

Work Values Hierarchies: What Motivates Workers



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Abstract How to achieve a self-regulated and strategically aligned workforce? In the ‘old paradigm’ it would be an impossible quest, as it is dominated by “*the assumption of Homo Economicus—a model of people as rational self-interest maximizers*” (Ghoshal, *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4(1), 75–91, 2005). For the workforce to be aligned with the strategy of the organization, human resources systems would deeply depend on control elements because of the insurmountable divergence between the interests of ‘principals’ and ‘agents’, as agency theory tells us.

Characteristics of the ‘new ideal worker’ have to be aspirational, but for this ‘ideal’ to drive policies and organizations, people must be convinced that ‘real’ workers are capable of behaving accordingly to those characteristics.

This chapter bridges a gap between the findings of psychology and other social sciences and the embedded beliefs in mainstream management theories about workers motivations and work values hierarchies. It presents Schwartz Values Theory and shows how the findings it has enabled in the last decades can open a much wider perspective for a scientifically plausible ‘new ideal worker’, motivated by self-transcendence values, as well as openness to change, self-enhancement and conservation values.

1 Values: Conceptual Framework

Rokeach (1973) maintains that “*the concept of values, more than any other, is the core concept across all social sciences. It is the main dependent variable in the study of culture, society and personality, and the main independent variable in the study of social attitudes and behaviour*”. But ‘values’ is a ‘broad spectrum concept’, so it is not odd Hitlin and Piliavin (2004) note that “*when one reads about values across the*

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disciplines of sociology, psychology, philosophy, and political science, the balkanized nature of the research is striking. There is little coherence between the different approaches used across conceptualization and measurement of values.”

This study departs from Schwartz Value Theory, “*which is the most widely-used and most well-developed value theory*” (Parks and Guay 2009). One example of its usage is the ‘European Social Survey’, run every 2 years since 2002, which includes a questionnaire called ‘The Human Values Scale’, developed by S. H. Schwartz and designed to classify respondents according to their basic value orientations.¹ More recently, Gollan and Witte (2013) observed that “*in the field of psychology, the circumplex theory of values by Schwartz (1992) has become the standard model in values research.*”

Schwartz (2012) presents values as *beliefs* which refer to desirable *goals* that motivate *action*. It is important to notice that people may behave according to their values without being consciously aware of them when acting (Bardi and Schwartz 2003).

It is essential to distinguish ‘values’ from other closely related concepts. Following Hitlin and Piliavin (2004), we look at three of them:

1. *Traits*: Values relate to enduring goals, while traits are enduring dispositions (conceptualized as fixed aspects of personality). Values, but not traits, serve as standards for judging others’ (and one’s own) behaviour; people refer to values when justifying behaviour as legitimate. Traits may be positive or negative; values are considered primarily positive. One who has a trait may not value it; for example, one may have a disposition toward being aggressive (a trait) but may not highly value aggression. Values-based behaviour suggests more cognitive control over one’s actions than traits-based behaviour.
2. *Attitudes*: Values are more abstract and focus on ideals, while attitudes are usually applied to specific social objects. The way values and attitudes are measured is different: the core characteristic of an attitude is its variation on an evaluative dimension (favourable–unfavourable) and the distinctive aspect of a value is its variation in importance. Because values are abstract, they have the potential to influence different attitudes. However, in many circumstances, relations between values and attitudes are weak, as attitudes may or may not assume the function of expressing a value (Maio and Olson 1995).
3. *Norms*: While norms are situation based, values are trans-situational. Norms capture an ‘ought’ sense; values capture a personal or cultural ideal. People acting in accordance with values do not feel pushed as they do when acting under normative pressure. Values serve as guides for self-regulation, whereas norms need to be accompanied by a control element.

¹See <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data/themes.html?t=values>

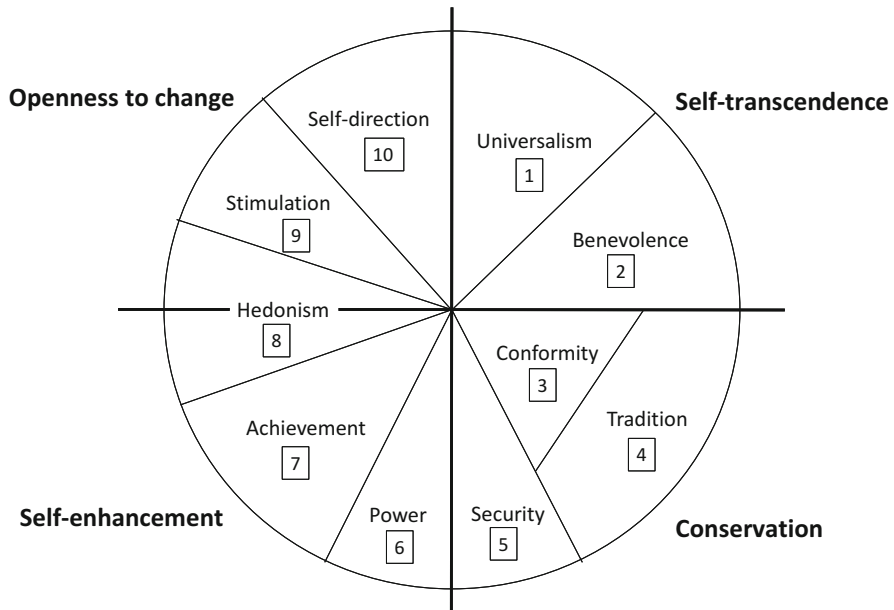


Fig. 1 Circular continuum of ten value types grouped in four higher order categories. Source: Adapted from Schwartz (1992)

2 Schwartz Value Theory

A value is something people believe to be good, which makes the desirability of a specific situation increase once a value is identified. According to Schwartz, what distinguishes one value from another is the type of goal or motivation it expresses. Although almost every person appreciates every type of value identified by Schwartz, the intensity with which each person prizes each value can be very distinct. Values are ordered by importance relative to one another, and it's the relative importance of multiple values that guides action.

Schwartz postulates an adaptive evolutionary origin for values. He assumes that the set of distinct motivational goals is due to three universal requirements of human existence: basic needs of the individual as a biological organism, requirements of successful interaction among people, and requirements for the survival of groups and societies. For individuals to coordinate their pursuit of these goals, they must express them as values.

Schwartz's initial theory identifies ten motivationally distinct types of values and specifies the dynamic relations between them. Those values are organized around a circular continuum and are grouped in four higher order values (FHOV), according to the conflict or compatibility among the motivations they express (see Fig. 1 and Table 1).

The theory concerns basic human values recognized by people from all cultural backgrounds. In 2012, studies had already assessed it with data from hundreds of

Table 1 FHOV's motivational expressions and dynamic relations

FHOV	Types of values	Motivation	Conflicts with
Self-transcendence	Universalism and benevolence	Preserve and enhance the welfare of others	Self-enhancement
Conservation	Conformity, tradition and security	Preserve and protect the <i>status quo</i>	Openness to change
Self-enhancement	Power, achievement and hedonism	Promote self-interest	Self-transcendence
Openness to change	Hedonism, stimulation and self-direction	Explore, discover, approach novelty	Conservation

samples in 82 countries. The samples included highly diverse geographic, cultural, linguistic, religious, age, gender, and occupational groups, with representative national samples from 37 countries. Some of these studies analysed participants' responses to the Schwartz (1992) Value Survey, which asks respondents to rate the importance of 56 value items (e.g., freedom) with a 9-point unipolar scale. The others were based in the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ), which includes short verbal portraits of 40 different people; each portrait describes a person's goals, aspirations, or wishes that point implicitly to the importance of a value. As Schwartz (2012) explains, "*We infer respondents' own values from their self-reported similarity to people described implicitly in terms of particular values. Respondents are asked to compare the portrait to themselves rather than themselves to the portrait. Comparing other to self directs attention only to aspects of the other that are portrayed. So, the similarity judgment is also likely to focus on these value-relevant aspects.*"

Schwartz (2012) says that "*in these analyses, the oppositions of self-transcendence to self-enhancement values and of openness to change to conservation values are virtually universally present*". That is, adjacent values tend to be positively correlated, orthogonal values tend to have less positive or null correlations, and opposing values tend to have null or negative correlations.

Those studies usually collect data from individuals' self-reports on the importance they attribute to values, which might reflect lip service to values rather than true endorsement. Schwartz and Bardi (2001) discuss it and sustain that collected self-reported values reflect real priorities rather than mere verbalizations.

Value items that represent the same value type share a motivational goal. Yet, as noted by Bardi et al. (2009), "*values on opposite sides of the value circle are not antonyms; thus, there is no lexical contradiction between them (e.g., the value item freedom that measures self-direction and the value item obedient that measures conformity are located on opposite sides of the circle, but they are not antonyms). Rather, their contradiction is based on their conflicting motivations. Motivations are considered conflicting if they often lead to opposite behaviours or judgment, and they are considered compatible if they often lead to the same behaviour or judgment.*"

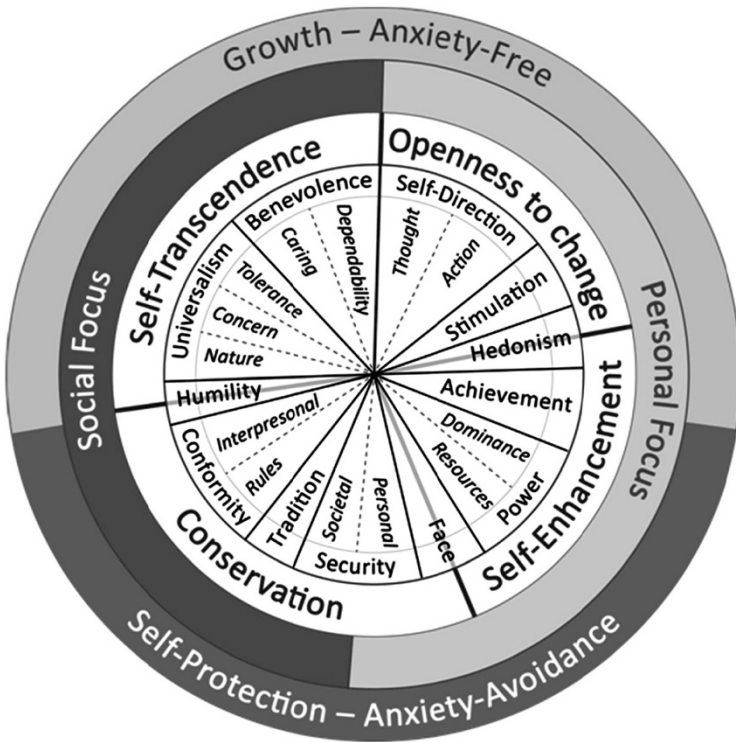


Fig. 2 The motivational circle of values according to the refined theory of basic values. Source: Schwartz and Butenko (2014)

Even though the aim of this theory is not to specify every single value but to identify broad motivational goals recognized and discriminated across cultures, as studies went on Schwartz et al. (2012) presented a refined theory that identifies 19 basic values (see Fig. 2), arguing that “partitioning this continuum into a finer set of meaningful values can yield increased heuristic and predictive power” (Schwartz et al. 2017).

Findings of early theory remain valid, as “the inner circle combines the values into four higher-order values that form two bipolar dimensions of motivationally incompatible values, self-transcendence versus self-enhancement and conservation versus openness to change” (Schwartz et al. 2017). Nevertheless, universalism and benevolence (self-transcendence values) change place: the first is now closer to conservation values, while the second stands nearer to openness to change values.

New insights appear in the second circle, which “distinguishes values concerned with personal outcomes (right) from values concerned with outcomes for others or for established institutions (left)”, and in the third circle, that singles out “values that concern ways of coping with anxiety and protecting the self (bottom) from values that concern relatively anxiety-free ways in which people grow and expand the self (top).”

There are other lines of research that reach similar conclusions, such as Grouzet et al. (2005), who present a two-dimensional circumplex model in the study of personal goals. There, the two primary dimensions underlying the goals are intrinsic (e.g., self-acceptance, affiliation) versus extrinsic (e.g., financial success, image) and self-transcendent (e.g., spirituality) versus physical (e.g., hedonism). Their study found evidence that money and a sense of community are personal goals that serve opposing motives in their circular model, a finding that fits the contrasting positions between the values of wealth and helpfulness in Schwartz’s model (Fig. 2).

3 Findings on Values Hierarchies

It is manifest that people differ in their personal value hierarchies, that is, in the relative importance with which they hold different values. Nevertheless, using data from 63 countries, Schwartz and Bardi (2001) showed that the importance ranks for the ten value types are quite similar around the world. There is a high level of pan-cultural agreement regarding the hierarchy of importance of the ten values, despite a distinctive African value profile.

In the general value profile (Fig. 3), benevolence was the most important value type, followed by self-direction, universalism and security (those three did not differ significantly from one another in importance), while in Africa conformity was the most important value type and unusually little importance was attributed to self-direction values. The study concluded that “*the observed pan-cultural similarity in*

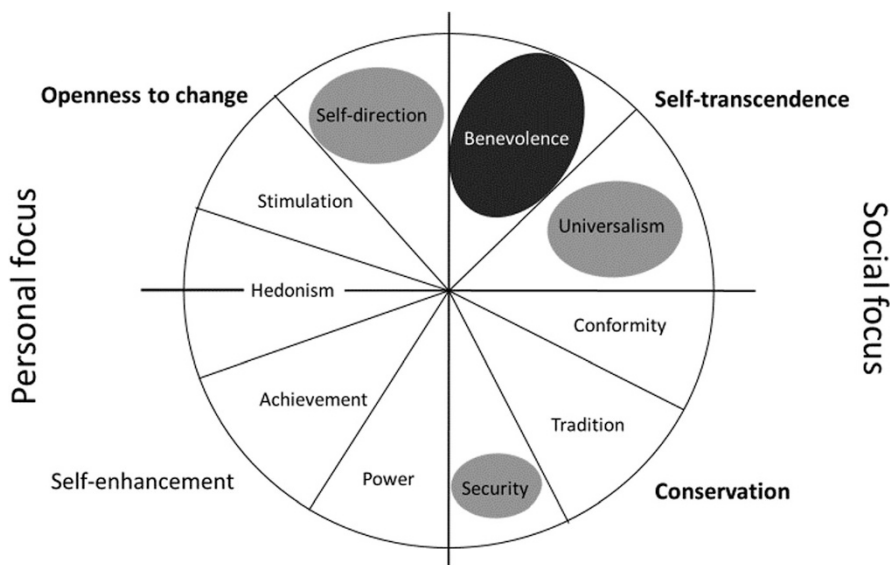


Fig. 3 Types of values more appreciated in the pan-cultural general profile

value hierarchies implies that there are shared underlying principles that give rise to these hierarchies.”

This pan-cultural agreement refers to value *hierarchies*. Schwartz and Bardi (2001) mention that, even when values are ordered similarly, value *ratings* may differ meaningfully and reliably across cultures.

In a study across 70 countries, Schwartz and Rubel (2005) concluded that sex differences in basic values priorities are small,² but consistent: men attributed more importance to self-enhancement and openness to change values than women did, whereas women attributed more importance to self-transcendence values than did men. Though less consistently, women tended to attribute more importance to security. Women and men did not differ on tradition and conformity values.

4 Acquisition and Change in Values

Bardi and Goodwin (2011) recall evidence that supports values “*develop as a joint product of the individual’s needs, traits, temperament, culture, socialization, and personal experiences.*” Schwartz and Bardi (2001) sustain that value acquisition occurs first in the family and later in other primary and secondary groups. Parks and Guay (2009) also observe that values are learned: they develop initially through social interactions with role models such as parents and teachers.

Döring et al. (2015) assess self-reported values of over three thousand 7 to 11-year-old children from six countries and deduce that “*the broad value structures, sex differences in value priorities and pan-cultural value hierarchies typical of adults have already taken form at this early age*”. The study provides “*clear support for the distinctiveness of the four higher order values and even considerable evidence that the motivational differences among the ten basic values are at least implicitly recognized.*” Also, “*girls ascribed more importance to self-transcendence and conservation values, whereas boys ascribed more importance to self-enhancement values. In those countries with larger sample sizes (Germany, Poland, Italy, and Bulgaria), these sex differences were statistically significant.*” Besides, “*in five countries, children considered self-transcendence values most important and self-enhancement values least important.*”

This early primacy of self-transcendence values is coherent with the usual situation of family as the dominant social group in childhood. Schwartz and Bardi (2001) recall that “*benevolence values (helpfulness, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, responsibility) provide the internalized motivational base for cooperative and supportive social relations*” and “*positive, cooperative social relations, the basic requirement for smooth group functioning, are especially important in the context of the family, with its high interdependence and intense interaction*”.

²Sex differences typically explain less variance than age and much less than culture.

Values are usually viewed as ‘relatively stable’ (Rokeach 1973). Arieli et al. (2014) claim this is due to “*their central role in the self and their trans-situational nature*”. An important value serves as a guiding principle across situations and over time: Krystallis et al. (2012) argue that “*values are stable constructs that do not change easily, even when investing considerable effort. As a result, values can serve as predictors of behaviour over extended periods of time, and they are of particular importance for marketing decisions.*” Bardi and Goodwin (2011) present values as ‘stable by default’: “*people often hold values that they do not think about in-depth. As they do not devote much thought to their values, they do not normally challenge their values, rendering values as stable by default.*”

Still, individual value hierarchies and ratings can go through significant, lasting modifications. Some life experiences can change one’s values in a predictable way, even if it is not positively intended. Krishnan (2008) presents the impact of 2-year residential fulltime MBA program on students’ values; results show that self-oriented values like a comfortable life and pleasure became more important and others-oriented values like being helpful and polite became less important over 2 years. Other changes can be more dependent on deliberate personal reflection. Arieli et al. (2014) argue that “*because values are inherently desirable, when people reflect on the importance of a given value and then advocate for the importance of this value, they may convince themselves to care more about that value*”.

Maio et al. (2009) consider “*the most relevant research has used Rokeach’s (1973, 1975) well-known value self-confrontation procedure to examine value change experimentally.*” In this procedure, participants “*receive feedback that makes them feel dissatisfied with the extent to which one of their values fulfills their self-conceptions of competence or morality*” and “*reduce this self-dissatisfaction by changing their value priorities.*” However, it is important to distinguish a process of values change from one of attitudes change. As mentioned before, values focus on ideals, while attitudes are usually applied to concrete social objects: when confronted with an attitude that is not coherent with a person’s value system, a change in attitude doesn’t necessarily mean a change in values: it can just show a more conscious behaviour that is consistent with previously held values.

5 Instilling Values in Group Members

As we’ve seen, the second circle in Fig. 2 distinguishes values concerned with personal outcomes (personal focus) from values concerned with outcomes for others or for established institutions (social focus). Schwartz and Bardi (2001) propose that “*the observed pan-cultural value hierarchy can tentatively be understood as reflecting adaptive functions of values in meeting three basic requirements of successful societal functioning*” and advocate that this is a reason for the importance of benevolence in the pan-cultural value hierarchy profile: a group will succeed if the goal of preserving and enhancing the welfare of group members is highly motivating.

Parsons (1951) defended that the basic social function of values is to motivate and control the behaviour of group members. For Schwartz and Bardi (2001), *“the most critical focus of value transmission is to develop commitment to positive relations, identification with the group, and loyalty to its members”*. They present two mechanisms for the transmission to be effective: *“First, social actors (e.g., leaders, interaction partners) invoke values to define particular behaviours as socially appropriate, to justify their demands on others, and to elicit desired behaviours. Second and equally important, values serve as internalized guides for individuals; they relieve the group of the necessity for constant social control.”* That way, *“socializers consciously and unconsciously seek to instill values that promote group survival and prosperity”*. Otherwise, *“life in the group would be filled with conflict and group survival would be at risk.”*

Schwartz and Bardi (2001) also notice that *“power values are located at the bottom of the pan-cultural hierarchy (10th), with very high consensus regarding their relatively low importance”* and attribute it *“to the requirement of positive relations among group members. Power values emphasize dominance over people and resources. Their pursuit often entails harming or exploiting others, thereby disrupting and damaging social relations.”* Their research doesn’t establish a causal relation, it is just a hypothesis that power values have a low importance ‘in order to’ permit a good functioning of the group, but it turns out that in a group where power values are dominant, social relations are more difficult and group cohesion—and, in the end, survival—becomes precarious.

Bardi and Goodwin (2011) claim that the accumulation of single, value-challenging experiences can lead to long-term value change and propose a theoretical model of planned value change. Their approach assumes that people know what their values are (although values may often operate without consciousness) and that values can be measured by asking people directly to rate their values. They define value change as *“a change in the importance of a value, evident in a change in the rating or ranking of a value on a questionnaire”*. Their study identifies five facilitators of value change:

1. priming, or activation of a motive-relevant concept from memory;
2. adaptation, or adjusting to a new group or culture;
3. identification, or identification with a group;
4. consistency maintenance, or resolution of inconsistencies;
5. direct persuasion attempts (e.g. media messages, education programs, programs of value socialization in organizations).

Adaptation and identification depend on specific groups, such as societies, work organizations, or education systems. Priming, adaptation and identification may work on an automatic way. An effortful path to change in values can be walked with the help of four of the facilitators (all except priming). An initial value change can be transformed into a long-term value change when the subject repeatedly evaluates situations according to the new value system.

In the ‘effortful path’, people change their values through deliberate epistemic processes, carefully evaluating what is important to them. It’s well known that “a

variety of individual and situational factors will determine how much cognitive effort a person devotes to processing a message" (Petty and Cacioppo, 1984). Petty and Cacioppo designed the Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion (ELM) and concluded that attitude changes can result from a person's careful attempt to evaluate the true merits of the advocated position (the 'central route' to persuasion) or may occur because the person associates the attitude issue or object with positive or negative cues or makes a simple inference about the merits of the advocated position based on various simple cues in the persuasion context (the 'peripheral route' to persuasion). We could say that the 'central route' corresponds to a 'effortful path' to values change and the 'peripheral route' to an 'automatic path'.

If values are correlated (see Table 1), when there is variation in importance in one value, there should also be variation in the importance attributed to some other values (specifically, adjacent and orthogonal values in the circular continuum). Maio et al. (2009) studied systemic effects in value change and value priming. As "*circular models indicate that each type of intervention should have consequences that go beyond the effects on the specific values or personal goals that have been changed or primed, because of the impact of these interventions on underlying motivational tensions that connect the values or personal goals*", they reasoned that "*if values are related through the motives that they serve, then changing a value should cause changes throughout the whole system. Values that serve the same motives as a promoted value should increase in importance, whereas values that serve conflicting motives should decrease in importance.*" For instance, "*the activation of achievement-promoting values would introduce a self-enhancing motivational focus that subtracts from the motivational orientation underlying the opposing, benevolent values (e.g., helpfulness), which instead rely on a motivational focus that transcends the self. This would make people more likely to construe a subsequent behavioural opportunity in terms of an achievement motive and less likely to construe the behaviour in terms of a benevolent motive.*" Their five experiments conducted with undergraduate students pointed to the existence of systemic change in values as predicted by Schwartz value theory.

6 Values and Behaviour

There is no agreement in the literature regarding the actual connection between values and behaviour (Maio et al. 2003). Yet, as noted by Gollan and Witte (2013), "*in the last decades, it became widely acknowledged in social science research that values play a central role in understanding and predicting attitudinal and behavioural decisions.*" Arieli et al. (2014) also observe that "*considerable research has provided evidence for the impact of values on a wide variety of cognitive processes, attitudes, and behaviour.*"

Other things equal, people try to act consistently with their values (Rokeach 1973), but there is no necessary link between specific values and behaviours.

Relations between values and behaviours are not univocal: on the contrary, they usually are rather complex. Actions in pursuit of any value have consequences that may conflict or be congruent with the pursuit of other values and, in many occasions, there are distinct actions that lead to the strengthening of the same value. Furthermore, one may highly 'value a value' (e.g. power) as a guiding principle in her life and be unable to act accordingly, due to personal characteristics (e.g. weakness of character) or to external circumstances (e.g. personal role in the firm).

Roccas et al. (2002) show some evidence indicating that values predict deliberate behaviour better and traits predict affective, automatic responses better, and conjecture an indirect influence of values on automatic responses through traits.

Values vary in their importance as guiding principles, ranging from at least minimally to supremely important: it's the relative importance of multiple values that guides action. As explained by Arieli et al. (2014), values "*are ordered by subjective importance, thus forming a hierarchy of value priorities. The higher a value in the hierarchy, the more it is likely to affect the way people perceive and interpret the world, as well as their preferences, choices, and actions*".

Schwartz et al. (2017) "*sought to assess whether each of the 19 values in the refined theory predicts behaviour distinctively. It examined relations of values to behaviour, measured by combined self-reports and other-reports, in four socioeconomically and culturally diverse countries.*" Recalling Baumeister et al. (2007) warning on the problems of measuring just reported behaviour and not observed behaviour, they stress that "*combining other-reports with self-reports improved the behaviour indices.*" The hypotheses that express the theoretical view that each of the 19 values has unique positive associations with their *a priori* corresponding behaviour received substantial support for 18 of the 19 values. The study also provided some support to the hypothesis that behaviour is a product of tradeoffs between values that propel it and values that oppose it, suggesting that research on the relations of behaviour to values should include both type of values.

To better understand the relation between values and behaviour, it would be important to discern if there is a causal relationship. Schwartz et al. (2017) clearly state that their study "*did not test the implicit assumption that at least some of that association is causal*". The causal link from values to behaviour would presumably be through motivational and cognitive processes. The first one, through increased attractiveness—"*as expressions of underlying motivations in the form of goals, values make behaviour that promotes these goals more attractive and motivate such behaviour*"—, and the second, through mental associations—"*as mental representations of desirable abstract goals, values promote behaviours that are cognitively associated with and instantiate these goals.*"

Boer and Fischer (2013) maintain that "*values are predictive of attitudes and behaviours due to their higher order cognitive representation of human motivations and life orientations*" although "*the predictions of attitude-value links are constrained or facilitated by environmental and cultural factors*". One of the most frequently appointed moderators of the strength of the value-behaviour association is social pressure, whether explicit (e.g., law) or implicit (e.g., peer pressure). In line with this, Lönnqvist et al. (2006) test the hypothesis that conformism values can

moderate the relations between (other) personal values and behaviour: *“individuals high in Conformism might be easily compelled to behave in a way that is inconsistent with their other personal values. Observing such people might lead one to conclude that personal values do not predict behaviour. But the opposite conclusion could be reached if one studied those people low in Conformism instead, whose value-consistent behaviour would not be so readily suppressed by social norms.”* Their study of the moderating effects of conformism values on the ability of self-transcendence values to predict altruistic behaviours supported the hypothesis.

According to Boer and Fischer (2013), *“conformity and social norm adherence vary systematically across cultures. Hence, the moderating influence of conformity values is likely to have implications for societal variations in attitude–value links.”* This is consistent with Schwartz et al. (2017) findings on normative pressure: the correlation was as predicted and significant for Italy (value–behaviour associations were weaker for behaviours that group members frequently perform and for values that the group endorses highly), but not for the other countries in the study (Russia, Poland and USA). More research is needed to understand the personal and social conditions under which normative pressure does or does not undermine value–behaviour relations.

7 General Life Values and Work Values

Values transcend specific actions and circumstances, i.e., ‘general’ or ‘basic’ values are relevant across virtually all situations. Elizur and Sagie (1999) recognized that *“general life values and work values have traditionally been investigated independently”*; moreover, *“a major limitation of the traditional structural approach to the study of work values has been its near isolation from streams of research on general life values”*. This ‘near isolation’ is partially responsible for an important gap identified by Hollensbe et al. (2014) when they say that *“we need to allow our best values to be brought to work and ensure those values can be aligned with business purpose”*.

Porto and Tamayo (2003) referred that *“in spite of the growing number of research in the field of work values, we lack solid theoretical models to understand it”*. In recent years, Schwartz’s theory of human values has been applied to the study of values held in specific life contexts, revealing stimulating insights. For example, Schwartz et al. (2014) concluded that *“basic values account for substantially more variance in political values than age, gender, education, and income”*, which *“strengthens the assumption that individual differences in basic personal values play a critical role in political thought.”* Many studies on consumer research apply Schwartz value theory particularly in food-related contexts where strong empirical support has been found for the link between values and food choice (see Krystallis et al. 2012). Furthermore, as *“values are a useful basis for segmenting consumers because they can be closely related to motives and behaviour, and because they are limited in number and central to the consumer’s self-concept”* there is a growing body of research about the strategic marketing value derived from value-based

segmentation, to a point that Krystallis et al. (2012) consider that “a good marketing strategy requires an understanding of the value basis of each strategically important segment.”

Nevertheless, some authors have already studied work values applying Schwartz’s theory of human values, such as Ros et al. (1999) who sustain that work values are “specific expressions of general values in the work setting” and “like basic values, work values are beliefs pertaining to desirable end-states (e.g. high pay) or behaviour (e.g. working with people)”; as a consequence, “the different work goals are ordered by their importance as guiding principles for evaluating work outcomes and settings, and for choosing among different work alternatives”.

Ros et al. (1999) remark that “most work researchers appear to identify the same two or three types of work values: (1) intrinsic or self-actualisation values, (2) extrinsic or security or material values, (3) social or relational values”, and relate those types to Schwartz’s higher order categories of values: “intrinsic work values directly express openness to change values—the pursuit of autonomy, interest, growth, and creativity in work. Extrinsic work values express conservation values; job security and income provide workers with the requirements needed for general security and maintenance of order in their lives. Social or interpersonal work values express the pursuit of self-transcendence values; work is seen as a vehicle for positive social relations and contribution to society.”

Although self-enhancement values, such as achievement and power, are common in empirical research on work values, authors usually include them in the intrinsic/extrinsic types, so they are seldom recognised as a distinct category of values (Fig. 4).

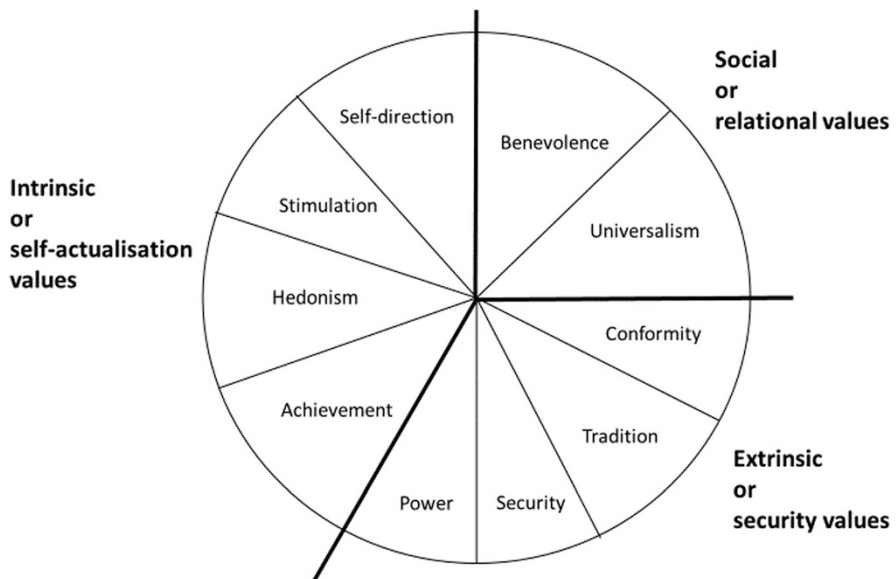


Fig. 4 Schwartz’s circular continuum with the ‘traditional’ division of work values

Therefore, the ‘near isolation’ of work researchers from streams of research on general life values is not difficult to solve, as it is quite straightforward to represent the ‘traditional’ division of work values in Schwartz’s circular continuum.

The advantage of applying Schwartz’s classification of four higher order values (FHOV) to work values, instead of the ‘traditional’ division, is mainly due to the dynamics of opposition between self-enhancement and self-transcendence values, by one side, and conservation and openness to change, by the other, which can be very useful to identify and strengthen different types of organizational cultures.

8 Motivating ‘Rational Self-Interest Maximizers’

Ghoshal (2005) considers that “*Friedman’s version of liberalism has indeed been colonizing all the management-related disciplines over the last half century*” and its roots “*lie in the philosophy of radical individualism articulated, among others, by Hume, Bentham, and Locke*”. Those disciplines are then dominated by “*the assumption of Homo Economicus—a model of people as rational self-interest maximizers*”, manifest for example in the “*denial of the possibility of purposeful and goal-directed adaptation in behavioural theories of the firm*”. This brings us back to Hollensbe et al. (2014) and helps to understand why many theories and models don’t “*allow our best values to be brought to work and ensure those values can be aligned with business purpose*”.

Ghoshal (2005) alerts to a vicious circle affecting management today. Using Schwartz’s insights, we can describe it that way: mainstream economic theory says economic agents are ‘rational self-interest maximizers’; in line with it, human resources policies rely on goals that activate self-enhancement values (Fig. 5), which, due to the negative correlation between orthogonal values, decreases the importance attributed to self-transcendence values in working context (a result similar to the one identified by Krishnan (2008) for MBA students, to whom others-oriented values became less important). That process is a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’, because the result corroborates initial theories.

Schwartz et al. (2012) list the items that represent each of the 19 value types in the PVQ5X Value Survey, the questionnaire used for their studies. For ‘Achievement’ the items are ‘*He thinks it is important to be ambitious*’, ‘*Being very successful is important to him*’ and ‘*He wants people to admire his achievements*’. For ‘Power-dominance’, we have ‘*He wants people to do what he says*’, ‘*It is important to him to be the most influential person in any group*’ and ‘*It is important to him to be the one who tells others what to do*’. For ‘Power-resources’, the items are ‘*Having the feeling of power that money can bring is important to him*’, ‘*Being wealthy is important to him*’ and ‘*He pursues high status and power*’.

This could be a quite accurate profile of the person promoted by many corporate cultures, with the support of most human resources policies (Fig. 5). Culture and policies priming power, as we’ve seen, implies difficult social relations and precarious group cohesion. Control is essential for survival.

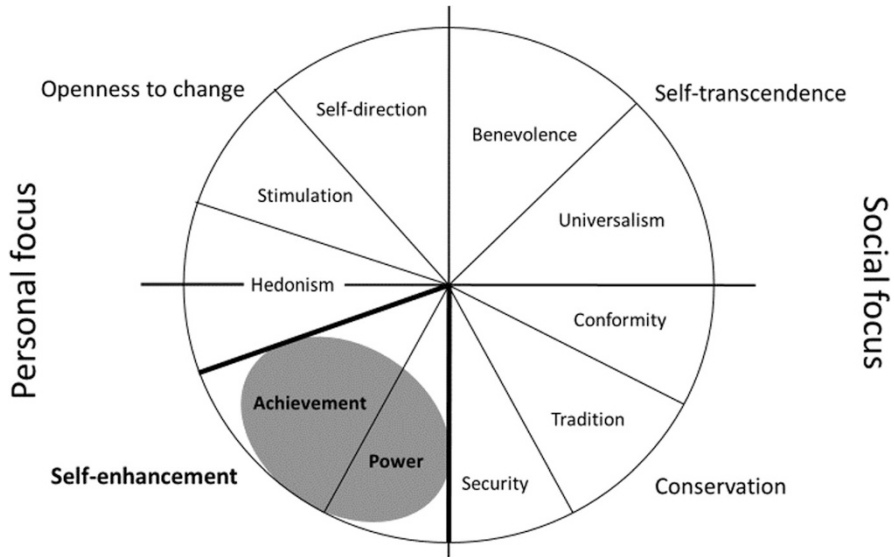


Fig. 5 Types of values mostly primed by managerial cultures

Power and achievement are the least shareable goals: what one gets is in expense of what other loses. Even when human resources systems rely on more intrinsic motivators (see Fig. 4), they usually prime achievement (self-enhancement). In the light—or shadow—of agency theory and the like, for the workforce to be aligned with the strategy of the organization, human resources systems must depend on control elements, and self-direction (openness to change) can't be motivated that way. In that context, it is contradictory to intend a self-regulated and strategically aligned workforce.

9 Motivating 'Real' Workers

Although self-transcendence values are usually seen as unrealistic as motivations of the workforce by mainstream economics, Schwartz theory, corroborated by hundreds of empirical studies, tells us that there is a high level of pan-cultural agreement regarding the hierarchy of importance of human values, and that benevolence is the most important value type, followed by self-direction, universalism and security.

So, can it be reasonable to believe that 'real' workers' behaviour may be oriented by a similar hierarchy of values? Or is there something in work (the activity, the organizational context, ...) that prevents 'real' workers from being significantly motivated by those values? In that case, as goal conflict situations are expected to arise as the integration of life values and work values decreases, are most people

doomed to experience persistent goal conflicts in common situations in everyday life?

The ‘self-fulfilling power’ of the limitations we assign to the ones that work for organizations may help to solve the enigma. According to Melé (2012) “*a manager’s ability to build communities is significantly constrained by prevailing assumptions of an economism-based managerial ethos.*” Drawing from Aristotle, he proposes a different view: “*the social order is not based on social contracts, as the individualistic view of the society suggests, but on the existence of human communities the roots of which are in human sociability*”. Moreover, following Edith Stein, a phenomenologist, Melé sustains that “*the human condition is not individuality, but inter-human sociability*”, and with Spaemann he declares “*person entails both an individual and a relational meaning.*”

Melé (2012) also acknowledges that there are “*companies with a strong sense of community based not only on the unity given by contracts and interests but also on commitment, loyalty and a sense of belonging, shared beliefs and values, and cooperation towards common goals. There are also companies in which the presence of such elements is very weak*” and leads us back to Schwartz values theory by remarking that “*acting with a sense of benevolence (wishing do good) and care does not mean lack of attention to provide goods and services in an efficient, competitive, and profitable way.*”

Here we recall Bardi and Goodwin (2011) and Fig. 2. If the organizational context explicitly or implicitly directs the facilitators of value change (priming, adaptation, identification, consistency maintenance, and direct persuasion) to those values that ‘concern ways of coping with anxiety and protecting the self’ (conservation and self-enhancement values), human resources policies must heavily rely on control elements.

On the other hand, if we assume that ‘the human condition is not individuality, but inter-human sociability’ and that workers are capable of being motivated by the four higher order values (FHOV), human resources systems are free to reasonably integrate policies whose motivational power is directed to openness to change or self-transcendence values. In that case, it is not contradictory to have—to a certain degree—a self-regulated and strategically aligned workforce.

Such a system is not easy to construct. Like any human resources system, to be effective and efficient, it must be consistent and credible. Consistency here means not only that different policies send coherent motivational messages (from recruitment and selection to training and development, from reward systems to performance management), but also that the values primed are not at odds with the values of the organizational culture. Credibility, in many cases, will have to struggle against the prejudice of the ‘rational self-interest maximizer’, applied to individuals but also to entities, from a department to the organization itself.

10 Conclusion and Future Research

This chapter provides theoretical background to existing classifications of work values (extrinsic, intrinsic and relational), showing how they are compatible with Schwartz's findings for basic human values, and to remarks such as that priming money can decrease helpfulness (Vohs et al. 2006). Furthermore, it proposes a classification of work values based on Schwartz's four higher order values (FHOV); due to a well established dynamics of oppositions, this classification can be very useful to identify and strengthen different types of organizational cultures.

Schwartz's studies on values help to understand what motivates people in their daily life and how are organizations leveraging such a small part of their motivational power in working contexts. Most organizational environments prime self-enhancement values and, to a certain extent, conservation values, but are not exploring the potential of openness to change and self-transcendence values. One example of this lost potential is that reinforcement of benevolence values would increase group cohesion and the chance of survival of the organization, so important in troubled times.

Future research could be directed to the design of a framework for a human resources system capable of strengthening specific values in line with the strategy of the organization—either self-transcendence values, openness to change, self-enhancement or conservation ones.

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