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# An Examination of Demographics, Personal Values, and Philosophical Orientations of College Students from Multiple University Campuses

## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study is to identify what current students value today and to determine whether there is a link between personal values and student demographics. A brief demographic survey of fourteen questions was developed and distributed, along with a twenty-question survey which is used to determine participant's values, or philosophical orientation (McKee, Boyatzis, & Johnston, 2008). There were two hundred and forty-two subjects who volunteered over a two-week time period for this research project. Analysis was completed comparing various demographics (such as age, gender, nationality, first generation students) to determine if certain demographics strongly correlated with a particular philosophical orientation, such as pragmatic, human or intellectual. This manuscript further describes some of the current research within the field, the method in which the data was collected and analyzed, as well as the results.*



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## **Introduction**

Regardless of one's demographics, humans have values. These values are the basis for many decisions made throughout life, ranging from daily priorities to selecting a partner in marriage. Values are founded in beliefs, constructed from experiences, personality traits, relationships, and social situations (McKee, Boyatzis, & Johnston, 2008). Sverdlik and Oreg (2014) consider values to be a concept which cause differences among individuals and operate as one's guiding principles. Additionally, values can be linked to motivation (Pacheco & Owen, 2015; Sverdlik & Oreg, 2014). Gau and James (2014) reason that values exemplify preferences and desires which can direct behavior that ultimately transcend situations. It can be further argued that it is important to understand personal values, as they provide insight into behavior and rationale for decisions (Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, Aharon, 2016; Gau & James, 2014; McKee, Boyatzis & Johnston, 2008; Ryan, 2008). Moreover, the manner in which one exhibits his or her values becomes their operating philosophy – how their values are enacted.

Boyatzis, Murphy, and Wheeler (2000) developed a *Philosophical Orientation* questionnaire (which is the primary instrument utilized in this study) and distributed it to 801 participants. Their research concluded that the operating philosophies of these participants significantly impacted their behaviors, such as learning styles, empathy, flexibility, and initiative. Furthermore,

their analysis of the results offered a new understanding between the relationships of personal values, approach to learning, and their behavior. They take the three current (and classical) philosophies and align them to particular values to understand how one would behave. Ryan (2008) conducted a study in Canada to determine philosophical orientations of students looking to become teachers. He conducted this study not only to identify philosophical orientations, which increased self-awareness, but also with the intention that it would lead to facilitating personal growth. He argues that behavior is related to a teacher's operating philosophy.

According to the human values theory, individuals have different reactions to similar situations in how they perceive rewards at work (Blekesaune, 2015). Pohling, Bzdok, Eigenstetter, Stumpf, and Strobel (2016) propose that personal values are a major component when selecting employees with strong ethical competence. Grunhagen and Mittelstaedt (2005) conducted a study examining the relationship between the philosophic orientation of franchise unit owners and franchisees to determine expectations and how to best manage working relationships. Their results indicated that franchisees do not differ in terms of investment motivation, but do differ in terms of entrepreneurial motivation. Chernyak-Hai and Tziner (2015) examine the relationship between personal values and work-family conflict (managing or trying to balance a career with familial demands). They discuss the impact individual values has on attitudes towards careers and/or organizations and consequentially explain why some individuals are more likely to encounter work-family conflict.

The purpose of this paper is to describe a study conducted that examined the relationship between demographics and three specific values (i.e., intellectual, pragmatic, and humanistic), and resulted in the identification of philosophical orientations. Participants included both graduate and undergraduate students across multiple campuses at a university in southwest Ohio. To provide a context for this proposed study, a review of some relevant research studies on this topic is provided in the next section. These studies are organized into two different categories. In the first section, the studies that examined the relationships of personal values and other life situations – such as making decisions, watching sports, political participation, and conducting research – are presented. In the second section, the studies that investigated the relationships of personal values and philosophical orientation as they relate to the marketplace – including work-family conflict, retirement behavior, career path (teaching, specifically), and managing relationships between franchisees and franchisors are detailed.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Values and Life Situations***

Pohling, Bzdok, Eigenstetter, Stumpf, and Strobel (2016) created a study where the intention was two-fold. First, it developed and provided a new manner in which to define the term “ethical competence.” Second, it refined the impact of empathy as well as personal values (including the 5-factor model of personality) on ethical competence. Their research indicated that decision-makers within organizations (particularly human resource managers or those with hiring capability) should take into account the roles of personal values and empathy as well as utilize the five-factor model in selecting candidates for hire with high ethical competence. There were eight hypotheses within this study. The first hypothesis proposed that those individuals with high empathetic concern were correlated with higher levels of both moral cognition and moral conation processes. The second hypothesis proposed that individuals who have perspective taking high levels also have both high levels of moral conation and moral cognition. The third was that individuals who demonstrate personal distress with higher levels correlate to both low

levels of moral conation and moral cognition processes. The next hypothesis specifically concerned the ranking of correlations among moral cognition processes and personal values. The fifth hypothesis ranked the correlations between personal values and moral conation processes. The sixth and seventh hypotheses also ranked correlations between perspective taking and personal values, and personal values and empathetic concern, respectively. The eighth and final hypothesis indicated that changes in personal values' structure manipulate two types of empathy (i.e., cognitive and affective) on the moral cognition and moral conation processes. In this research study, the sample population consisted of 366 German undergraduate students from four different universities volunteering for the study. Of the participants, 46.2% were female. Additionally, the mean age of the population was 22.5 years old. Each of the participants were advised about the intention and topic of the study. Questionnaires were completed during class time, and students were give 30 minutes for completion. Only one university permitted students to complete the questionnaire as well as the following instruments in 100 minutes and under supervision. Empathy measurement was conducted using the SPF (Saarbrucker Persönlichkeitsfragebogen), while personal values were assessed by using a German-versioned Schwartz Value Survey. The Moral Judgement Test calculated the intensity of moral cognition processes and the Inventar Berufszugewandelter Einstellungen und Selbsteinschätzungen instrument helped assess the moral conation process. Finally, a German version that measured the Big Five Inventory calculated the five-factor model of personality. Researchers were able to define ethical competency as "the capacity to feel sympathy, compassion and concern for others" (p. 465). Additionally, a number of the hypotheses were analyzed with the data. There were three limitations identified: 1) singular cultural influence (only German students), 2) the consideration of only one operationalization for both moral cognition and moral conation processes, and 3) the sole use of self-reported data. Strengths of the study included exploring the whole set of empathy dimensions, studying personality measurements, and utilizing integrated hypotheses to examine the connections between personal values and the supplementary variables. As the results related to the workplace, the study suggested screening employees (both managerial and non-managerial) for value profiles. Pohling, et al., also said the following:

*With respect to values... business organizations should call into question which values they endorse and promote in their organizational culture. It would be conceivable to deliberately embrace values with a social focus and inbuilt them in all organizational processes as means for supporting ethical practices within organizations. Moreover, values primarily influence actions when they are relevant in the context (Schwartz, 2012). Hence an organizational context that is highlighting specific values promotes the activation of these values in the behavior of organization members. Finally, putting certain values into the limelight would help to shape and strengthen the moral identity of its members by means of role-modeling and moral approval of the respective peers and supervisors (Pohling, et al, 2014, pp. 468-469).*

Gau and James (2014) studied the relationship between personal values and spectator sport consumption. Their goal was to determine whether or not there was a correlation between personal values and the frequency of watching spectator sports, which included multiple types of consumption categories: in-person consumption, watching it on television, reading about it, talking about it, watching it via the Internet, and listening to it over the radio. There were 384 participants in the study. Of the total participants, 42% (184 participants) were female. The majority of participants (44.1%) were between the ages of 21 and 23. There were 99 participants

(26.1%) between 18 and 20 years of age. Additionally, 98% of the participants self-reported having some college education. This study was broken down into four stages. In the first stage, a comprehensive literature review was performed in which 77 values were identified and derived from Maslow's needs theory, Schwartz's values, and Rokeach's and Kahle's research. In the second stage, two focus groups were created to discuss the comprehensive list of values identified for this study and to categorize which of those values were linked with a spectator sport. The third stage consisted of a pilot study. Finally, in the fourth stage, the primary study was launched wherein data was analyzed to determine the relationship between spectator sport consumption and the personal life values identified for this study.

Gau and James (2014) utilized two types of instruments for this study: a questionnaire and focus groups. A questionnaire was developed identifying personal life values for participants to rank values accordingly. Focus groups were created and moderated by a facilitator to manage the discussion. As a result, there were two values in particular, i.e., loyalty and sense of accomplishment that directly projected the consumption of spectator sport. The other end of the spectrum which included the values, moral and creativity, proved to demonstrate the least amount of spectator sport consumption. The degree of variance among values was less than 10%. Spectator sport consumption was also linked to sense of accomplishment. Another conclusion was that "a motive might be situational" and may not be a predictor of personal values (p. 51). As this study relates to the marketplace, it indicates that those in leadership positions, particularly managers, should lead their values by example, specifically through integrity with their employees (p. 52). A limitation of the study is its generalizability, in that most participants were college students or of college age.

Researchers Pacheco and Owen (2015) focused on three primary reasons for this study. First, they intended to satisfy a need in current research, and second, to further contribute to the working body of knowledge in the field. In doing so (third), they would use specific methodology that concentrated on personal values. The researchers wished to recognize the personal values associated with political participation. Additionally, they hoped to determine whether certain personal values lead to higher participation. Data was provided by the European Social Survey (ESS) in 2010-11 including 50,781 individuals across Europe. The final sample was comprised of 29,439 participants from 23 countries with varying demographics and of voting age. The data was sourced from the ESS survey and further compiled and analyzed by the researchers using Schwartz's 10 human values scale as a foundation. The personal value of hedonism was removed based on a significant overlap with the personal values of self-enhancement and openness to change. A generalized order logit (GOLOGIT) model as well as a series of Wald tests were used. The authors believed this to be the first empirical study scrutinizing political participation in this manner. Results demonstrated strong evidence that the personal values identified by Schwartz were reliable indicators of whether an individual would participate in the political process and to what degree. While there was no direct contact with participants, it appeared as though education levels were a strong factor in persuading individuals to participate in the political process within the ESS population.

### ***Values Relative to Philosophical Orientation and the Marketplace***

The study conducted by Hussein Ismail (2016) from the Lebanese American University was the first empirical study that was developed to determine whether or not a connection exists between 1) personal values and 2) the participant's strategic preference (i.e., either business or corporate strategies). There are two hypotheses presented in this research study. Each hypothesis

intended to confirm the relationship between personal values and each strategic preference (business and corporate). There were 137 business graduate and undergraduate business students (with “senior” status) at a single business school who participated in the study; it was distributed during class. The demographics provided are basic, which include gender (52% males/48% females), age (all participants older than age 21), and marital status (students were primarily unmarried). A self-reporting questionnaire was distributed to 137 graduate and undergraduate business students, sectioned into three different parts (personal values, strategic preference and demographics). There were two measurement tools utilized. The measurement for personal values originally created by McDonald and Gandz included a 7-point scale rating 24 different values. The measurement for strategic preference developed by Martin and Grbac had students identify preferred strategy after providing short descriptions of both business and corporate strategies. Ultimately, there were three components to the questionnaire: 1) self-reported demographics, 2) two dependent variables (strategic preference broken down into two categories – business and corporate), and 3) twenty-four personal values (the independent variable measurement). The results of this study demonstrated that there were three salient values (i.e., obedience, courtesy, and adaptability) which indicated preference to customer focus as well as backward and forward integration. The author discovered that strategic choice, which includes “operational excellence, product leadership and customer intimacy” (p. 33), varied by the personal values of the participant. The results also indicated no direct correlation between diversification (a corporate strategy) and personal values. In discussing his outcomes, Ismail (2016) confirmed a direct relationship between personal values and strategic preference. It validated (based on the sample size in this study) that there were particular values that demonstrated preference towards certain strategies. The manuscript also exposed a number of limitations including sample size, certain demographic variables, and selective distribution to business students at a particular school. The author recognized that this study was “exploratory” (p. 38) research and that additional research should be conducted as strategic choices relate to personal values.

Chernyak-Hai and Tziner (2016) conducted two studies exploring the relationship between balancing a career and family life, known as Work-Family Conflict (WFC) or Work-Life Balance. The first study connected organizational climates and specific values, particularly power, self-direction, power, hedonism, and achievement. The second study investigated whether there was a relationship between workplace burnout and work engagement, resulting in Work-Family Conflict. Within this study, four hypotheses were made. The first hypothesis held that a considerable positive correlation would exist between WFC and the personal value of egocentricism. The second hypothesis held that a negative relationship would exist between WFC and the favorability of workplace climate. The third hypothesis assumed a negative affiliation between the values of workplace climate and egocentricism. Finally, the fourth hypothesis proposed that workplace climate would intercede between WFC and the level of personal values. Two different studies were conducted. The first study evaluated the manner in which personal values can predict WFC. In this study, 242 employees from two company locations volunteered to participate, representing various career levels within the organization. There were 109 women, 124 men, and 9 participants who declined to gender identify. The mean age was 35.5 years. Almost 60% were single while almost 40% were married with 4% divorced. The participants were asked to complete different questionnaires honestly. The first questionnaire consisted of 57 questions on a Likert scale. The second questionnaire consisted of 38 questions developed by Litwin & Stringer in 1968, measured 9 categories of organizational climate, also on a Likert

scale. The third questionnaire — created by Netemery, Boles, and McMurrian in 1996 — included 10 questions on a Likert scale.

The second Chernyak-Hai and Tziner (2016) study targeted predictive levels of employee burnout and work engagement. In this study, there were 240 participants from three organizations, with a mean age of 34.7. Participants consisted of 126 women (53%), with 75% of the participants married. A little over three-quarters of the participants were in non-managerial positions. 56% of the participants reporting having a Bachelor's degree, while 22% reporting having a Master's degree. Three questionnaires were given to participants wherein they were also asked to answer questions honestly. There was a questionnaire consisting of 9 items on a Likert scale to determine level of work engagement. To assess workplace burnout, participants were given a 16-question survey also on a Likert scale. Finally, to measure WFC, the same questionnaire from study 1 was used. Results of study 1 indicated that the first hypothesis was generally supported in that participants who experienced high WFC also scored high in power, hedonism, self-direction and achievement. Additionally, those who ranked high in egocentric values also held unfavorable workplace climate perceptions. The results of the second study concluded that those participants who were highly involved in their work endured higher WFC. Moreover, participants who indicated high energy and effort towards their work increased the potential for burnout. The researchers confirm that Schwartz's (1992 & 1994) theory of basic human values are comprehensive across the human race but also oppose and harmonize one another as they related to various group and individual factors. Their research concluded that there was a strong correlation between WFC, work engagement, and personal values. Notably, there are two limitations within this study. First, participants were from select organizations, which may alter a comprehensive look at organizational climate. Also, the manner in which the data was measured within the study did not allow for any casual interferences. Future research is suggested using participants from various organizations and studying the relationships between organizations and WFC, burnout and engagement.

Blekesaune (2015) conducted a research study that sought to analyze the extent self-enhancement values (identified in the Schwartz taxonomy, which include power, achievement, and hedonism) would predict behavior during retirement. Researchers of this study hypothesized that individuals who have strong self-enhancement values will postpone retirement, and those individuals who have low self-enhancement values are likely to retire (i.e., stop working) early. This was a longitudinal and multi-disciplinary study with a gross sample size of 7,739 participants between the ages of 40 and 79. The Central Person Register of Norway provided data for the sample population. Methods used to collect data included a phone interview and a questionnaire which generated a response rate of 50.4%. Within the age group in which this research surveyed (50 to 69 years), 63.2% partook in the telephone interviews. Of the 63.2%, nearly 80% of that group also completed the questionnaire. The 10 human-values survey developed by Schwartz in 1994 was translated and used, specifically focusing on power, achievement, and hedonism. After the data was analyzed, results demonstrated that there were two self-enhancement values in particular that did not lead to voluntary early retirement: achievement and hedonism. The power value did not. Achievement (associated with accomplishment and linked to job commitment) was the constant predictor among the three values that proved the avoidance of voluntary retirement.

The intention of the Ryan (2008) study was to discover pre-service education students' philosophical orientation. In revealing their educational philosophy, researchers believed students could then become more self-aware and promote personal growth. In looking at the



following philosophies within education (behaviorism, essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, social reconstructionism, and existentialism), the goal was to unearth the intensity of the association of one orientation to student-teachers. A cross-sectional population of 520 university undergraduate students taking class with the author of the paper, enrolled in the Bachelor of Education program. Students were given a survey with 48 questions on a Likert scale, with every survey question directly linked to one of the six philosophies being researched. Each student completed the survey at the mid-point within the term, and thereafter every student underwent teaching practica and successfully finished a number of educational theory classes. A survey was developed with 48 statements giving students the options of strongly agreed, agreed, had no opinion (neutral), disagreed, or strongly disagreed. Students wrote their answers on a pre-defined template. Interestingly, the overwhelming majority of student participants (96%) all fell within the same category – 499/520 students – the progressivist category. The author found these overwhelming results to be a point of interest rather than a point of concern, believing the statements within the survey were just as powerful as when they were made nearly 100 years ago. In summary, these student participants revealed the following beliefs: student needs and personal experiences should be the basis for school curriculum; personal creativity and individual expression should drive art-related courses; and significant social interaction should be a part of the school's curriculum.

Grunhagen and Mittelstaedt (2005) developed a study to determine the philosophical orientation of business franchisees, whether it be for investment purposes or for entrepreneurial ambitions. There were two hypotheses in this study. The first hypothesis indicated that when multi-unit operators took on additional units, they already possessed a more significant sense of entrepreneurial enthusiasm as compared to area development franchisees. The second hypothesis proposed that area development franchisees had a superior investment motivation than sequential multi-unit franchisees. There were 2,495 addresses from 14 different fast-food systems that were randomly chosen. There were two stages in this study. In the initial stage, a survey was conducted in order to categorize franchise owners by their franchise relationship. These surveys went to all of the 2,495 addresses. The response rate was 10.5%, with 262 usable results. In the second stage, three versions of the survey instrument, mostly Likert-type scales, were then sent to the 262 respondents from the first stage. The response rate exceeded 70%. Each hypothesis was tested. It was concluded that a greater degree of entrepreneurial drive exists with sequential multi-unit owners than with area developers. Furthermore, there appeared to be no difference in regard to investment motivation. Ultimately, the results from this study were consistent with other research outcomes.

### **Rationale for Study**

Boyatzis (2000) initially created this study in an effort to determine how our actions cannot always be explained by our values. For example, when a working professional identifies the most important value as “family,” the expression of that value could be displayed in varying behaviors. One manner is for that working professional to develop his/her career so that financial support will provide the best schooling, the best neighborhood in which to live, and a secure financial future. Conversely, the other working professional could ensure that while present on the job, 100% of the time was dedicated to quality work to ensure he/she was home each night for dinner, available to attend sporting events and other extracurricular activities, and maintain strong personal relationships. More recent studies have researched values in a number of scenarios, but not resembling those within this study. The present study looks to identify whether or not specific demographics correlate to a particular philosophical orientation.



In reviewing recent literature concerning how values relate to various life situations, the review concluded that values transcend disciplines and situations. In the Pohling, Bzdok, Eigenstetter, Stumpf, and Strobel (2016) study, researchers concluded that as the results related to the workplace, the study suggested screening employees (both managerial and non-managerial) for value profiles. Gau and James (2014) studied the relationship between personal values and spectator sport consumption. As this study related to the marketplace, it indicated that those in leadership positions, particularly managers, should project their values by example, specifically emphasizing integrity for the benefit of their employees. Researchers Pacheco and Owen's (2015) study demonstrated strong evidence that the personal values were reliable indicators of whether an individual would participate in the political process and to what degree.

Additional literature reviewed for this study supported values leading to philosophical orientations as related to the marketplace. The study conducted by Ismail (2016) determined whether or not a connection existed between personal values and strategic preference in the marketplace. The study confirmed a direct relationship between personal values and strategic preference and validated that there were particular values that demonstrate preference towards certain strategies. Chernyak-Hai and Tziner (2016) conducted different studies exploring the relationship between balancing a career and family life, previously identified as Work-Family Conflict (WFC). Results of one study indicated that participants who experienced high WFC also scored high marks in power, hedonism, self-direction, and achievement values. Those who ranked high in egocentric values also held unfavorable workplace climate perceptions. Additionally, the results of the second study concluded that those participants who were highly involved in their work endured higher WFC. Their research concluded that there is a strong correlation between WFC, work engagement, and personal values. Blekesaune (2015) conducted a research study that sought to analyze the extent self-enhancement values would predict behavior during retirement. Results demonstrated that two specific self-enhancement values did not lead to voluntary early retirement: achievement and hedonism. The intention of the Ryan (2008) study was to discover the philosophical orientation of pre-service, education students. These student participants revealed the following:

- Student needs and personal experiences should be the basis for developing school curriculum;
- Personal creativity and individual expression should drive art-related courses; and
- Significant social interaction should be a part of the school's curriculum.

Grunhagen and Mittelstaedt (2005) developed a study to determine the philosophical orientation of business franchisees, whether it be for investment purposes or for entrepreneurial ambitions. They concluded that a greater degree of entrepreneurial drive exists with sequential multi-unit owners than area developers.

### ***Gaps within Current Literature***

There are some gaps that exist within the current literature. First, there are no current studies that correlate values or philosophical orientations to student majors. For example, are students who hold specific values high trending towards particular disciplines or lines of work? While this may not be a cut-and-dry approach, it may be directionally correct and provide guidance to support a more content life and career, with a reduction in inherent conflict due to career choice. Moreover, Hostetler (2010) examined three major components in educational research. In his research, he concluded that because *values* were not considered scientific, they were to be removed from educational research.

The second gap is a higher-level, general gap. Current research has not correlated demographics to particular values that led to understanding certain philosophical orientations – specifically in students. It has not been determined whether or not there is a relationship between 1) personal values and the behaviors exhibited as a result, and 2) specific demographic factors possessed by students.

Lastly, after researching various studies with a similar focus that considered common values and how they were exemplified based on the identified demographics, the author believes this study contributes to the body of knowledge, as the research performed herein has not been conducted previously.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify what current students value today and to determine whether there exists a link between personal values and student demographics. A brief demographic survey of fourteen questions was developed and distributed, along with a twenty-question survey which was used to determine participants' values or philosophical orientations (McKee, Boyatzis, & Johnston, 2008).

## **Methods**

### ***Study Participants***

Study participants included domestic and international students (both graduate and undergraduate), as well as faculty and staff members - all affiliated with a reputable southwestern Ohio university and located at its various extensions. The study consisted of 242 participants with the following demographics:

- 123 were females (51%) and 119 were males (49%).
- The mean average age was 24, with ages ranging from 16 to 73 (SD = 10.4).
- 61% of the participation population indicated that their parents were still married.
- 65% of the participation population reported that either their father or mother attended college.
- 92% of the participants had either completed a Bachelor's degree or intended to earn a Bachelor's degree.
- 15% had either earned an advanced degree or intended to earn an advanced degree.
- Participants self-reported the following classifications when indicating race/ethnicity: 80% white/Caucasian, 5% Asian/Chinese, 4% black/African American, and 12% reported "Other" or did not indicate.
- 85% of the participants were not married.
- 61% of the participants had children.
- 62% of the participants lived with their parents.
- 90% of the participants indicated English as their first language.
- 4% of the participants reported being a first-generation American citizen.
- Three-quarters of the population indicated they were not Business majors.

The questionnaire was distributed in person and voluntarily completed on paper individually. Participants were recruited in various places on each of the campuses, including offices, bookstores, and classrooms as well as in areas frequently trafficked by students. The questionnaire included a fourteen-question section on demographics and twenty questions related to identifying personal values leading to understanding philosophical orientation (McKee et al., 2008).

### ***Study Design***

The study was designed to determine whether or not there was a correlation between personal values (which determines a participant's philosophical orientation) and demographics. It was conducted over a two-week period. Fourteen questions were asked regarding demographics, followed by the Philosophical Orientation questionnaire (*Psychological Reports, 2000*). It is "through a mixture of these three philosophies, you manifest your values. People see the worth, benefit or goodness in ourselves, others, and organizations through the lens of our dominant operating philosophy" (McKee et al., 2008, p. 100). The questionnaire consisted of twenty questions that were developed to measure 3 types of values – human, intellectual, and pragmatic. There were two hypotheses within this study. The first was to determine whether or not there was a difference in gender – that females have a predominantly humanistic philosophical orientation. The second was to determine whether or not a particular university major correlated with one of the three values – positing that Commerce (business) majors have a predominantly pragmatic philosophical orientation.

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

All surveys were distributed in person and on paper to students in classes, faculty, and staff with open office doors and those populating places around campus including the cafeteria, study areas, and main hallways. Once the surveys were completed, they were collected for recording data. The questionnaire was scored accordingly to determine which participants demonstrated a human value, intellectual value, or pragmatic value preference. A comparison between value preference and demographics was also conducted.

### ***Instrumentation***

The Philosophical Orientation questionnaire itself was developed by Richard E. Boyatzis, Angela Murphy, and Jane Wheeler in "Philosophy as the missing link between values and behavior" (*Psychological Reports (2000)*). The questionnaire measured how individuals demonstrated their values – also known as a person's operating philosophy (McKee et al, 2008). Each question within the questionnaire provided a scenario and the participant ranked the three options in order by personal preference, on a scale of one to three. The scores were calculated through a detailed methodology. Each ranked answer was weighted in a particular manner that was ultimately used to calculate one of three values (intellectual, pragmatic, or human) that described the participant's operating philosophy. Additionally, demographic questions were created to look for correlations between particular values and demographic significance. With the exception of age and race where participants wrote in their answers, all other questions were a selection of two or more choices to select. This information was recorded to correlate data.

### ***Analysis***

Upon determining which participants showed a preference to any of the three values, further analysis was conducted measuring demographic information for potential correlation. For each value, the researcher scrutinized data for relationships between gender, parental marital status, race, marital status, having children, college major, whether or not the participant was a first-generation American, or whether either of the participant's parents attended college.

After the initial analysis, the author considered that by focusing on participants under 30 years of age, results between male and female participants may change. This reduced the total number of participants from 242 to 200. In this new sample population (participants under age 30), there were 96 females (48%), 80% self-identified themselves as students, 62% of the

population indicated that their parents were married, 73% had had a parent attend college, and 96% intended to earn a Bachelor's degree. Additionally, 166 of these participants were white, with only 2% married. 24% were Commerce (business) majors, and the average age was 20, with ages ranging from 16 to 29 (SD = 2.4). Because the data was primarily nominal, Chi-square tests were performed in SPSS to determine statistical significance.

## Results

The initial results were unexpected. Of the 242 participants, the majority (176 participants) scored under the "human" philosophical orientation (73%). Those with this orientation "determine the worthiness of an activity in terms of its effect on specific other people and its impact on the quality of the relationship he or she has with specific others" (McKee et al., 2008, p. 101). The female-to-male participant ratio was 98 (58%):72 (42%) in this orientation. For those participants who scored only in the human value, the average age was 25. The identification of race/ethnicity mirrored that of the overall population. The overwhelming majority are not married (86%), however the majority had children (82%). Nearly all participants indicated English as their first language (96%) and almost 80% (134 participants) were not Business majors.

Intellectual orientation was ranked next with 46 participants (19%) scoring in that value. Those with an intellectual orientation "determine the worthiness of an activity in terms of its conceptual contribution to understanding something" (McKee et al., 2008, p. 101). For those participants who scored only in the intellectual value, the average age was 22. The identification of race/ethnicity basically mirrored that of the overall population. The overwhelming majority are not married (91%), however the majority had children (84%). The female to male participant ratio was 11 (26%):32 (74%). Most participants indicated English as their first language (84%) and 81% (35 participants) were not Business majors.

The third value had 27 participants (11%) scoring in the pragmatic orientation. Pragmatists "determine the worthiness of an activity in terms of its utility in helping achieve desired ends" (McKee et al., 2008, p. 101). For those participants who scored only in the pragmatic value, the average age was also 25. The identification of race/ethnicity mirrored that of the overall population. The overwhelming majority are not married (87%), however, 65% participants reported that they had children. The female-to-male participant ratio was nearly equal 11:12. Many of the participants indicated English as their first language (83%) and 70% (16 participants) were not Business majors.

There were 6 participants (3 female and 3 male) who had two (or more) equal values. Ironically, the human orientation was present in each of the scores. These 6 participants were all white, ages ranging from 18 to 29. All of them plan to earn a Bachelor's degree, all indicated that English was their first language and none of them are married; only 1 participant had children.

Chi-squared tests were performed on a number of combinations of variables with no statistical significance. To continue with the analysis, when the age of the population was reduced to under 30 years, there were 200 participants analyzed. Ironically, the same distribution was among the total population. The majority (146 participants) scored under the "human" philosophical orientation (73%) – the same as the total population with all ages included. The new intellectual orientation was ranked next with 37 participants (18.5%) scoring in that value – again, the same as the total population. And in line with the total population, 23 participants (11.5%) scoring in the pragmatic orientation. The same 6 participants (3 female and 3 male) had two (or more)

equal values. Once again, the human orientation was present in each of the scores. These 6 participants were all white, ages ranging from 18 to 29. All of them plan to earn a Bachelor's degree, all indicated that English was their first language and none of them are married; only 1 participant had children.

When comparing female and male philosophical orientations to the initial general population of 242, the results were all in line to the same distribution among the 3 values. However, when comparing females under the age of 30 to the all-inclusive population, results exhibited a reduction in the score. While 73% of the total population scored in the "human" orientation, there were 65.7% of these younger females who scored in this value. The majority of that difference was seen in the increase in intellectual value. These female participants scored an "intellectual" orientation of 24.2%, as compared to 19% of the total population, but followed the same ranking in orientations – human, intellectual, and pragmatic.

There were two hypotheses within this study. The first was to determine whether or not there was a difference in gender, indicating that females have a predominantly humanistic philosophical orientation. This hypothesis was supported. While the total population including both females and males scored significantly higher in the "human" value, the females within the same population scored 69%. Females under 30 had two-thirds score within that value (about 10% less than the total population), scoring 65.7%. As a side note, nearly one-quarter of the younger female population scored in the "intellectual" value, following the same overall ranking order among the 3 orientations.

The second hypothesis was to determine whether or not a particular student major correlated with one of the three values. The second hypothesis: Commerce (Business) majors have a predominantly pragmatic philosophical orientation, was not supported. Values were ranked similarly to that of the general population of 242 participants: Human (76%), Intellectual (16%), and Pragmatic (10%). However, when breaking down the Commerce population between genders, results were interesting. The male population followed the same ranking among the three orientations, but there were more participants who scored higher within the intellectual value and less in the pragmatic value: Human (69%), Intellectual (23%), and Pragmatic (4%). Ironically, the female population ranked the human value the highest (76%), but the *pragmatic* value ranked *second* (16%). These results are different from not only the males in Commerce, but also the entire population as well as other combinations of variables analyzed. The intellectual orientation scored 8%. Among this female population, all but two participants were under 30 years of age. One participant was 39 years old; the other is 44. Females under 30 who declared Commerce as their major were the unique group in their overall ranking among the 3 orientations, which was human, pragmatic, and intellectual.

After scrutinizing several groupings of variables against each of the 3 philosophical orientations, this re-ordering of orientations within the Commerce majors who were females was the only combination that scored against the population's ranking. An example of a pragmatic behavior in a business sense is performing a cost benefit analysis, looking at the value and comparing it to the desired outcome.

## **Discussion**

### ***Human, Intellectual and Pragmatic Philosophical Orientations***

According to Boyatzis, Murphy, and Wheeler (2000), "rationalism" was the root of the intellectual operating philosophy. It ultimately was an attempt to understand the workings of the world by



creating a vision and understanding how it operates. Individuals who function under this operating philosophy emphasize logic and an intellectual strength, using reason as the basis of their decision-making process. The significance in using reason as the substance behind the decision (data, laws, principles, etc.) can outweigh the outcome of the decision.

Boyatzis, Murphy, and Wheeler (2000) discuss the human operating philosophy and how it developed from communitarianism theories, which stress personal relationships to be the primary significance of life and valuing traits such as consistency and loyalty. Some cultures promote friends and close family as more significant than having relationships with people outside of those circles.

Moreover, Boyatzis, Murphy, and Wheeler (2000) construct the pragmatic operating philosophy as a compilation of the following philosophies: pragmatism, consequentialism, instrumentalism, and utilitarianism. Individuals with this philosophy are self-determined and prefer to measure the details within the situation, that is, they not only try to maximize their results, they measure the amount of effort relative to the outcome to determine its value.

### ***Limitations***

There are three limitations within this study. First, the study was conducted only on college campuses in a particular region and did not include others within the general population. The sample population consisted of students, faculty, and staff already a part of the campus life. Second, while the demographics of participants within the study contained some demographic diversity, participants were primarily white, undergraduate students. There were no significant outliers within the socioeconomic demographic which may not be generalizable to the greater population. Third, the demographic questions did not break down majors. It only identified whether or not participants were or were not Business majors. However, this third limitation is moot based on the results of the study. Future studies could include various samples from the greater population and could include career choices.

### ***Impact of Results and Future Research***

While the impact of this study is mostly relevant to educators for classroom use (in that the majority of students today value the humanistic philosophical orientation), educators should be aware of the other values and ensure they are included or considered throughout the learning experience. Moreover, while there were no significant differences between genders: female undergraduate students who declared Commerce (Business) as their major reversed the ranking order of philosophical orientations as compared both the general population as well as the male Commerce population of their ranking within these three values. While the human value was the dominant, 16% were pragmatic, and none of them scored in multiple categories. Future research would benefit from studying the values of working professionals, comparing those in the marketplace and those in other areas. It would be interesting to see whether values change over time, and if so, whether it based on the environment or another motivating factor.

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## About the Author

Mary Kovach joined Miami University as an adjunct instructor and was hired full-time as an Assistant Professor. She graduated with her MBA from Cleveland State University and is currently working on her PhD at Miami University. Her professional experience includes 15 years with Fortune 500 organizations and has held numerous leadership positions, including managing multi-million-dollar global business units. She holds a LEAN Six Sigma Black Belt certification, as well as multiple Agile certifications. Mary's teaching interests include organizational behavior, management, general business, leadership, personal finance, MS Excel, marketing and a study abroad program.