## Value Systems

Warrants are very specific logical assumptions that connect claims and supports; disciplinary methods, theories, or assumptions that go assumed in academic arguments; or broad cultural values that go unquestioned by audiences and create common ground.

Broader cultural values often operate in values systems, or sets of coherent and interlinked values that embrace certain ideals while spurning others, which can be identified through words understood as positive and negative values by each system.

The vast majority of Americans subscribe to some combination of 6 typical American value systems. R. D. Rieke & M. O. Sillars described these six value systems in their book entitled *Argumentation and the Decision-Making Process* (Scott, Foresman & Co., Glenview, Illinois, 1984). The 6 common American value systems are:

### 1. Puritan-Pioneer-Peasant

The Puritan-Pioneer-Peasant value system is rooted in the idea that persons have an obligation to themselves and those around them, in some cases to their God, to work hard at whatever they do, especially in the face of difficult circumstances. This value system takes on a moral orientation and is what most Americans refer to when they speak of the "pioneer spirit," "puritan morality," and/or "Protestant work ethic." Some of the words associated with the Puritan-Pioneer-Peasant value system are:

<u>Positives</u>: activity, work, thrift, morality, dedication, selflessness, virtue, righteousness, duty, dependability, temperance, sobriety, savings, dignity.

<u>Negatives</u>: waste, immorality, dereliction, dissipation, infidelity, theft, vandalism, hunger, poverty, disgrace, vanity, laziness, vice.

### 2. Enlightenment

The Enlightenment value system is rooted in the idea that people find out about the universe through the power of reason, since the world is ordered by universal or natural laws. In this system, humans are perceived as basically good and capable of finding answers; people should never be restrained in matters of the mind (i.e., reason must be free); and government is an agreement among individuals to assist a democratic society in protecting inalienable rights. Some of the words associated with the Enlightenment value system are:

<u>Positives</u>: freedom, science, nature, rationality, democracy, fact, liberty, individualism, knowledge, intelligence, reason, natural rights, natural laws, progress, equality, humanity.

<u>Negatives</u>: ignorance, inattention, thoughtlessness, error, indecision, irrationality, dictatorship, fascism, book burning, falsehood, regression, repression.

### 3. Progressive Value System

The Progressive value system is rooted in the Enlightenment. If humans used reason to continually uncover natural laws, then both individual and social progress would result as older problematic ideas and practices would be replaced by better ones. While linear, historical, or actual progress is hotly debated, it remains a fundamental American value—even if uncertain or unattainable, people and society should strive for it to continually make things better. Some of the words associated with the Progressive value system are:

Positives: practicality, efficiency, change, improvement, science, technology, future, modern, progress, evolution.

Negatives: old-fashioned, regressive, impossible, backward, reactionary.

### 4. Transcendental Value System

The Transcendental value system is rooted in the idea that intuition, as a way of knowing, is a faculty higher than reason (i.e., intuition and emotion transcend reason). In this system, an emphasis exists on humanitarian values, the centrality of love for others, peace and harmony in the world, and the importance of feelings. Some of the words associated with the Transcendental value system are:

Positives: humanitarian, individualism, respect, intuition, truth, equality, sympathetic, affection, feeling, love, sensitivity, emotion, personal kindness, compassion, brotherhood, friendship, mysticism, romanticism, nature.

Negatives: science, reason, modern, mechanical, technology, hate, war, anger, insensitive, coldness, unemotional, progress.

### 5. Personal Success Value System

The Personal Success value system is rooted in a highly pragmatic concern for the material happiness of the individual. This value system stresses personal achievement and success. The system might value hard work but toward the aim of individual self-reliance implied in the adage "The Lord helps those who help themselves." Some of the words associated with the Personal Success value system are:

Positives: career, family, friends, recreation, economic security, identity, health, individualism, affection, respect, enjoyment, dignity, consideration, fair play, personal.

Negatives: dullness, routine, hunger, poverty, disgrace, coercion, disease.

### 6. Collectivist Value System

The Collectivist value system is rooted in the idea of cooperative action and a perceived need to control the excesses of individualism in a mass society. Collaborative action extends from the importance of unions and civil rights movements to traditional

community barn raising and collective military organization and self-sacrifice, not to mention teamwork in athletics and even business. Some of the words associated with the Collectivist value system are:

Positives: cooperation, joint action, unity, brotherhood, together, social good, order, humanitarian aid and comfort, equality.

Negatives: disorganization, selfishness, personal greed, inequality.

Notes:

Not all value systems are equally important to specific audiences. Republicans often prefer the pioneer and personal success value systems, while Democrats often prefer the progressive and collective value systems, for examples. In other words, some of the value systems are compatible with each other, while other value systems conflict with each other.

- Example: The Puritan-Pioneer-Peasant value system is often paired effectively with the Personal Success value system while conflicting with the Progressive value system.

- Example: The Enlightenment value system is often paired effectively with the Progressive value system while conflicting with the Transcendental system.

- Example: The Progressive value system is often paired effectively with the Enlightenment value system while conflicting with the Puritan-Pioneer- Peasant Value System.

- Example: The Transcendental value system is often paired effectively with the Collectivist value system while conflicting with the Enlightenment system.

- Example: The Personal Success value system is often paired effectively with the Puritan-Pioneer-Peasant value system while conflicting with the Collectivist value system.

- Example: The Collectivist value system is often paired effectively with the Transcendental value system while conflicting with the Personal Success system.

Many written arguments for general audiences will use one dominant value system for the entire argument to create common ground, but also may rely on compatible value systems to ground smaller supporting arguments.

Advertising often appeals to as many values systems as possible, regardless of compatibility, in order to reach as wide of an audience as possible—often you'll see 4 or 5 in one ad, sometimes even all 6.