

RELATED TOPICS

Psychology of the Mexican: Culture and Personality. By R. DÍAZ-GUERRERO. Austin, 1975. University of Texas Press. Tables. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xxi, 171. Cloth. \$10.95.

This is a collection of Dr. Díaz-Guerrero's social psychological research over a 15 year period. The continuing thread is the comparison between Mexican and U.S. attitudes toward work and social relationships. For me, the most interesting study contrasts concepts of "respect" held by students in the two cultures, showing that while Americans think in terms of equality and admiration for successful performance, respect for Mexicans implies fear, love, and the duty to obey. Díaz-Guerrero writes "The American pattern was a relatively detached, self-assured equalitarianism. The Mexican pattern was one of close-knit, highly emotionalized, reciprocal dependence and dutifulness, within a firmly authoritarian framework." (p. 87).

Since so much of the data is based on questionnaires to middle-class students, one must be more cautious than Díaz-Guerrero is about generalizing to conclusions about national character. Particularly, I question his rather uncritical acceptance of the conventional Mexican patriarchal ideology. Even his own data suggest that patriarchal and matriarchal principles war within the Mexican psyche, that maternal values of abnegation, self-sacrifice and fatalistic acceptance of life are as important to the Mexican character as the male or macho values of courage and conquest, and that in the beginning and the end, the mother is the most revered figure in the culture.

Even taking this into account, we should keep in mind that all national character descriptions mix together different social classes and their social characters, in the case of Mexico, the independent campesinos, the landless *jornaleros*, the ambitious middle class, the entrepreneurs, and the politicians. It is the interaction and conflict between different social characters, with their different economic as well as cultural strivings, which helps explain the complex drama of social change in Mexico.

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