

Social Values and Motivational Orientations as Predictors of Willingness to Engage in Pro Bono Action



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Abstract

Pro Bono Action (PBA) refers to volunteering based on professional skills (e.g., a lawyer giving free legal advice to a non-profit organization). We may boost this specific kind of volunteering by pinpointing those current and future (i.e., university students) professionals who endorse a particular value and motivational orientation. With this objective we designed the BEESE-Q, an instrument that includes measures of profile values (5 items), motivational orientations (12 items), dispositional empathy (4 items), personal goals (5 items) and temporal and context perspective (5 items) items. We conducted two studies. In the first study, we asked 1753 participants to complete the BEESE-Q: 368 Spanish, 94 French, 840 Hungarian, 210 Portuguese, and 241 Bulgarian. The results of Study 1 showed that the measures included in the BEESE-Q allows accounting for Pro bono Action above the typically strongest predictor of past performance of volunteering action. In the second study,



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We that the BEESE-Q can be useful at assessing the motivational variables that promote among professionals the volunteering action based on their skills and knowledge.



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Introduction

Sisyphus, the arrogant and deceitful king of Corinth, was forced by Zeus to roll an immense rock up a hill. When he was close to the top, the rock rolled down and he had to take it back to the peak. He turned old and blind while suffering this condemn for eternity. Icarus was the son of Daedalus, the creator of the Labyrinth of Crete. In order to abandon the island, his father fashioned wings from feathers and wax and asked Icarus not to fly too low or too high. Icarus ignored his father's warning and approached to the sun, which melted the wax in his wings and led the son to fell into the sea and drowned.

Philosophers, writers and scientists have used these two myths as allegories of some critical quandaries of the human condition. For example, in his philosophy of the absurd, Camus refers to Sisyphus to highlight the tension our fundamental need to attribute meaning to life and the persistent and cruel silence that we use to receive as response. In a similar vein, the figure of Icarus has been used as a parabola that



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warns, specially to young people, regarding the threats involve in arrogantly searching powerful entities that are out of our reach.

In this work, we will point out those (motivational) forces that push and orientate youngsters to embark in transcendental actions (i.e., being beyond and above their personal welfare) that may provide them with sense of meaning and fulfillment. These forces may help them not to eventually feeling and behaving like a Sisyphus or Icarus.

A Functional Analysis of Social Action

As Snyder and Omoto (2007) have stated, people take action that benefits society either working alone or together. Not all these efforts are necessarily motivated by an explicit desire to benefit society but the combined effects of individuals' action can have a profound effect on society. For example, people may practice the habits of recycling and conserving energy, they may serve as volunteers and provide services to other people who have difficulty, participate in programs in schools and



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in the workplace that provide opportunities for community service, join and be active in social movements that are dedicated to causes of concern to them. The Pro Bono initiative is one of these movements.

Following with the Snyder and Omoto (2007) analysis, these activities are all instances of individuals seeking to address problems of society by engaging in what is often referred to as civic engagement, citizenship behaviors, or (more generically) social action. This social action is both an individual and a social phenomenon. It is individual phenomena in that they involve the actions of individuals, reflecting their individual concerns, their personal values, their own motives, and their particular goals. It is social in two different ways. First, it is often engaged by collections of people who ensemble together to perform these activities in groups, organizations, and communities. Second, it is done on behalf of other people, who are the beneficiaries of social action, and often for the betterment of a larger entity (i.e., the society or the world as a whole).

Across diverse literatures on numerous forms of social action, investigators have adopted a motivational perspective, focusing theoretically and empirically on



the role of motivations in disposing people to take action, in channeling them into particular forms of action, in guiding them through the course of their involvement, and in sustaining their efforts over time. This emphasis on motivation reflects that social action refers to activities chose by individuals who perform them freely and without obligation, continuing over extended periods of time and even in the face of substantial personal costs. Besides, there are multiple routes to reaching the same end of contributing to the social good (Clary & Snyder, 1991; Omoto & Snyder, 1990; Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000; Snyder & Omoto, 2000).

Variables Considered in the Present Research

In this work we pay attention to five theoretical sets of variables: values, empathy, risk and personal space, motivational orientations, and extrinsic rewards.

Values are regarded as important bridges that connect people's minds, hearts, and actions. Research has shown that values express human tendencies (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992) which guide behaviour through their relationship with attitudes, motives, norms, or beliefs (Feather, 1995; Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Schwartz

& Boehnke, 2004). Among the authors who have proposed and tested the existence and influence of a specific number of values (Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1960; Hartman, 1967; Kahle, 1983; Mitchell, 1983; Rokeach, 1973), Schwartz and collaborators created one of the most accepted and influential modern approaches (Schwartz et al., 2013). According to Schwartz's theory, there is a structure of universal values that guides many aspects of human life, such as attitudes, emotions, or actions (Schwartz, 1992, 1994, 2010; Schwartz et al., 2013). The universality is because human existence involves coping with universal requirements stemming from their needs as social animals (Schwartz, 1992). Regarding the structure, this theory proposes a quasi-circular and continuous arrangement that establishes the mutual compatibility (those values placed close to each other such as power and achievement) or incompatibility (those placed in opposite positions such as stimulation and security) of values. This structure can be summarized in two orthogonal dimensions: self- enhancement versus self-transcendence (i.e., emphasizing either the pursuit of self- interests or concern for the welfare of others) and openness-to-change versus conservation (i.e., emphasizing either independent



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action and readiness for new experiences, or self-restriction and resistance to change.

This structure of values seems to be related with the four motivational forces that Batson and collaborators link to a prosocial action: egoism, altruism, collectivism, and principlism (Batson, 1994, 2011; Batson, Ahmad, & Lishner, 2009; Batson, Ahmad, Powell, & Stocks, 2008). The difference between these motivational forces resides in the ultimate goal that characterizes them, understood as the final state or objective that guides a person's action at a given moment (Heider, 1958; Lewin, 1951; Batson, 1991). Thus, the ultimate goal of these four motives is to alleviate pain and increase pleasure in ourselves (egoism), in another person whom we perceive as needy (altruism), or in a concrete group with which we identify or feel a link (collectivism), or to uphold a specific moral principle such as justice (principlism). Therefore, egoism can be associated with the typically self-enhancement values (power and achievement), altruism with benevolence, collectivism with security and conformity, and principlism with self-direction and universalism. In this vein, Oceja and collaborators (2019) built on Schwartz's theory of values (1992, 2010) and Rokeach's

(1973) distinction between instrumental and terminal goals to propose that stimulation as an instrumental goal, and universalism as a terminal goal combine into the transcendental- change profile (TCP) that refers to the readiness to engage in those challenges that can make the world a better place (Oceja 2008; Oceja and Salgado 2013; Oceja et al. 2018a; Oceja and Stocks 2017; Oceja et al. 2019; Salgado and Oceja 2011; Villar et al., 2019).

With respect to the broad concept of empathy (Batson, 2011), López-Pérez and collaborators (2019) recently developed a new instrument (SyTeD) that contains three subscales to measure the dispositions to feel sympathy, tenderness, and personal distress, incorporating the sympathy-tenderness distinction into this dispositional measure. Specifically, these authors based on the extensive research on empathic concern, which refers to other-oriented emotions elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone in need (Batson 1991, 2011). Lishner et al. (2011) showed from a situational perspective how empathic concern is comprised of two different emotions: sympathy and tenderness. These authors based this distinction on the appraisal theories (e.g., Scherer 1984), which suggest



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that different emotions may be activated depending on the way situations may be appraised. Thus, Lishner et al. (2011) showed that sympathy was linked to the appraisal of current need, whereas tenderness was connected to the appraisal of vulnerability. In this work, we based on this approach to include items aimed at measuring these variables.

We also evaluated a set of beliefs regarding (a) the disposition to seek changes that may involve some degree of risk, and (b) the perceived personal life space. The first variable refer to a personality trait typically considered in the research on decision of embarking in new and relatively unknown actions (Zaleskiewicz, 2001). The second variable is based upon the Salgado, González-Suhr & Oceja's (2013) approach, who analyzed the prosocial effect of including the macro-environment in life space. They propose that the extent to which people perceive that their life takes place in broader environmental contexts (e.g., the society, the world) will facilitate prosocial behavior when the situation of need is presented in an abstract fashion (e.g., very broad and distant).

Regarding motivational orientations, as aforementioned, Snyder and associates (Clary & Snyder, 1991; Clary et al., 1998; Snyder & Omoto, 2007) used a functional analysis that resulted in a set of psychological mechanisms that can promote social action: the wish to feel better about oneself (self-esteem enhancement), wanting to develop skills about how to deal with people in need (knowledge), the desire to build one's social network (social relationships), the wish to support and assist a specific community of people in need (community concern), and a sense of duty to help arising from personal guiding values (affirming values). From this approach, these motivational orientations refer to the psychological functions a person tends to attribute to a specific social action, and they are relatively stable and accessible to consciousness. As such, researchers can develop scales for measuring them (e.g., to ascertain their relationship with volunteerism activity, see Clary et al., 1998; Omoto & Snyder, 1990; Omoto & Snyder, 1995).

Finally, following the classic distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci, 1972; Lepper, 1981; Liu et al., 2020), we added reasons that may be regarded as typical extrinsic rewards for university students: gaining and developing skills and



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knowledge, improving the CV, enhancing the chances of employment, and obtaining explicit academic accreditation (e.g., credits).

Present Work

This work was two objectives. First, to construct an instrument that allows accounting for the young students' willingness to embark in a Pro Bono action. Second, to test whether actually engaging in a specific Pro Bono initiative enhances the motivational variable that promote such willingness. To this end, as aforementioned, we focused on the variables that may intrinsically motivate a general prosocial behaviour (e.g., Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Schwartz, 1992, 1994; Feather, 1995) and, besides, we measured a set of reasons that may extrinsically motivate to perform a particular Pro Bono action.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Measures

One thousand seven hundred fifty-three participants completed the BEESE-Q between April and May of 2019. Specifically, 368 Spanish (68.8% women; 75%, 20% and 5% in the 17-20, 21-25, and more than 26 years old ranges, respectively), 94 French (77.7% women; 20%, 74% and 5% in the correspondent age ranges), 840 Hungarian (42,5% women; 31%, 50% and 19% in the correspondent age ranges), 210 Portuguese (74.8% women; 0%, 77% and 23% in the correspondent age ranges), and 241 Bulgarian (69.7% women, 4%, 78% and 18% in the correspondent age ranges).

We structured and presented the BEESE-Q in five parts (see Appendix 1). The first two contained items aimed at measuring the potential predictors of the willingness to embark in an initiative with positive consequences to others. The following two contained questions referred to the general volunteering behavior and



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the more specific Pro Bono action. The final part included the typical questions regarding the sociodemographic and personal characteristics.

In the first and second part of BEESE-Q the respondents are asked to report the extent to which they identify with a set of 19 sentences according to a 7-point scale (1 = Totally disagree, 7 = Totally agree). These sentences, which were randomly presented for each respondent, were divided into the following five subgroups.

Profile of values. Regarding the values, we focused on those we understood being the most relevant to predict willingness to perform a Pro bono action (WPBA from now on): stimulation, power, security, world-change, and universalism. These values come from the Schwartz's model (SVS, 1992, 1994) and the specific items were designed and tested by Ocejda et al. (2019) in eight different countries (see Appendix).

Risk, Personal space and Empathy. We evaluated a set of beliefs regarding (a) the disposition to seek changes that may involve some degree of risk, (b) the perceived personal life space, and (c) the disposition to feel vicarious emotional reactions. As shown in the Appendix, these were measured through two items taken from the Stimulating-Instrumental Risk Inventory (Zaleskiewicz, 2001), three items

taken from the Space Personal Questionnaire (Salgado, González-Suhr & Oceja, 2013), and three items taken from the Sympathy, Tenderness and Distress Dispositional Scale (SyTeD) (López-Pérez, Carrera, Oceja, Ambrona & Stocks, 2019).

Social Desirability. We tested the tendency to respond in a socially acceptable way through five items taken from the brief Marlowe-Crowne scale developed by Strahan and Gerbasi (1972).

Motivational orientations. In the second part of the questionnaire the respondent was required to imagine that s/he had the opportunity to participate in a helping action and then to report in a 7-point scale (1 = Totally not important, 7 = Extremely important) to what extent a set of reasons were important to decide to participate. These reasons were taken from the Snyder and associates' work (Clary & Snyder, 1991; Clary et al., 1998; Snyder & Omoto, 2007) on the five motivational orientations that can promote social action. These are the wish to feel better about oneself (self-esteem enhancement), wanting to develop skills about how to deal with people in need (knowledge), the desire to build one's social network (social relationships), the wish to support and assist a specific community of people in need

(community concern), and a sense of duty to help arising from personal guiding values (affirming values). Besides, we added a new reason recently proposed and tested by Oceja and Salgado (2013): the willingness to increase the welfare of the world. Overall, these motivational orientations refer to the psychological functions a person tends to attribute to a specific social action, and they are relatively stable and accessible to consciousness. This subgroup included 10 items (see Appendix 1).

Along with the motivational orientations, in this second part of the questionnaire we included another five reasons that may be extrinsically linked to the participation in a Pro Bono action in the university context. These refer to gaining new skills, knowledge and experience; developing existing skills and knowledge; enhancing the CV; improving the employment prospects, and gaining an accreditation (e.g., ECTS credits). The 15 reasons were randomly presented for each respondent.

Previous Volunteering. In the third part of the BEESE-Q, respondents were asked if they had ever participated in any volunteer action and, if so, in which kind. They also informed the usual and preferred channels to collect information



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regarding volunteering. If they reported not to have participated, they then informed regarding the reasons that have prevented them to participate (see Appendix 1).

Attitude toward Pro Bono action. In the fourth part, respondents informed whether they had ever heard about Pro Bono and their initial disposition to participate in that kind of initiative. The final part of the questionnaire included the sociodemographic characteristics.

Procedure

We translated the questionnaire into the five languages covered by the general sample: Spanish, Portuguese, French, Hungarian and Bulgarian. Then we design a common version to be presented through an online platform. At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants read a set of instructions explaining the goals of the study and guaranteeing the confidentiality of the data. Once they had read these instructions and signed a consent form, they proceed to answer the questions. Time necessary for responding to all the items was approximately twenty-five minutes.

Results

Description of the variables

The potential predictors. We first obtained the descriptive indexes for all the potential predictors (see Appendix 2). All the scores were on a 7-point scale. Regarding the values, overall the highest averages corresponded to universalism (You like taking care of nature and seek equality and social justice) and stimulation (You like adventures, experience something new, different and exciting) (Ms = 5.69 and 5.61, respectively). The lowest averages corresponded to power (You like being the decision maker, getting wealth, and having status) and security (You like living in a stable and tidy environment, and avoid doing things that could risk your safety) (Ms = 5.12 and 4.93, respectively).

With respect to the risk and personal space, overall the participants showed a moderate orientation toward the taking risks (M = 4.93 as a goal and as a means combined), living the present time, and feeling the work and the world as the main frame of their lives (Ms = 4.38, 3.78 and 3.93). Regarding the psychological reactions related to empathy, they reported a moderately high disposition to be concerned for

another individual's welfare (M = 5.15 compassion and tenderness combined), a moderate orientation to take the perspective of those who suffer (M = 4.63), and a relatively lower disposition to feel distress when facing them (M = 3.28).

Regarding the motivational orientations, overall they assigned the highest importance to provoke global positive changes (for the humanity, the world as a whole, and other people, Ms = 5.34, 5.71 and 5.32, respectively), and the lowest to feel less alone and learn about other people's coping strategies (Ms = 3.27 and 4.32). The orientations referred to the need of enhancing or sustaining the one's own self-esteem, knowledge, social relationship or values were moderate ($4.47 < Ms < 4.80$)

With respect to the possible extrinsic reasons to perform a volunteering action, those related to gain new skills and knowledge or developing the existing ones were highly evaluated (Ms = 5.80 and 5.63, respectively), whereas those related to obtaining direct academic rewards such as enhancing the CV and/or gaining ECTS credits were moderately low valued (Ms = 3.95 and 3.83, respectively).



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It is noteworthy that the social desirability scale did not show a tendency to report answers regarded as socially approved. None of the five mean values were at the extreme of the 7-point scale ($3.27 < Ms < 5.37$).

Volunteering and Pro Bono action. Around half of the respondents informed to have already participated in a volunteering initiative (48.1%), and around the other half reported not to have yet but being interested in it (40%). Therefore, only a minority (11.3%) expressed not being interested at all in volunteering. Among those who have already volunteered, most of the initiatives were directed to increase the welfare of deprived children (41%) or other collectives (47%), and around two thirds or the initiatives were described as either local (37%) or global (28%).

Regarding the sources of information, those who volunteered mainly found out through friends and acquaintances who made them a personal recommendation about the initiative (72%) or posted it on a social platform (43%). They also received information from the organization's own website (28%) or social media site (31%). Among those who have not participated but would be interested, they actually mentioned those sources as the preferred ones: personal recommendation (81%) or



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an online post (48%) from friends and acquaintances; and around one third also mentioned the organization website (39%) or public posters (32%). With respect to the reasons that prevented the actual volunteering, they mainly reported the lack of time (40%), not having found yet an interesting initiative (38%) or, in a lower extent, “not to have heard of this possibility” (19%).

Very interestingly, most of the respondent did not ever hear about a Pro Bono (81.7%) but were willing to participate in it (93%). This willingness was bold (I’d be happy to participate, 33.4%) or conditional: “if I knew the organization who will be helped” (27%) or “if I worked in small groups or with the supervision of a more experienced professional” (32.7%).

General characteristics. The 42.1% and 57.5% of the sample indicated to be women or men, respectively; 7 out of the 1753 respondents did not indicate their gender. One third of them were between the 16-20 years-old (32.3%), around half (52.3%) between the 21-25 years-old, and a minority between the 26-35 years-old (10.1%), or above (5.3%). As a general description, most of them had secondary (68%) or higher education (32%), as did their parents (45% and 45%, respectively), they live



in a city (81%) either with their parents (45%) or in an apartment (25%). Some respondents reported a difficulty (15.3%) that referred to social (3.7%), economic (1.9%), learning (2.5%), physical (1.2%), or other (2.7%) challenging situations (see Appendix 3).

Prediction of Willingness to perform a Pro Bono action (WPBA):

Variables

There were 28 items aimed at measuring the potential predictors of the willingness to perform a Pro Bono Action (WPBA). We construed this variable by differentiating three levels: those who wanted to participate in a Pro Bono initiative, those who would like to participate under some conditions (i.e., to know the organization, or to work in small groups or under the supervision of an expert), and those who did not want to participate. The 28 potential predictors were theoretically divided into five conceptual sets: values, empathy, risk and personal space, motivational orientations, and extrinsic rewards. We then carried out a series of



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stepwise regression analyses according to the following procedure. First, for each of the five theoretical sets taken separately, we introduced the items as predictors and the WPBA as criteria. Second, within each set, we selected those items that proved to be separate and independent significant predictors; that is, their prediction power was not subsumed by other items of the same set. Third, we progressively introduced the significant predictors of each set into the same equation obtaining a final solution that included items referred to: the orientation toward attaining changes that may enhance the world as whole, the moral obligation and concern for collectives (society and others) and, negatively, the difficulty of facing another's suffering and feeling alone (see Figure 1). Importantly, these variables remained significant when the previous experience in volunteering was introduced into the equation. Therefore, taken together these variables point out a willingness to participate in a Pro Bono action that is not explained by past behavior in the same area. It is noteworthy that this procedure allowed us not only to obtain the final more practical and parsimonious solution, but also to figure out which items are the most predictive

within each theoretical set. We show the detailed results of this procedure in the Appendix 4.

Figure 1. The separate and independent predictors (single items)

You like engaging in those challenges that can make the world a better place

These kinds of actions can also change the world

What happens in the world is the main frame of my life.

My sense of obligation toward society

I consider myself a person who is concerned about others

It is very hard for me to visit someone who is sick (reversed)

To feel less alone (reversed)

Prediction of Willingness to perform a Pro Bono action (PWBA):

Dimensions

In order to obtain a comprehensive model that grouped and distinguished the 28 single items into a set of general predictors, we carried out a maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblimin rotation. This analysis revealed seven factors with eigenvalues over 1 which together explained 43.56 % of the variance. We labelled this factors as Transcendence-Change, Self-promotion, Stimulation-Risk, Knowledge, General-Caring, Values and Work. The final factorial solution with the correspondent weights is shown in Appendix 5.

We introduced the seven dimensions into a stepwise regression analysis and all of them, with the exception of Stimulation-Risk and Work, showed a separate and independent predictive power. We then analyzed how this predictive power was moderated by gender, place and age. The results showed that Transcendence-Change and values were more predictive for men, whereas Transcendence-Change, Self-promotion (reversed), General-Caring and Stimulation-Risk for women.



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Regarding the place, Transcendence-Change was predictive in all the places with exception of the French sample. General-Caring was predictive in the Spanish and Hungarian samples. Self-promotion (reversed) in the Hungarian and Portuguese samples. Knowledge and Values only in the Hungarian sample, and Stimulation-Risk in the French sample. With respect to the age, Transcendence-Change was predictive for all the age groups, General-Caring for the youngsters (i.e., between the 16 and 25 years old), and Knowledge for the eldest (i.e., older than 25 years-old). All the beta weights are shown in Appendix 5.

Conclusions

Previous research has consistently showed that past behavior predicts future behavior. The results of the present research support that finding; those 47.5 % of the total sample who have already volunteered reported a higher willingness to perform a Pro Bono action. However, the results also reveal that other psychosocial variables, mainly referred to values and motivational orientations, may predict that willingness.

Regarding those who have not yet volunteered, around half mentioned the lack of time, but it was not the only reason. More than half of the sample mentioned either not knowing or finding the appropriate initiative, and this open venue for initiatives that may engage the university students to actually participate in a Pro Bono action. The study, analysis and test of the psychosocial variables will promote the design of initiatives that properly match with students' predispositions.

There are at least three findings that encourage us embarking in this enterprise. First, the Pro Bono action is mostly unknown among students;



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nevertheless, when they are informed, they express willingness to perform it. Second, this willingness do not seem mainly revolt around the expectation of getting extrinsic rewards. That is, students overall appreciate gaining and developing new skills, knowledge and experience through engaging in prosocial actions –and interestingly they are not that interested in improving their CV or obtaining academic accreditation–; however, these are not the most important reasons. Instead, and this is the third and most relevant finding of the present work, a general caring for the welfare of other specific individuals and collectives and the enthusiasm to embark in challenges that may provoke positive changes in the society or the world seem to be the most powerful motivational forces that push and orientate youngsters' prosocial action. Therefore, framing initiatives as Pro Bono action in these terms may lead these youngsters to find sense of meaning and fulfillment.

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Appendix 1

Questionary BEESE-Q



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Appendix 2

Averages and standard deviations of the potential predictors



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Appendix 4

Beta weights corresponding to the different step-wise regression analyses.



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Appendix 5

Factorial weights for the maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblimin rotation
over the 28 potential predictors