2.45	1.29	3.19	1.51
Aesthetic	2.18	1.37	1.84	1.34

## PHASE II

*Method*

The lack of significant differences in Phase I could, of course, be attributed to numerous factors. Because volunteers were obtained from a broad spectrum of undergraduate courses (including introductory level courses), a lack of significant differences may have been a reflection of the heterogeneous sample obtained. To ameliorate this confound, another sample of 96 undergraduates were recruited for the study about three semesters later. In this

sample, 22 psychology majors and 74 nonpsychology majors who were enrolled in sophomore and junior level psychology service courses, e.g., Drugs and Behavior, volunteered. The Revised Study of Values was again administered. Students who had completed the questionnaire in Phase I did not participate in this phase.

### Results

*t* tests were computed for each of the scales as well as for age and rank (collected in this phase). Significant differences were observed for rank, with psychology majors tending to be of junior rank although nonpsychology majors were of sophomore standing (3.2 and 1.5 mean years in college, respectively). Also, psychology majors were significantly older than nonpsychology majors ( $M = 22.4$  yr. and 19.2 yr., respectively.) The only other significant group difference suggested that nonpsychology majors exhibited higher political values than psychology majors. Means and standard deviations for this phase are also found in Table 1.

### DISCUSSION

The results suggest that psychology and nonpsychology majors do not differ in their values as measured by this version of the Study of Values, when heterogeneous samples were compared. When subjects were more closely matched for sampled classes and ranking of students, nonpsychology majors reported being more significantly political than psychology majors. Possibly a larger sample of psychology majors, sampling senior-level psychology and nonpsychology majors or matching subjects for age may provide a robust examination of differing use in the Study of Values. An alternative explanation of potential sampling error could be that this revised version was not sufficiently sensitive to detect differences in values. However, considering the trends noted in Phase II, sampling may be a more critical issue to pursue in further research. For example, possibly both Parts I and II (and not just a revised version of Part II) may have yielded group differences.

### REFERENCES

- ALLPORT, G. W., VERNON, P. E., & LINDZEY, G. (1960) *A study of values*. (3rd ed.) Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- HERGENHAHN, B. R. (1981) *An introduction to theories of personality*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- KRASNER, L., & HOUTS, A. C. (1984) A study of the "value" systems of behavioral scientists. *American Psychologist*, 39, 840-850.
- SPRANGER, E. (1928) *Types of men*. Halle: Max Neimeyer.
- TERMAN, L. M. (1955) Are scientists different? *Scientific American*, 192, 25-29.