

University of Wisconsin - La Crosse
Undergraduate Research Grant Application - Spring
Cover Sheet

1. Title of Project: Collegiate Value Interpretations: An Approach to Validity in Values Research

2. Applicant: Alex Thompson SS#: _____

Major: Sociology Year in School: Senior

Date of Graduation: December 2008 Local Phone: _____

Local Address: _____

Email: thompson.alex@students.uwlax.edu

3. Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Timothy Gongaware Email: gongawar.timo@uwlax.edu

Department: Sociology Campus Phone: 608-785-6772

Campus Address: 437H Carl Wimberly Hall

4. Synopsis of proposed research (do not exceed space provided)

In asking a sample of UW-L students to provide subjective definitions of social values, this study will address the validity of previous research. A subset of investigations on the effects of cultural values on the individual has relied upon respondent rankings or rating of social value labels, and in so doing has presupposed common value interpretations. This study seeks to examine the validity of these designs through the "diary-interview" method and a content analysis of the resulting data.

The final results of this study will provide this growing body of literature with a new perspective, an analysis of subjective value definitions. The final report will be presented at the UW-La Crosse Celebration of Undergraduate Research and Creativity ceremony in the form of a poster/PowerPoint presentation and a formal paper. This paper will also be submitted for publication in the *UW-L Journal of Undergraduate Research*.

5. Grant Effort. (Provide dates of research and time to be spent on project): Data will be collected during September 2008; analysis and final report production will take place from October 2008 until approximately December 2008.

6. Total amount requested for completion of research project (from Budget Summary page): \$ 1052.00

7. Compliances. (If "yes" for any of the below, compliance documentation **must** be filed if this proposal is funded.) Does this proposal require review for:

a. Human Subjects?	Yes	<u>X</u>	No	_____
b. Animal Care?	Yes	_____	No	<u>X</u>
c. Hazardous materials?	Yes	_____	No	<u>X</u>

8. Signatures

a. Applicant: _____ Date: _____

b. Faculty Advisor: _____ Date: _____

c. Department Chair: _____ Date: _____

d. Academic Dean: _____ Date: _____

University of Wisconsin - La Crosse
Undergraduate Research Grant Application - Spring
Project Budget Summary

Project Title: Collegiate Value Interpretations: An Approach to Validity in Values Research

Student Researcher: Alex Thompson SS#: _____

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Timothy Gongaware Department: Sociology

I. Honorarium..... \$ 500

Describe research duties and expected time commitment to project. If multiple investigators, explain how the \$800 honorarium is to be distributed among them:

The primary duties of the research will consist of holding an informational meeting for the participants, distributing and retrieving the journals, and coding/analyzing the data. During the ten day journaling period, I will act as an on-call resource for participants with questions or concerns. After collecting the journals, I will spend approximately 40-50 hours coding the entries. Lastly, I will spend countless hours analyzing the final data set and constructing the final report.

II. Supplies & Services..... \$ 551.90

A. Consumable supplies (itemize) \$ 342.90

UW-L Pens--- \$57.90 (30 @ \$1.99ea.)
UW-L Legal Pad Portfolios--- \$285.00 (30 @ \$9.50ea.)

B. Duplicating, postage, communications, etc. \$ 9.00

Duplication--- \$9.00 (90 copies @ \$.10ea.)

C. Other (describe and itemize) \$ 200.00

NVivo 7 Student--- Qualitative data analysis computer software.

III. Travel..... \$ 0.00

A. Transportation (describe arrangements) \$ 0.00

B. Lodging (describe arrangements) \$ 0.00

IV. TOTAL FUNDING REQUESTED..... \$ 1052.00

Background/Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to measure the validity of the Kahle's List of Values (LOV) survey by examining the definitions students attach to cultural value labels. As Hitlin and Piliavin (2004) point out, there is little consistency between the various methods researchers use to measure cultural values. For example, while the Schwartz Value Survey provides respondents with clear definitions of the values they're asked to rate, Kahle's LOV only provides value labels and not definitions of them (Hitlin and Piliavin 2004). Such a lack of uniformity in measurement has been a problem for values research since the mid-20th century (Hitlin and Piliavin 2004; Bishop 1992).

In 1992, Schwartz drew on Rokeach's 1973 Value Survey to create one of the first extensively used survey tools that measures how individuals rate cultural values (Hitlin and Piliavin 2004). The 2001 update of Schwartz's design, titled the Personal Values Questionnaire, has been used a great deal in recent years (Caricati 2007; Ryckman et. al. 2003; Smith et. al. 2004) because it provides the respondent with clear definitions of the values it addresses (Hitlin and Piliavin 2004). These definitions provide each survey respondent with the same definition for each value they are asked to rate. Unfortunately, other survey designs, such as Kahle's (1986), take the same rating approach to values but do not provide the definitions.

Since the definitions are not provided, when researchers have used this survey to study such phenomena as alcohol consumption (Shim et. al. 2005), materialistic inclination (Keng et. Al. 2000), and "at risk" lifestyles (Sjoberg et. al. 2005), they may not have received valid representations of respondent values. Because Kahle's LOV does not provide the value definitions, it is unable to control for subjective interpretation of these labels. Consequently, each respondent may not be rating the same set of values.

While research on the importance of cultural values in the lives of individuals is vast and varied, this is yet a topic of which we have little understanding. I will investigate the subjective definitions students attach to the values included on Kahle's LOV. In doing so, I will examine the validity of a survey design which relies on common respondent interpretation of value labels.

Objectives

The objective of this study is to examine how individuals subjectively define cultural values. Recognizing the level of disparity found among definitions of values, this study addresses the validity of Kahle's LOV which presupposes a shared respondent understanding of cultural value labels. In sum, the goal of this investigation is to determine if subjective definitions of value labels are similar enough to justify a researcher's use of value labels only.

To allow for subjective respondent input, this investigation will utilize the qualitative "diary-interview method" (Lofland et. al. 2006). Under this method, the study participants will write, over an extended period of time, on issues proposed by the researcher (Jacelon and Imperio 2005). Each respondent will be asked to define each of the nine values on Kahle's LOV. Following ten days of journaling, I will collect the entries and subject them to a rigorous content analysis.

Research Methods

The sample for this study will be systematically drawn from the approximately 10,000 students listed in the UW-L Student & Staff Directory. The first student listed in the "Students" section and every 345th student after will be selected to make up a 30 student sample. They will be asked to attend an informational meeting where they will each receive an overview of the

study objectives, guidelines for journaling (please see the attached example), and a short demographic survey (to be completed and returned with the journal) to establish age, ethnicity, major, etc. Additionally, as an incentive for participation, each participant will receive a UW-L legal pad portfolio and a UW-L pen that they are to use for journaling and may keep afterwards.

Zimmerman and Wieder's (1977) "diary-interview" method has proven to be a valuable tool for focusing upon respondent insights (Rancour and Brauer 2003; Iberreta and McLeod 2004; Scanlan et. al. 2002). This method significantly reduces both the researcher's time in the field and the pressure placed on respondents in formal interview settings (Jacelon and Imperio 2005; Zimmerman and Wieder 1977) Journaling periods of less than a week produce few subjective observations and those of two weeks or more are reported too arduous (Jacelon and Imperio 2005). Consequently, the journaling period for this investigation will be ten days.

Participants will be guided through the journaling process by a set of questions and guidelines designed to help them focus their thoughts upon a specific cultural value for each day's entry. For example, on the first day of journaling, the journaling guidelines sheet asks each respondent to provide a detailed definition of "warm relations with others." The respondents are also provided with questions such as, "Do you see it as positive or negative? Why?" to assist them in creating a detailed entry.

Over the ten day journaling period, each respondent will be asked to define each of the nine values on Kahle's (1986) LOV, which includes: self-respect, security, warm relations with others, self fulfillment, a sense of accomplishment, being respected, a sense of belonging, fun and enjoyment, and excitement. The respondents will be asked to contemplate each of these values, in turn, throughout each day and to write at least a one paragraph definition of their own

about the value. After collecting the completed journals, I will undertake a meticulous content analysis.

Content analysis, facilitated by the qualitative research computer program NVivo 7, will begin with the development and subdivision of broad data categories. Following “open coding,” or the labeling of recurring definition components in sentences or word groups, I will compile groups of similar respondent passages under broad categories. Each category will be subdivided multiple times to produce distinct categories containing homogenous student definitions (Berg 2004).

The final step of the content analysis process will be to identify and examine significant patterns within the data. Berg (2004) defines a data “pattern” as three or more occurrences of the same phenomenon. I will explore these patterns in light of previous, related, research and theory in order that the final product is supported by and adds to past research.

Final Product and Dissemination

The final product of this study will be an analysis of the variations found in student definitions of the nine cultural values measured in Kahle’s List of Values. If there is little variation among value definitions, then this study will serve to confirm the validity of Kahle’s LOV, which presumes common value definitions across samples. If, however, there is significant definitional disparity, this study will serve as a pilot endeavor for future investigations into the validity of this survey design.

The final results will be presented at the Celebration of Undergraduate Research and Creativity Ceremony at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and will be submitted for publication within the *UW-L Journal of Undergraduate Research*. Additionally, I will submit the

final paper to the Undergraduate Student Paper Competition of the Wisconsin Sociological Association and for presentation at the Annual meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society. It is my fervent wish that the results of this study will encourage future investigation into the meaning individuals attach to value labels and the bearing this has upon value research design validity.

Bibliography

- Berg, Bruce L. 2004. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 5th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.
- Bishop, John B. 1992. "The Changing Student Culture: Implications for Counselors and Administrators." *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy* 6(3-4): 37-57.
- Caricati, Luca. 2007. "The Relationship Between Social Dominance Orientation and Gender: The Mediating Role of Social Values." *Sex Roles* 57: 159-171.
- Hitlin, Steven, Jane Allyn Piliavin. 2004. "Values: Reviving a Dormant Concept." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 359-393.
- Ibarreta, G. I., L. McLeod. 2004. "Thinking Aloud on Paper: An Experience in Journal Writing." *Journal of Nursing Education* 43(3): 134-7.
- Jacelon, Cynthia S., Kristal Imperio. 2005. "Participant Diaries as a Source of Data in Research with Older Adults." *Qualitative Health Research* 15: 991-997.
- Kahle, Lynn, Sharron E. Beatty, Pamela Homer. 1986. "Alternative Measurement Approaches to Consumer Values: The List of Values (LOV) and Life Styles (VALS)." *Journal of Consumer Research* 13: 405-409.
- Keng, Kau Ah, Kwon Jung, Soo Jiuan, Jachoen Wirtz. 2000. "The Influence of Materialistic Inclination on Values, Life Satisfaction, and Aspirations: An Empirical Analysis." *Social Indicators Research* 49(3): 317-333.
- Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson, Lyn H. Lofland. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth\Thompson Learning Inc.
- Ryckman, Richard M., Diane M. Houston. 2003. "Value Priorities in American and British Female and Male University Students." *The Journal of Social Psychology* 143(1): 127-138.
- Rancour, Patrice, Kathryn Brauer. 2003. "Use of Letter Writing as a Means of Integrating an Altered Body Image: A Case Study." *Oncology Nursing Forum* 30(5): 841-846.
- Scanlan, Judith M., W. Care, Sonia Udod. 2002. "Unraveling the Unknowns of Reflection in Classroom Teaching." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 38(2): 136-143.
- Schwartz, Shalom H. 1994. "Are there Universal Aspects in the Structure and Content of Human Values?" *Journal of Social Issues* 50: 19-45.
- Schwartz, Shalom H., Wolfgang Bilsky. 1987. "Toward a Psychological Structure of Human Values." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 53: 550-62.
- Shim, Soyeon, Jennifer L. Maggs. 2005. "A Psychographic Analysis of College Student's Alcohol Consumption: Implications for Prevention and Consumer Education." *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* 33(3): 255-273.
- Sjoberg, Jennart, Elisabeth Engelberg. 2005. "Lifestyles and Risk Perception Consumer Behavior." *International Review of Sociology* 15(2): 327-362.
- Smith, Wanda J., Richard E. Wokutch, K. Vernard Harrington, Bryan S. Dennis. 2004. "Organization Attractiveness and Corporate Social Orientation: Do Our Values Influence Our Preferences for Affirmative Action and Managing Diversity?" *Business Society* 43(1): 69-96.
- Strauss, A., J. Corbin. 1998. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zimmerman, Don H., D. L. Wieder. 1977. "The Diary-Interview Method." *Urban Life* 5: 479-98.

Collegiate Value Interpretations: An Approach to Validity in Values Research
Participation Guidelines

The Values

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Warm Relations with Others | 4. A Sense of Accomplishment | 7. Fun and Enjoyment |
| 2. Security | 5. Being Respected | 8. Self Respect |
| 3. Self-Fulfillment | 6. Sense of Belonging | 9. Excitement |

The Objective

This study seeks to determine how you define each of the nine societal values listed above. Past research efforts have presupposed that there is little variation between individuals in how these values are defined. This study seeks to either verify or challenge this assumption. Together, we not only have the opportunity to critically address this issue but also to contribute to the academic and sociological community's understanding of what it *really* means to be a college student.

The Method

You have ten days to journal and nine values to define. (This means you may take a day off but if you wish to write all ten days, feel free to.) Each morning look to the next value listed at the top of this page. Throughout the day, consider how you might define it. Each evening please sit down and write out a clear definition.

Please do not use a dictionary or outside source (e.g. your roommate, parents, etc.) for help. Just give it your best effort and write at least one reasoned paragraph. Here are some questions to get you started:

- How do *you* define it?
- What is the first thing that came to mind when you read the label?
- How would you explain it to a young child?
- What are some "real world" examples?
- Do you see it as a negative or a positive? Why?

The Policy

- Complete and turn-in an informed consent form prior to writing in the journal.
- Make a minimum of nine one-paragraph entries in the journal.
- Return the completed journal, and its accompanying survey to the sociology department, 435 Wimberly Hall beginning Thursday, October 2nd but no later than Tuesday October 7th.**

In the event of any questions or concerns, contact:

Alex Thompson
(507) 381-5210
thompson.alex@students.uwlax.edu