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Rogelio Díaz-Guerrero: A Legacy of Psychological Creation and Research

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Rogelio Díaz-Guerrero's journey began in 1918, born into a large (13 brothers and sisters) and very typical and traditional Mexican family in his homeland, Guadalajara. In search of the keys to understand human behavior, he moved to Mexico City immediately after finishing high school, where he studied medicine whilst taking psychology and chemistry classes at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). During this stage of his life, he was a student to a series of distinguished and prominent Mexican professors and thinkers: Enrique Aragon, Ezequiel Chavez, Guillermo Davila, Oswaldo Robles, Antonio Caso, Samuel Ramos and Jose Gaos. Finishing his years in medical school, he received a scholarship for post graduate studies at the University of Iowa, where he completed masters and doctoral studies in neuropsychiatry and psychology, being lectured by renowned psychiatrists such as Jacques Gottlieb and Paul Huston, eminent neurologists like Van Epps and Adolph Sahs, and pioneers in psychology such as Kenneth Spence, Kurt Lewin and Robert Sears.

Díaz-Guerrero's psychological research runs over with originality, accuracy, consistency, culture and longevity. It's through his work that he becomes the pioneer and guide of Mexican psychology and an icon to Latin American psychology decade after decade. His medical formative bias became obvious in his first publications in the 1940's, where he shows his interest in the relationship between biological variables and behavior. Some of his articles include "*Electroencephalic study of sleep in manic-depressive patients in comparison with normal subject*" and "*The role of endocrine glands in neuromuscular development and regeneration*". Moving into the 1950's, his traditional upbringing, his international education and his Australian-American wife set the basis for his inclusion of culture in the understanding of mental health. In this stage, his publications centered on the conceptualization and operationalization of psychological variables rooted in culture, such is the case of his work on anthropo-cultural values, which served as the immediate successors of the historic-socio-cultural premises, which he postulates a decade later as the operationalization of culture through norms and believes. During this decade, Díaz-Guerrero published papers regarding the "*Determination of the degree of personal and social mental health in the urban Mexican*", and "*Neurosis and the Mexican family structure*".

In the 1960's, Díaz-Guerrero's interest in the socio-cultural basis of behavior flourishes and crystallizes together with a fructiferous and long friendship with Wayne Holtzman with whom he authors, among other publications, the book "Personality development in two cultures" which appears simultaneously in Spanish and in English. Among his major contributions of this decade are requiring the definition of cultural concepts in a valid, reliable and culturally appropriate manner and the need for creating objective measuring instruments. He further aspires for a generalized interest in psychological research throughout cultures, which he urges using his own inquiries as examples and sets the stage for future indigenous psychologies through the discovery of idiosyncratic characteristics of the Mexican population. During this decade's work, one can perceive the fundamental difference between his approach to the study of the Mexican's psychology, which appears very similar to Wundt's Folk Psychology, and the restrictive view derived from orthodox behaviorism prevalent in experimental social psychology. Díaz-Guerrero pointed out that the difference dwells in the emphasis given to culture as the basis for the development of individual attributes and behavior patterns. Together with his students he indicates

that the culture in which an individual develops will specify the foundations, structure, and acceptable and desirable norms of behavior. Hence, the socio-culture can be defined as a system of thoughts and ideas that offer a hierarchy of habits, needs and values, and guide interpersonal relationships; they stipulate the type of cultural, interrelated premises (norms, roles, etc.) that govern the roles that must be carried out, and the rules for the interaction of each individual for each role. In other words, the wheres, the whens, the whos and the hows of behavior. Díaz-Guerrero and Peck (1963) pointed out that these socio-cultural norms are a guide to how we should behave within the family, the group, society and any institutional superstructure. In addition, the directions of these norms also affect the development of one's personality, one's goals in life, one's coping style, one's perception of humanity, of gender and what is masculinity and femininity, etc. It becomes clear from his research that our behavior, development, attitudes, beliefs, values and our self in general, will depend on the socio-cultural context in which we grow and develop. In other words, the way we think, the things we think about, the way we relate to friends and strangers, our tastes and our way of life, are being formed as each and every one of us interacts with our parents, our families, our neighbors, our schoolmates and our environment.

Díaz-Guerrero's work on the psychology of the Mexican conceptually crystallizes the aspiration toward a scientific and cultural psychology, and additionally offers valid and reliable operationalizations that result in culturally relevant and interpretable data. The journey begins, with no doubt, with the historic-psycho-socio-cultural premises. The study of the norms proposed, developed, studied, and described by Díaz-Guerrero that regulate behavior in the Mexican culture, specify that the socio-culture in which an individual grows and develops is the foundation for the formation of national character, and delimits the acceptable behavior norms and rules in human interaction. In this way, social conduct is partially determined and directed depending of the level in which each person adopts and believes their cultural dictates.

The second step, after specifying that the socio-cultural ecosystem serves as the ontological ground in which individuals learn the correct ways of interaction with their world, was the operationalization of the Mexican premises. A historic-socio-cultural premise is a simple or complex affirmation that provides a group with the base behind the logic of understanding and guiding their world. Díaz-Guerrero extracted premises from proverbs, sayings and other ways of popular communication. After carrying out careful content analysis based on the obtained representations, the crucial role of the family in traditional Mexican culture became evident. The cultural traditions, values, beliefs and actions immerse in these premises indicate the correct way to behave in different interpersonal relationships. In sum, two prepositions describing the traditional Mexican family appear: the power and supremacy of the father, and the love and the absolute and necessary sacrifice of the mother. Built upon these two cardinal premises, over 80% of wide population segments in the 50's and 60's reported high degrees of adherence to them, and indicated that they served as an important guide in their lives.

Psychometric analysis of the answers given to the normative affirmation inventory, offer a variety of statistically robust, conceptually clear, and theatrically congruent factors. First of all, there is a central dimension of traditionalism named affiliative- obedience vs. active self-affirmation, which stipulates that children and youngsters must always obey their parents and that everyone should love their mother and respect their father. This means, that children must always show their regard to their parents, who in return must protect and care for them. In regards to this structure, it must be made clear that in Mexican culture, there is a rigid hierarchical disposition that awards respect and power to those at the top of the pyramid, in contrast with other cultures where respect is shown to those perceived as equals (Díaz-Guerrero & Peck, 1963). The traditional factor is complemented with a gender dimension, with "machismo" and abnegation-virginity at the axis. This orientation is derived from the degree of attachment to statements such as "men are more intelligent than women", "docile women are better", "men must be the heads of the household" and "women must remain virgin until marriage". It is worth saying that abnegation mirrors the belief that the group and its needs supersede those of individual. It's in this way that it

is fundamental to satisfy the needs of others before one's own. In other words, self-modification coping styles are preferred over self-affirmation as guides of interaction mechanisms. Lastly, the relevance of the status-quo and the cultural rigidity grows out of the acceptance of the role that men and women carry out in the family. This is reflected in proverbs such as "women must be faithful to their husbands", "the majority of daughters would like to be like their mothers", "women must always be protected", "young women must never go out alone at night" and for the children "when parents are strict, children grow up being good".

In sum, it is considered that Mexican society is built upon a hierarchical structure based on the respect for others, particularly parents and kin (Díaz-Guerrero & Peck, 1967). The internalization of these premises produces abnegation, a cardinal trait in Mexican culture, which is sustained as true by Mexican men and women who believe that satisfying others needs is more important than satisfying their own. Derived from abnegation, a vertical hierarchy in the culture is produced, built on power, affection and obedience, evident in the way that authority is exercised within the family ("a child must always obey and respect his/her parents") (Díaz-Guerrero & Peck, 1963). Some of the more relevant publications in the 60's refer to the "*The historic-socio-cultural premises*" and the "*The philosophy of life*", in which the passive and active syndromes are described and are the predecessors of the epic book "*The development of personality in two cultures*" in 1975 and which also appears in articles on the development of the project (1964), and *Respect and values* (1963, 1967).

In the 70's, the ideal of integrating cross-cultural psychological perspectives into main stream psychology began to consolidate. Keeping in mind the need of majority countries to work out solutions to substantial problems related with educational, social, economic and individual development, Díaz-Guerrero and his collaborators research and publish profusely in applied areas. A few examples of these lines of study are the "Study in eight countries on occupational values in children and young adults when faced with violence" (1973), or the work done in collaboration with Osgood on the semantic differential as a methodological technique to describe the semiotics of language in articles pondering on the "*Pancultural study of meaning*". Other projects dwelled on the pertinence and effect of educational programs in general, such as "*Sexual differences in the development of the Mexican student's personality*", or in specific, through television, like the case of the *Formative Research of Sesame Street*. With the same orientation, but with the objective of expanding knowledge on the psychology of the Mexican, he published a seminal paper in *American Psychologist* on this theme (1977), in which he added a novel gender perspective in the context of the study of personality and culture. As an epilogue to the seventy's, Díaz-Guerrero coordinated a series of projects from which he postulated a transdisciplinary and cultural conception in "*Towards a historic-bio-psycho-socio-cultural theory on human behavior*" (1977).

The 80's found Díaz-Guerrero mounted on several decades of solid and robust inter-cultural and intra-cultural findings that focused him in working on an unedited theory in Latin-American psychology. Besides leaving a clear theory on the psychology of the Mexican, to which he added the study of masses (1984a) and health (1984b), he also re-interpreted and re-directed the research toward adapting psychology from a socio-cultural perspective. The synthesis gave way to incorporating a structuralism vision to the functionalist study of the characterizations of human beings according to their sex in papers on the "*Roles, personality and the status of women*" in. Following the course of integrating behavioral and cultural psychology, Díaz-Guerrero communicated the need to incorporate the effect of contextual and cultural niches in which human beings develop into psychological studies, as is evident in his "*The cultural ecosystem and life quality*", and "*The culture counter culture approach*". However, his conjectures were summarized in the theoretical and methodological creation and delimitation of a new branch in psychology, *Ethnopsychology* (1991).

Díaz-Guerrero's accumulation of work by the 1990's showed three new clear tendencies. In the first, he continues his hard work characterizing and differentiating the effect of culture on visible psychological variables in "*The subjective worlds of Mexicans and North Americans*"

(1993), and “*The effects of culture on national identity*” (1991). The second wave took him to establish the basic precepts of “*Mexican Ethnopsychology*” (1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998), and the revision of the changes time had on delimited phenomenon reported in “*The new philosophy of life*” and in the study of “abnegation” (1993). The third current shows his interest in cross-cultural findings that indicate that values depend on the degree of satisfaction, difficulty and intensity of needs, described in “*Human values and needs: the missing link*” (1995).

The determining work that defines Díaz-Guerrero precisely in the new millennium is his book “*Under the claws of culture*” (2002). In it, he reports longitudinal and cross-sectional data spanning 50 years on the processes of socialization and enculturation responsible for the maintenance of structures that work for the permanency of the socio-cultural premises. In fact, he expands on the small effects that political, economic and social changes have had on the way Mexicans think and act when it comes to the realms of family, male-female interactions and the interaction of parents and their children. The book consolidates a life’s work dedicated to psychological research. None the less, as was typical of Díaz-Guerrero, who could easily trick us as to his retirement with his recurrent “life, you owe me nothing, we are in peace”, he continued expanding new horizons until his last breaths. In fact, he had already begun an investigation on the impact of culture on cognitive, political and economic development. Honoring his work and his life can only be done by continuing his work with the same insistence, creativity, passion, and accuracy. As a corollary to this small homage, allow me to add a few of Díaz-Guerrero’s typical expressions and afterward, an extended selection of his publications. His laughter was without a doubt a distinctive characteristic, as well as “ay caramba”, “very well, it seems like everything is going very well”, and the very Mexican “life is hard sometimes”.

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