Values and History Education. The social representation on historical significance of Teacher Training students

Valores y enseñanza de la historia. La representación social de relevancia histórica en docentes en formación

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Abstract

The teaching of history involves a process of content selection that implies educational purposes, while the treatment of characters and events involves processes of creation of meanings that include emotions and values. Therefore, this paper analyses the social representation of prospective teachers of Primary Education on historical significance of universal history to seek which values are associated with the indicated contents. To this purpose, a non-experimental descriptive mixed design has been chosen. The study involved 202 students of the Primary Education programs at the universities of Murcia and Barcelona in the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. The questionnaire has been designed with an

associative approach by means of words-stimuli that 5 characters or events could evoke. The characteristics of what is considered historically relevant by the participants show an image shared with other studies, both national and in the European and Latin American context, in which an androcentric, political and sociocentric vision predominates. In addition, the analysis of the values associated with characters and events shows a predominance of the idea of progress (advancement) as well as that of achievement, which correspond mostly to current values, and that can be traced independently of the historical context of characters and events. What is outlined in this work can serve to rethink strategies for history teaching where more emphasis is placed on multiperspective, a greater weight in the contextualization of historical characters and events, and in giving voice to characters of history who have traditionally been silenced to highlight dominant values more typical of contemporaneity than of true weight. meaning and sense of past events.

Keyword: History education, social representation, historical significance, teacher training, Historical Culture, values.

Resumen

La enseñanza de la historia conlleva un proceso de selección de contenidos que implica de por sí qué finalidades educativas se pretenden, al tiempo que el tratamiento de los personajes y acontecimientos involucran procesos de creación de significados que incluyen emociones y valores. Por ello, en este trabajo se analiza la representación social de docentes en formación sobre los hechos y personajes relevantes de la historia universal con la intención de ver qué valores predominan asociadas a los contenidos indicados. Con tal fin, se ha optado por un diseño mixto no experimental de corte descriptivo. En el estudio han participado 202 estudiantes del Grado en Educación Primaria de las universidades de Murcia y Barcelona en los cursos académicos 2020-2021 y 2021-2022. El cuestionario se ha diseñado con un enfoque asociativo por medio de palabras-estímulos que 5 personajes o eventos pudieran evocar. Las características de lo que se considera relevante históricamente por parte de los participantes muestran una imagen compartida con otros estudios tanto nacionales como del contexto europeo y latinoamericano, en los que predomina una visión androcéntrica, política y sociocéntrica. Además, el análisis de los valores asociados a los personajes y hechos muestra un predominio de la idea de progreso (avance) así como la de logro, las cuales corresponden en gran medida a valores actuales y que se pueden rastrear independientemente del contexto histórico de personajes y hechos. Lo esbozado en este trabajo puede servir para replantear estrategias para la enseñanza de la historia donde se haga más hincapié en la multiperspectiva, un mayor peso en la contextualización de los personajes y acontecimientos históricos, y en dar voz a personajes de la historia que tradicionalmente han sido silenciados en aras a resaltar unos valores dominantes más propios de la contemporaneidad que del verdadero peso, significado y sentido de los acontecimientos pasados.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de la historia, representación social, relevancia histórica, formación del profesorado, Cultura histórica, valores.

Introduction

The selection of school history content has always been a contentious issue, but the lack of specific content in Law 3/2020 amending Organic Law 2/2006 on Education in Spain has attracted the attention of the media, particularly those who warned of the potential loss of significant historical milestones that have shaped the country's collective identity. Additionally, the Royal Academy of History (hereinafter, in Spanish, RAH) has expressed concern about the disproportionate emphasis on contemporary history and the dearth of historical content, particularly in comparison to sociological, political, and economic studies. The RAH has also advocated for a clear distinction between history and memory, emphasizing the scientific rigor of history while acknowledging the subjective and evolving nature of memory (RAH, 2022).

The debate about what history content to teach masks, in reality, what educational aims are being pursued. However, has the teaching of history ever been dissociated or indifferent to the socio-cultural context in which it is taught and/or consumed? What selection has been made so far of what was considered relevant in history, and what meanings have been given to it? In light of these considerations, the issue of analysing the perspective of future primary school teachers in Spain on what is deemed relevant in history emerges as a crucial point of inquiry. This is particularly significant given that history constitutes the inaugural stage in which its significance begins to be reflected in the curriculum, with potential implications that may arise from this. In order to address this issue, an investigation was conducted to analyse the construction of historical significance among future teachers at the Spanish universities of Murcia and Barcelona. This was done with the aim of verifying the degree of coincidence in this respect and its possible implications.

Considering the aforementioned concerns, we have put forth the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the characteristics of the historical figures, facts, and events deemed relevant by the participants (trainee teachers).

2. To describe the meanings attributed to the historical figures, facts, and events most frequently mentioned by the participants.

Literature review/ State of the art

The analysis of the social meaning of the contents to be studied is often over-
looked in the approach of didactic designs for the teaching of history. One
possible explanation for this discrepancy is that there is a dichotomy between
what is considered to be objective, and which must be confined to formal ed-
ucation. This distinction can be observed in the commitment to the teaching
of historical thinking (Gómez, Ortuño & Miralles, 2018) and the consump-
tion of history outside the educational sphere (Seixas, 2016). However, upon
entering formal education, students are not free of historical knowledge, as
they are conditioned by the historical culture they possess, which is deter-
mined by the way in which the group interprets, transmits, and transforms the
past. This historical culture is used for the purposes of group cohesion and
identity ties (Grever & Adriaansen, 2017). Consequently, the school itself
(teachers, educational laws, among others) is not exempt from its own histor-
ical culture, which serves as an instrument for the generation of this identity
element. Consequently, over recent years, there has been a growing interest
in understanding how students construct meanings from historical content,
including processes, characters, and so on. This interest extends beyond the
view that teaching the historical method fosters critical thinking about histor-
ical knowledge (Epstein & Peck, 2019; Levesque & Croteau, 2020). Indeed,
research in this area is already underway in Spain. For instance, studies such
as those by Arias & Egea (2019), Ibagón, Maquilón & Miralles (2021) and
Rivero, Navarro & Aso (2022) have identified the characteristics of the most
relevant historical figures for trainee teachers and secondary school students.
In the meantime, studies such as those by Mugueta (2016), Ortega & Pagés
(2017), Rivero & Pelegrín (2019) or Ortuño, Molina & Maquilón (2024) have
explored the meanings of historical events through the identification of cli-
chés or values, thereby opening the door to understanding and influencing the
socio-cultural context in the learning of history.

   This contextual study helps to understand how meaningful learning
of the subject is generated, since this context affects the meaning given to
history insofar as it opens up the possibility of bringing these contents of the
past closer to the use that is made of them to justify the present and how we

want the future to be (Fronza, 2016). A shared vision of the past by a group can become a social representation, insofar as these are carriers of collective memory. Consequently, the analysis of social representations of history is pertinent to competence education, given that the utilisation of the past is linked to common sense knowledge, which "guides individuals in the immediate context, enabling their adaptation to the physical world and their integration into social interactions, questioning membership of different groups" (Delfino, Sosa, Bobowik & Zubieta, 2020, p. 70).

The context of teaching history in schools provides an ideal setting for the intertwined teaching of methodology and the analysis of the meanings attached to it, which collectively facilitate the generation of more critical thinking about the nature of the self and the management of the past (Straub, 2005; Seixas, 2012 & 2016; Clark & Peck, 2018). This necessitates the integration of didactic approaches that facilitate the identification, analysis and interpretation of historical processes, events, and characters (first-order concepts typical of master narratives). Additionally, it requires the introduction of ontological elements that enable the questioning of the nature of the subject matter, the rationale behind its study and the intended applications (Alvén, 2021). Nevertheless, these concepts, which are referred to as third order concepts, continue to be overlooked. These concepts involve meaning-making processes and include emotions and ideologies (Edling, Löfström & Ammert, 2021). Awareness of this would facilitate self-reflection and the comprehension of the values that condition present actions and future decisions, which are also discernible in learned historical content (Spanget, 2013). It is thus necessary to reconsider whether the values associated with historical teachings should include or promote values of human dignity, universalism, and commitment to nature and to each other. These values can also be found in the more rigorous history that we wish to demonstrate (Rüsen, 2012). Furthermore, this entails elucidating the way our socio-cultural context is projected onto the past, a process that frequently gives rise to resistance to change in our present actions. In light of the climate crisis and the unsustainable concept of unlimited economic growth, there is an urgent need to educate new generations on the necessity to rethink our relationship with the environment and with each other. The prevailing anthropocentric vision of the past, which has

historically separated human life and nature, must be reconsidered in light of
the interconnectivity of these entities (Nordgren, 2021). In reality, human life
is inextricably linked to the natural environment, upon which our life projects
are dependent.

Methodology

In this research, we have opted for a non-experimental design with a quali-
tative and quantitative data analysis method. The combination of narratives
and statistics in content analysis is a powerful approach in social research,
especially in education, as it allows for a more comprehensive understanding
of the subject matter (O'Connor, 2019). In order to analyse the open-ended
responses, a descriptive phenomenological design was employed, which is
typical of the qualitative tradition. This approach allows for the identification
of specific issues by searching for the meanings present in participants' re-
sponses (Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017).

Research sample

The selection of participants was intentional as it allows us to capture the
vision of history that future school actors will bring and use to act or make
decisions in their classrooms (McCrum, 2013). This group of participants can
be described as having similar characteristics, including students in non-com-
pulsory stages, with intellectual concerns and basic historical training.

It should be noted that, although social representations are studied
through the interrogation of individuals, the subject of the research is not so
much the individual as the social group. This results in the intentional selec-
tion of the sample, as the socio-cultural context in which the subjects and
groups develop was necessary for it to be as coincidental as possible (Gutiér-
rez-Vidrio, 2019).

The present study involved the collaboration of 202 students from
two Spanish public universities (University of Murcia and University of Bar-

celona), in the years 2020 and 2021. The mean age of the participants was 20.54 years (SD = 1.96), with an age range between 19 and 26 years. The majority of participants were women (168, 83.16%), with 44 men (21.78%). Regarding the academic year in which the students were enrolled at the time the survey was administered, 133 students (65.84%) were in their second year of their degree programme, while 69 students (34.15%) were in their second year. The data pertaining to the participants is presented in Table I.

TABLA I. Distribution of participants according to the gender of the respondents, origin of the university and year.

	2020		2021	
	University of Murcia	**University of Barcelona**	**University of Murcia**	**University of Barcelona**
MEN	13	7	20	4
WOMEN	31	42	40	45

Source: Compiled by the authors

Research instruments

In order to obtain the information, an ad hoc questionnaire was created, in which the participants were given the freedom to name five people or events in the history of humanity that they considered significant and relevant (positively or negatively). As Abric (2001) asserts, the questionnaire, in contrast to the interview, enables the introduction of quantitative perspectives, which facilitates the organisation of responses and standardisation to reduce the subjective aspect. This is achieved through the standardisation of the expressions of the surveys through the themes addressed, order of the themes, modalities of the responses, and so forth. In order to obtain meanings, the questionnaire was designed with an associative approach, with the intention of discovering the structure of a semantic map through the induction of a word-stimulus that the character or event in question could evoke. Despite its apparent simplicity, as Gutiérrez-Vidrio (2016) notes, this strategy of associating a word with an object (in this case a figure or historical event) involves a high de-

gree of abstraction. Furthermore, its spontaneous and less controlled nature facilitates much quicker and easier access to the constituent elements of the semantic universe of the object of study. This type of instrument is suitable for the study of social representations of history (Liu & Hilton, 2005; Zubieta & Barreiro, 2014). The adjectives, nouns or verbs in their infinitive form used by the respondents have been determined by the participants' own freedom of choice, which has resulted in a wide variety of forms and terms being used. In order to facilitate the analysis process, the information has been condensed by summarising the adjectives into a single word that encompasses all the variants (nouns, adjectives or verbs) used by the participants (see Annex). Although the term "example" is the sole item in this annex, the frequency of all the variations has been considered when determining the digit that represents the repetition of this quality associated with a character or event (referred to as a "case" in the research).

Procedure

For the analysis of the data, we employed the qualitative analysis software NVivo 1.6, which allowed us to integrate qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques simultaneously. To this end, we constructed three large families of codes pertaining to the subject who made the assessment with respect to the object of the representation, the attributes of the object and the assessment of the object itself. With these, we proceeded to two types of operations necessary for the analysis of the representation: firstly, we proceeded to the construction of the objects of the representation (in this case, processes, events, or historical characters) by means of the identification of typologies within them. Secondly, we used socio-demographic information codes of the participants (gender, university of origin and year of participation). The historical characters and events have been classified as cases, to which four attributes have been added (see Tables III and IV). The geographical and temporal coding has been carried out in accordance with conventional criteria: the traditional periodisation by centuries and the action during the life of the

characters.

In regard to the second operation (value projection), the appellatives have been coded in accordance with the theory of universal values as proposed by Schwartz and Boehnke (2004). This theory posits that values are conceived as "beliefs linked to emotions that act as a guide for actions and judgments, which can be ordered by order of priority and importance, forming the value system of each individual" (Páez, 2014; 136). It is important to note that these values can be considered motivational types, as each value reflects the goals and objectives to be pursued. This reinforces the idea that social representation allows us to understand the meaning of what is considered relevant in history, as the participants identify which values motivated the characters to do what they did and for which they are worthy of being remembered and studied. The Annex contains a list of qualities associated with the values, while Table II presents the definition proposed by Schwartz and Boehnke (2004).

TABLE II. Definition of values by Schwartz & Boehnke (2004).

Self-Direction	Independent thought and action, choice, creation, or exploration
Benevolence	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the well-being of all people and nature
Conformity	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the well-being of all people and nature
Stimulation	Novelty, attraction and change in life
Hedonism	Pleasure or sensory gratification for oneself
Achievement	Personal success by demonstrating competence in accordance with social standards
Power	Social status and prestige, control or domination over other people or resources
Security	The security, harmony and stability of society and relationships, as well as those of the self.
Tradition	Respect for, commitment to and acceptance of the traditions and ideas offered by a culture or religion
Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the well-being of all people and nature

Source: Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004

In order to analyse these data, it is necessary to consider that the number of options available to respondents to freely choose characters or events was 5 (with their corresponding value associated with that choice), which translates into 1,015 entries to analyse, with their respective qualifiers. If we focus on the total number of registered cases only, the figure rises to 232 cases (characters or events named without counting their repetitions). The data enabled us to proceed with the research, as it demonstrated a high degree of saturation of the responses, with 23% of the possible cases covered in the sample. This indicated the existence of specific objects on which to symbolise what was considered relevant in the historical sphere.

Results

With respect to the first objective of the study, as we can see in tables III and IV, the responses by groups attached to a university, as well as the gender of the respondents, do not differ in terms of the type of figure selected (mostly political military), their geographical affiliation or their gender. Although participants were given the possibility of choosing characters from any period and geography of the world because of their relevance to the history of mankind, the answers are mostly linked to Europe and Spain, following the pattern of the curricula of the compulsory educational stages. Likewise, 49.6% of the personalities chosen are male, compared to 22% of female characters and 28.4% who name historical events or processes. The chronology of the historical characters and events is mostly from the 20th century (48.7%), to which, if we add the percentages of events and characters from the 19th century (10.3%) and the 21st century (10.8%), we can see an overwhelming majority of contemporary history over the rest of the historical periods. It is worth noting that women select more female characters than do male respondents (see Table V): 36.3% of female respondents select historical characters, compared to 16.4% of male respondents, who do so in 16.4% of cases. Finally, there is a high coincidence in the characters and events shown in the questionnaires of both universities and different years (Figure I).

TABLE III. Typology of characters/events by university

	Event	Politician/military	Thinker/Philosopher	Scientist	Activist	Artist	Technology	Writer	Adventurer	Religious person	Political ideologies	Businessperson	Sportsperson	Total
UB	31	43	7	23	9	16	2	8	2	4	2	2	1	150
UMU	47	39	8	17	7	13	1	7	2	3	1	3	2	150
Total	61	67	11	26	11	24	2	12	3	5	2	5	3	232

Source: Compiled by the authors

TABLE IV. Geography of figures/events by university

|	Europe	Spain	World	USA	Asia	Africa	Latin America	Total
UB	55	34	16	26	6	5	7	149
UMU	54	35	22	28	6	2	4	150
Total (exclusive)	78	59	26	45	9	6	9	232

Source: Compiled by the authors

TABLE V. Typology of figures according to the sex of respondents

	Character = Woman	Character= Man	Total
MEN	13	66	79
WOMEN	48	84	132
Total (exclusive)	51	115	166

Source: Compiled by the authors

FIGURE I. Most cited characters and events by university and year
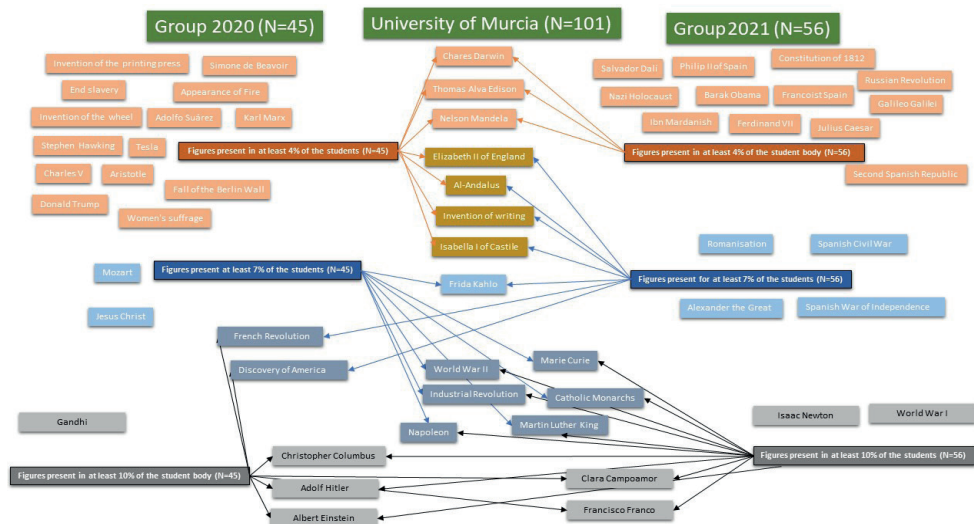
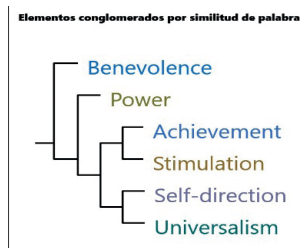
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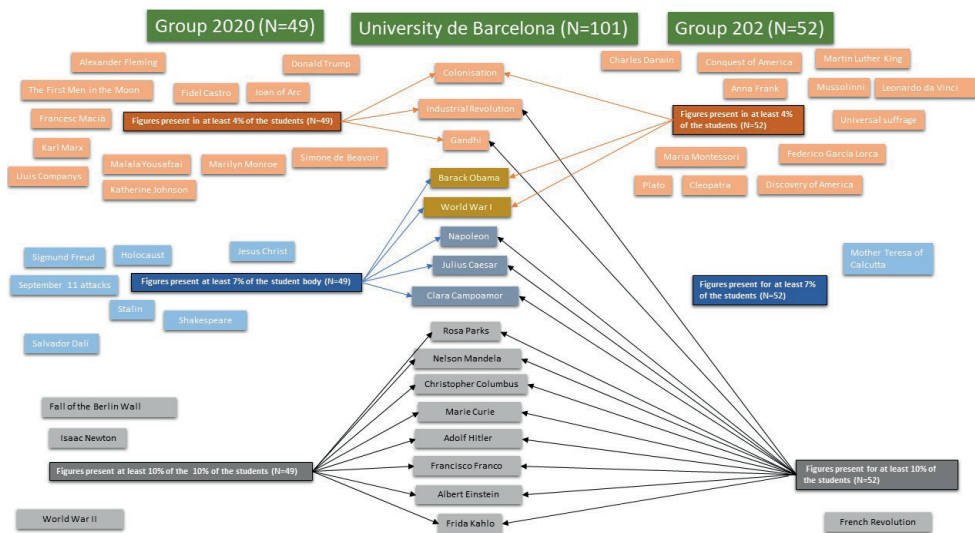
Source: Compiled by the authors

In addition to these considerations, we are also interested in the selection process itself and the meaning that is ascribed to it. The initial premise is that the ten values outlined by Schwartz and Boehnke (2004) can be differentiated into three distinct levels. These are presented in Table II. Firstly, the most frequently repeated values are those of change/stimulation, achievement/merit, moral valuation (goodness/evilness) and power. Secondly, and to a lesser extent, there are mentions of values related to the idea of transcendence of the individual and the idea of self-direction/freedom. Finally, values such as security, order, tradition, and hedonism are mentioned only marginally (Annex).

However, as will be demonstrated below, it is of interest to note that these values are often combined, and associations are established between them. Indeed, considering Pearson's correlation index according to the similarity of words in the coding process (see Figure II), connections emerge that allow us to obtain a more complete understanding of what the historical characters and events embody for the participants.

FIGURE II. Dendrogram with the association of values according to the similarity of words in the coding.

Source: Compiled by the authors

In order to analyse the meanings attributed to the historical figures and events selected by the participants, we will focus on the values that have been most frequently repeated and the qualifiers associated with them. We will exclude those values that have a marginal presence (security, order, tradition, and hedonism), although it is true that, on occasions, the latter appear related to other predominant values.

Change/ stimulation

The idea of change/stimulation is one of the first to be associated with 'relevant'. The adjectives most frequently used to describe this idea are Discovery, Courage, Revolution, and Innovation (these adjectives have a frequency of 148 out of 179 for the total number of adjectives associated with change/stimulation). And associated with these adjectives are historical figures such as Christopher Columbus, Marie Curie, Frida Kahlo and the French and Industrial Revolutions (see Figure III). The values associated with these characters, archetypes of change, correlate with the idea of Achievement (personal merit), meaning, therefore, that change implies progress. Not only that but change and progress also go hand in hand with the idea of individuality shown in the value of self-direction. There are several examples:

Reg. 139 qualifies Columbus as an important character in history "since he discovered America [value=Stimulation] and was a step [understood as progress] in history [value= Achievement]".

Reg. 148, also highlights Columbus, whom he describes as "ambitious [value=Achievement] because he wanted [value=Self-direction] to discover beyond what was known and to break the rules of that society [value=Stimulation/Change]".

Reg. 248 cites Einstein, whom they describe as "intelligent [value=achievement] because he made great scientific breakthroughs (theory of relativity). His motivation was to make great scientific discoveries [Value=Stimulation/Change] that would help us understand how the world works".

Reg. 721, cites Marie Curie, whom they described as "revolutionary [value=Stimulation/Change] because at the time in which she lived I think she was very daring and thanks to her daring she managed to be valued [value= Achievement] by other people who were involved in the same thing as her".

FIGURE III. Adjectives and figures associated with the value Change/stimulation
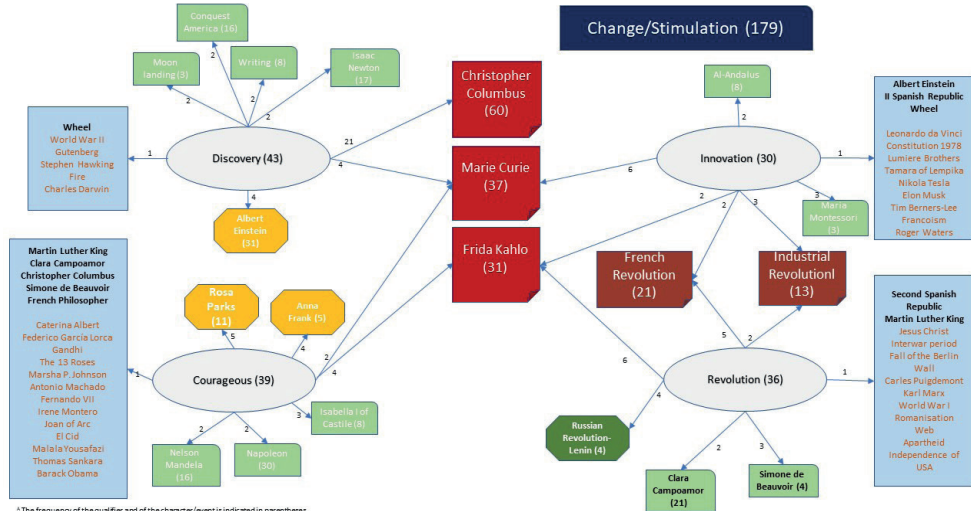
Source: Compiled by the authors

Furthermore, the stimulation/change value leads us to highlight that events involving a high degree of violence, such as the arrival of Europeans in America, the French and Russian revolutions, the World Wars or American independence appear as elements of change associated with values of Achievement, such as the idea of progress, freedom, or transcendence. These events are seen as traumatic elements, indeed, but with a result that allows social progress (also associated with values of universalism or transcendence of the individual). Again, there are several examples:

Reg. 888 identifies the Russian Revolution as "revolution" [value=stimulation/change], and justifies it as the "revolution par excellence, total unity [value=universalism] to achieve a cause".

Reg. 857, indicates the French Revolution as "necessary [value=universalism] for all the positive consequences it brought about [value=stimulation/change; = Achievement], not only in France but throughout the world, in spite of the brutality]".

Achievement

Another of the most repeated values is that of achievement, associated with
appellatives such as ambition, genius, progress and intelligent, which cover
66% of the total number of adjectives used for this value. In this case, the most
frequently cited characters are from the world of science, except for Napoleon
and Columbus. As for the reading of the adjectives used, the message seems to
follow a pattern in the respondents: male scientists are basically described for
their qualities, while female scientists are associated more with the idea of so-
cial change (Figure IV). An example is found in Reg. 240, who, when describ-
ing Einstein, describes him as "intelligent" [value=achievement] "because he
developed theories that have been very important for science". However, Marie
Curie presents a connotation more as a symbol of vindication of women than of
her own value as a scientist (also cited), it being significant that, together with
intelligent, her adjectives go more towards the term of progress, revolution,
innovation. Examples of this are:

Reg. 720, describes her as "innovation" [value=stimulation/change] be-
cause she "seems to him to be an empowered woman, very advanced [value=
achievement] in her time and for that reason she is innovative".

Reg. 699, describes her as "determined" [value=self-directed] because
"she sacrificed a lot for her work and for science. She did not give up even if
she suffered for it".

It is also interesting to note that only two men named Marie Curie (5%
of men) as a relevant figure, while 35 women selected Marie Curie (21% of
women). In the case of Albert Einstein, of the 31 respondents who chose him,
25 were female and 6 male, which means that 15% of males identified him as
relevant, while females accounted for 15.4%.

Another interesting idea shown in the value associated with Achieve-
ment is the idea that social advancement is technological development. For
examples, see:

Reg. 878, which, in highlighting the Industrial Revolution, qualifies it
as "advancement" [value= Achievement] "because it enabled a total change
[value=Stimulation/change] in societies and people's lives".

Reg. 884, also describes the Industrial Revolution as "progress because
it meant being able to achieve many more rights [value=universalism], discov-

ering [value=stimulation/change] new ways of working".

Reg. 882, qualifies the Industrial Revolution as "innovation [value=-stimulation/change] because it meant the beginning of a new era, in which great advances [value=achievement] were made in different fields (economic, social, technological...)".

FIGURE IV Historical figures and events associated with the achievement/recognition value
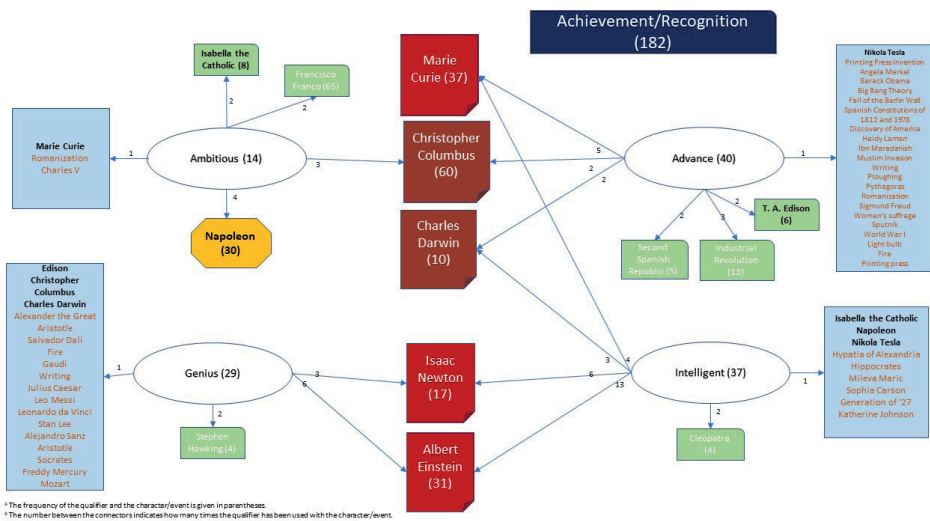
Source: Compiled by the authors

Benevolence

In the case of adjectives associated with the idea of moral evaluation of historical figures or events, negative appellatives such as murderer, evil or cruel stand out (115 times out of 161), and all of them with a strong association to two historical figures: Adolf Hitler and Francisco Franco (Figure V).

In contrast to what happens with other values, we can see how moral evaluations revolve around 20th century events and personalities still very much alive in the collective memory and with evident manifestations in the present. It is striking that, with regard to the two aforementioned figures, there

is a difference in perception on the part of the participants. In the case of Hitler, the association with evil is manifest: 60% of the mentions associate them with qualifications such as evil, murderous, or cruel. An example of this is Reg. 469, which describes him as "racist, [value=universalism] because he carried out a lot of atrocities [value=benevolence/evilness] against the Jewish and black population".

However, in the case of Franco, only 34% associate him with evil. This is the case of Reg. 332, who describes him as "cruelty [value=benevolence/evil] because he killed a lot of people and showed cruelty in every action". The appellatives intended for Franco are not applied to the nature of the subject, but to the way in which he exercised power: Reg. 304 describes him as "dictator", and Reg. 310 uses the appellative "authoritarian" [value=power] and justifies it with "he was a dictator who for evil [value=benevolence/evil] marked the history of Spain for many years, with the war and the dictatorship)".

As a counterpoint, among the characters associated with goodness, Gandhi and Mother Teresa of Calcutta stand out, although they have far fewer mentions than Hitler or Franco.

FIGURE V. Historical figures and events associated with the value of benevolence/evil.
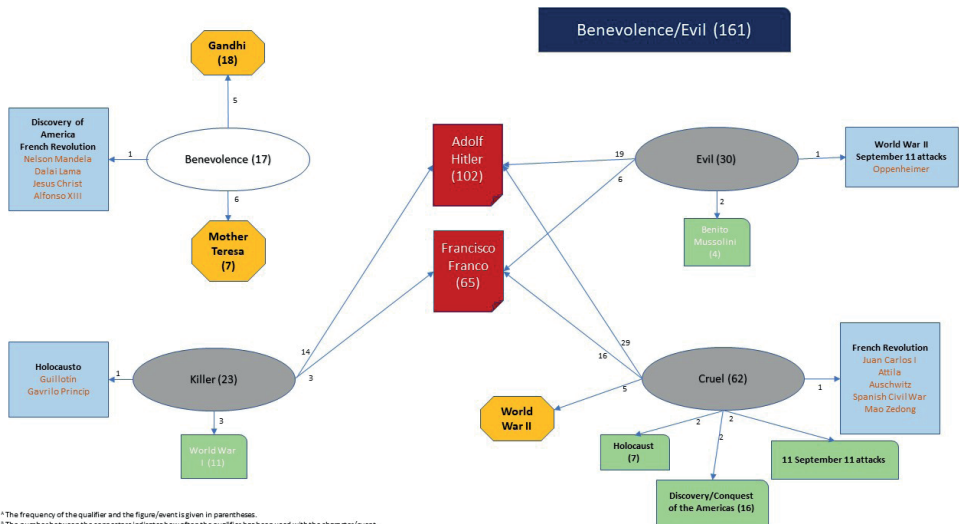
Source: Compiled by the authors

Power

The idea of power is closely linked to mainly male characters (only Isabella the Catholic stands out: Figure VI), generally linked to adjectives that could be considered to have a negative moral evaluation: imperialism, dictator, authoritarianism, or conquest.

However, alongside these adjectives, we find evaluations of these same characters that are linked to the ideas of achievement (mainly), and self-direction, to a lesser extent. Only Hitler and Franco have a moral evaluation of their actions, motivated, as we have already indicated, by the possible validity, still, of their actions in today's society. Figures such as Julius Caesar or Napoleon are basically associated with the idea of power (almost two out of every three times they are mentioned), and not necessarily with negative evaluations. This "friendly" character of power can also be found in characters such as the Catholic Monarchs, Alexander the Great, or even Napoleon

himself. There are several examples:

Reg. 659 highlights Caesar and describes him as "astute [value=achievement] because I consider that he conquered [value=power] a large part of Europe thanks to his strategies".

Reg. 790 describes Napoleon as "ambitious [value= achievement] because I consider that he was a very non-conformist [value=conformity, in a negative sense]".

Reg. 13, describes Alexander the Great as "strategic [value=achievement] because he conquered many territories [value=power], so he was intelligent and very ambitious [value=achievement]".

Finally, Isabella the Catholic is highlighted in Reg. 629, as "courage [courage=stimulation/change] because she had to face unpleasant situations in order to reach the throne".

FIGURE VI. Historical figures and events related to the value of Power
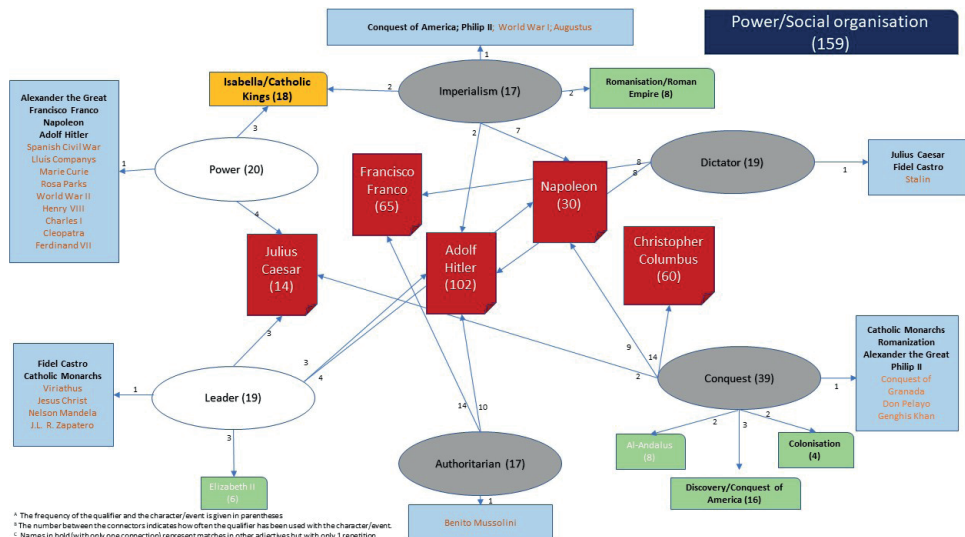
Source: Compiled by the authors

Universalism

Another value with a high number of associations is universalism. The adjectives equality, justice, union, and open-mindedness are used to describe the concept with great frequency. Furthermore, the figure of Clara Campoamor (see Figure VII) is associated with these values. In addition, respondents identified Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela as other figures worthy of mention in this category. It is noteworthy that all of the figures are associated with the idea of achieving civil rights, which is inextricably linked to the value of non-conformism. The references to Barack Obama and the Catholic Monarchs are noteworthy. The latter are associated with the idea of union and equality within the Spanish territory.

FIGURE VII. Historical figures and events related to the value of universalism/transcendence
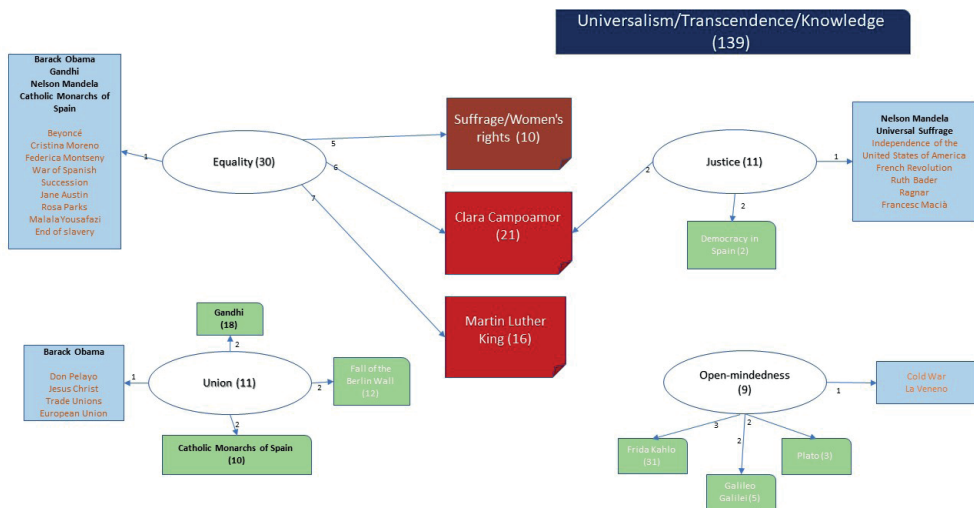
Source: Compiled by the authors

Self-direction

There is a tendency to associate the value of self-direction with stimulation

and achievement. If the idea of universalism is associated with the achievement of civil rights, the idea of self-direction is largely reflected by two historical processes: the French Revolution and the Fall of the Berlin Wall, which exemplify liberation from an oppressive system of social organisation. The most commonly used qualifier is freedom (see Figure VIII). On a second level, we find the idea of struggle, which is associated with activists such as Clara Campoamor, Rosa Parks, and Frida Kahlo herself. This association also leads us to see how the most frequently cited female figures (Marie Curie, Frida Kahlo, Clara Campoamor) are always associated with the character of icons who have made a break with the world they lived in, pioneers in the advance towards a society in which women have visibility. Nevertheless, men are associated with the idea of power and their achievements are recognised for their individuality and personality, rather than as proper names in the service of a cause. Consequently, the stereotypical idea of women as a collective is partly maintained.

FIGURE VIII. Historical figures and events related to the value of freedom/self-direction
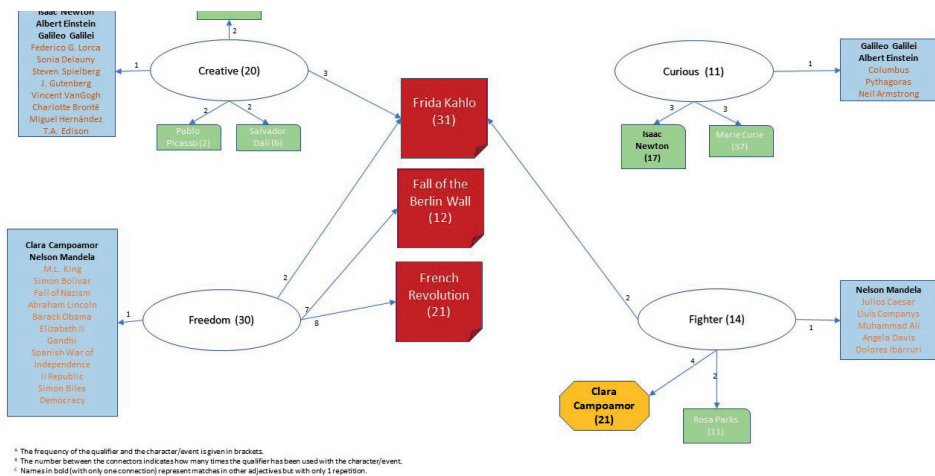
Source: Compiled by the authors

Discussion

Despite the overwhelming weight of contemporary events over other historical periods, the prevailing view is that there are no significant differences between the characteristics of past and contemporary historical figures and events. In addition, it is important to analyse what these characteristics lack historicity. The first of these is that, according to the answers, the driving force of history seems to be simplified in the will of the characters. In this view, power lies in the individual, in the great characters who are generally men. Furthermore, androcentrism continues to be the general pattern when it comes to signifying characters, in line with stereotypical ideas in the educational sphere (Sáenz, 2015; López Navajas, 2015; Bel, 2016). This conception of historical agency also reduces the role of collective action, of the commons, to invest it in a few leaders. Although it is associated with the image of nationhood and progress, this vision is in fact a far cry from modernity, as it promotes the idea of natural hierarchy (Seixas, 2012b). Furthermore, the will of these characters is seasoned by the value of achievement/recognition and self-direction, which are associated with individualism (Páez, 2014), a dominant contemporary trait (Vega, 2012). The concept of the individual, merit or achievement, and freedom are also associated with the notion of progress and evolution. Social and individual progress and advancement is therefore the fruit of meritocracy, an idea that arose precisely in the 19th century. However, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of meritocracy and progress are inherently linked to the legitimisation of inequality in the contemporary world. This is evidenced by the justification of failure in the individual's lack of aptitude (Piketty, 2014), as well as current reports, demonstrates the myth of creating the causes of inequality and privilege as an individual responsibility rather than a structural phenomenon (Future Policy Lab, 2022).

Another of the characteristics that can be identified in the responses is that of violence. This represents a pivotal element in the selection of events or characters that exemplify changes in humanity (Arnoso, Paéz, Bobowik & Basabe, 2018). The selection of these events (wars, revolutions, processes of conquest) is therefore motivated by the fact that traumatic acts leave their mark on memory, resulting in feelings of anger, sadness, fear, and anxiety.

However, alongside this traumatic character, there is also the notion that violence is necessary as an element of change and progress. This demonstrates the continued relevance of one of the main pillars of nineteenth-century historiography (Iggers, Wang & Mukeherjee, 2008).

Furthermore, the aforementioned characters and events exhibit Eurocentrism or sociocentrism (Arnoso et al., 2018), which gives excessive global importance to events and cultural values. As the Royal Academy asserted in its allegations to the new law, it is necessary to expand the Eurocentric perspective in Spain in order to comprehend the challenges of the contemporary world. Nevertheless, this assessment does not appear to be limited to the new curricular framework; rather, it is a persistent feature of the textbooks used (Sáez & Bellatti, 2016; Gómez & Chapman, 2017). In this sociocentric framework, there is a tendency to view technological development as a driver of social and economic growth on a global scale. In other words, the ideas expressed about what is relevant also demonstrate a freedom associated with individuality and materialism, which are largely based in Europe and North America (Castells, 2005).

Conclusion

The characteristics of what is considered historically relevant by the participants show a similar picture to that of the studies by Mugueta (2016), Arias and Egea (2019) or Ortuño, Molina and Maquilón (2024), for the Spanish case. In addition, the work of Delfino, Sosa, Bobowick and Zubieta (2020) for Latin America, and that of Van Havere, Wils, Depaepe, Verschaffel and Van Nieuwenhuyse (2017) for other European latitudes, should be considered in relation to the androcentric, political and sociocentric vision. Furthermore, our work contributes to the understanding that the values associated with historical relevance (change, achievement, goodness/evilness, power, or self-direction) correspond to a significant extent to current values, typical of industrial and mercantile productivity, strong economic development, and urbanised societies where the nuclear family predominates over the extended

family (Páez & Zubieta, 2006). The concept of good and evil is largely a consequence of the role that the teaching of history can have in the transmission of values. Students tend to perceive a moral charge in the history content they are taught, differentiating between good and bad, justice and injustice, and so on (Löfstrom, Ammert, Sharp & Edling, 2020). Finally, the concept of power is closely linked to the significant influence of political history on the development of curricula and school textbooks (Gómez, Monteagudo & Miralles, 2018). The results presented here contribute to an understanding of the role that history plays in the formation of a sense of community and group cohesion. This is because historical narratives are often constructed in a way that exemplifies behaviours that are more typical of the present. This is in accordance with the findings of González, Santisteban and Pagès (2020).

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Firstly, the participants are a very limited and unrepresentative sample. Although it is essential to consider the characteristics of the group (in this case, trainee teachers) in the analysis of social representation, it is true that the participants represent a smaller sample in relation to the population of this group. Therefore, it is advisable to exercise caution in interpreting the results. Similarly, a more comprehensive analysis of materials (educational resources, leisure resources, press materials, social networks, audiovisual materials, etc.) is required in order to ascertain the role of historical culture in the formation of this social representation. Secondly, the design of the research and the length of the article have precluded the possibility of conducting an interesting gender perspective study that would allow us to trace the extent to which the predominant values may or may not be subject to the gender bias of the respondents and the historical figures chosen. Finally, for an analysis of historical culture and the values inherent in the teaching of history, it would be beneficial to extend the focus to other sectors of the population, such as practising teachers, pupils at different stages of education, and educational curricula.

In any case, it is our contention that the proposed strategies for the teaching of history, as outlined in this work, can be employed to inform the design of training materials for teachers. These materials should facilitate the development of skills that enable students to engage with historical figures

and events from multiple perspectives. Furthermore, they should contextualise historical figures and events within their respective historical contexts. Finally, they should provide opportunities for students to engage with historical figures and events that have been traditionally marginalised, in order to highlight dominant values that are more representative of contemporary times than of the true weight, meaning and significance of past events.

Funding

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Annex

Change-Simulation — 173

Term	Count
Alternative	
Bold	
Adventure	
Change	
Discovery	
Hope	
Experiential	
Exploration	
Faith	
Foundation	
Improvisation	
Innovation	
Invention	
Novelty	
Digital	
Daring	
Pioneering	
Populism	
Revelation	
Revolution	
Surprising	
Reckless	
Courageous	
Visionary	

Achievement/Recognit — 182

Term	Count
Ambitious	14
Astute	
Advance	5
Greedy	
Altruism	
Sharp	
Charismatic	
Celebrity	
Marketing	
Communicator	
Cultured	2
Solidary	
Development	
Strategist	2
Subdue	
Evolutionary	
Exceptional	
Success	
Serious	
Skill	
Heroic	36
Influential	
Resourceful	2
Inspirational	
Intelligent	38
Keen	2
Prodigy	
Productivity	
Progress	4
Reverent	
Wealth	
Overcoming	2
Talent	
Hardworking	
Advantage	
Versatile	
Ignorant	3
Impoverishment	
Naïve	3
Poverty	
Backward	

Benevolence_Evil — 14

Term	Count
Benevolence	1
Selfless	
Altruism	
Love	3
Empathy	3
Positive	
Monarchy	
Power	1
Sensitivity	
Deaths	
Deadly	
Evil	
Ruthless	30
Invader	2
Oppressor	
Rival	2
Tyrant	
Repressive	2
Totalitarianism	

Power and Organisat — 161

Term	Count
Anarchism	1
Capitalism	1
Democracy	3
Open-mindedness	1
Leader	19
Majestic	1
Monarchy	1
Power	20
Socialism	1
Authoritarian	23
Colonisation	1
Conquest	1
Despot	60
Dictator	1
Imperialist	2
Invader	30
Oppressor	2
Rival	1
Tyrant	2

Universalism/Transcenden — 153

Term	Count
Accessibility	1
Creative	
Scientific	2
Calculator	
Awareness	
Knowledge	20
Criticism	2
Culture	25
Strong	
Imaginative	
Rights	25
Essentials	39
Independent	
Rebellious	
Fundamental	19
Globalising	
Historical	
Human	3
Idealist	
Controversial	
Equality	30
Impartial	
Importance	
Inclusion	3
Integral	
Justice	1
Multiculture	
Necessary	3
Pacifist	8
Pacboemism	
Thought	1
Primordial	
Principles	
Rationality	
Realistic	
Reflection	2
Wisdom	2
Dreamer	
Tolerance	2
Union	1
Variable	1
Combat/conflict	1
Destroy	1
Destructive	1
Devastation	4
Extermination	2
Genocidal	2
Genocide	2
Holocaust	1
Inhuman	1
Intolerance	2
Irrational	1
Massacre	1
Racism	3
Xenophobia	3

Self-direction — 139

Term	Count
Constant	20
Curious	11
Conformist	
Determined	1
Dedicated	1
Selfless	1
Obedience	
Activism	2
Dissatisfied	
Disobedience	
Rebellious	3
Vindicator	1
Freedom	30
Fighter	
Obsessive	
Persevering	7
Human	7
Controversial	1
Equality	
Sovereign	
Stubborn	3
Slavery	2

Conformity — 102

Term	Count
Order	4
Harmony	11
Chaos	20

Security — 28

Term	Count
Conservative	4
Devotion	3
Respect	1
Tradition	
Egocentrism	4
Proud	1
Greatness	
Overbearing	
Transgressive	

Tradition-Humility — 16

Term	Count
Abstraction	1
Passionate	5
Funny	3
Enjoyable	1
Pandemic	1
Interesting	1
Radical	2
Pleasure	1
Saviour of the World	

Sensorial-contemplativ — 18

Term	Count
Depressive	1
Eternal	1
Legend	1
Mad	1
Martyr	1
Seen in person	

No Value — 9