

The Value of Values in Cross-Cultural Research: A Special Issue in Honor of Shalom Schwartz

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Ariel Knafo, PhD¹, Sonia Roccas, PhD², and
Lilach Sagiv, PhD¹

Abstract

The centrality of values in cross-cultural research has more than doubled over the last three decades. This Special Issue investigates values across cultures and focuses on two main levels: individual and national. At the individual level, values express broad, trans-situational motivational goals, affecting individuals' interpretation of situations, preferences, choices, and actions. At the national level, values reflect the solutions groups develop in response to existential challenges and relate to the way social institutions function. The authors review the role of values at each level and present eight articles included in the special issue, showing the value of values in cross-cultural research.

Keywords

Values, culture, individual-level values, nation-level values, and Shalom Schwartz

The last two decades have seen a growing interest in studying values at both the individual and national levels. Values have been recognized as having a crucial role in understanding cultures, and they have become the focus of intensive cross-cultural research. While in the 1970s and 1980s less than 8% of *JCCP* articles dealt directly with values (as indicated in referring to values in their abstract or title), in the last decade this figure has almost doubled to 15% of the published articles (Figure 1). In the years 2007 to 2009, more than 20% of the articles published in *JCCP* considered values. This indicates that value research is a core aspect of cross-cultural psychology and sets the background for the motivation behind this special issue.

Values are socially shared conceptions of what is good, right, and desirable. They operate at multiple levels. Most research in cross-cultural psychology has focused on the individual and nation level. At the individual level, values express broad, trans-situational motivational goals (Rohan, 2000; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). They affect the way people perceive and

¹The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel

²The Open University of Israel, Ra'anana, Israel

Corresponding Author:

Ariel Knafo, Psychology Department, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem 91905, Israel.
Email: msarielk@mscc.huji.ac.il (AK), soniaro@openu.ac.il (SR), mslilach@mscc.huji.ac.il (LS).

interpret the world, and their preferences, choices, and actions. At the nation level, values reflect the solutions groups (e.g., nations, communities, organizations) develop in response to existential challenges (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1999). They therefore play a crucial role in the way that social institutions function.

Values thus provide researchers with conceptualizations that allow them to analyze and understand individuals and groups, people and institutions. Consequently, studying values may serve to distinguish among cultures and among individuals within and across cultures. Fully understanding how values are conceptualized, emphasized, and acted upon across cultures requires considering both levels of analyses. The special issue is intended to provide a state-of-the-art collection of articles dealing with values from diverse theoretical viewpoints.

This volume is in honor of the work of Shalom Schwartz. Schwartz's seminal cross-cultural research on values over the last quarter of a century yielded two theories: a theory of personal values that distinguish among individuals within cultures (Schwartz, 1992) and a theory of the cultural value orientations that distinguish among societies (Schwartz, 1999). The two theories inspired and initiated a large body of research at both the individual and the cultural levels. Some of the articles included in this special issue draw directly on Schwartz's theories, while others examine values from different perspectives and relate them to Schwartz's models.

Nation-Level Values

At the nation level, values characterize groups and societies and allow for comparison across cultures (Hofstede, 2001; Inglehart, 1997). Nation-level values are shared, abstract ideas of what is good, right, and desirable in a society (Williams, 1970). They are the goals and objectives that members of a society are encouraged to view as worthy and serve to justify actions taken in the pursuit of these goals (Schwartz, 1999). Nation-level values develop in response to basic challenges that are faced by all societies (Hofstede, 1991; Inkeles & Levinson, 1963; F. R. Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Schwartz, 1999). They are reflected in societal institutions and in the shared symbols, rituals, norms, and practices that these institutions develop and reinforce (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007).

Several typologies of nation-level values have been offered and studied. The seminal work by Hofstede (1980, 2001) has been followed by other projects (the GLOBE project: House, Javidan, & Dorfman, 2001; The World Value Survey: Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Minkov, 2007; Smith, Dugan, & Trompenaars, 1996; The Schwartz cultural values model: Schwartz, 2004). All of these theoretical approaches provide important cornerstones in our understanding of cultural values differences. Despite the differences in the theoretical conceptualizations of nation-level value dimensions, and the variety of measures employed to measure them, the models of cultural values partly overlap, both conceptually and empirically. Mapping of national groups around the world on the basis on their values results in consistent grouping of nations that are largely independent of the specific theory and methods that were used to derive them (see discussions in Schwartz, 2004, 2010). This attests to the robustness of the national value differences.

Using data from thousands of individuals from 70 countries, Schwartz focused both on the structure and on the content of the cultural dimensions (see Vauclair et al., this issue, Figure 1 for details). Schwartz's theory is unique in specifying the structure of the cultural dimensions (replicated in samples of teachers and students), in terms of the shared and opposing assumptions that underlie them (Schwartz, 2004, 2010). Identifying the structure of cultural dimensions of values helps to deepen our understanding of those dimensions and points to the dynamic set of compatible and conflicting relations among them. Thus, for example, the structure of cultural values sheds light on both the differences and the commonalities between societies that

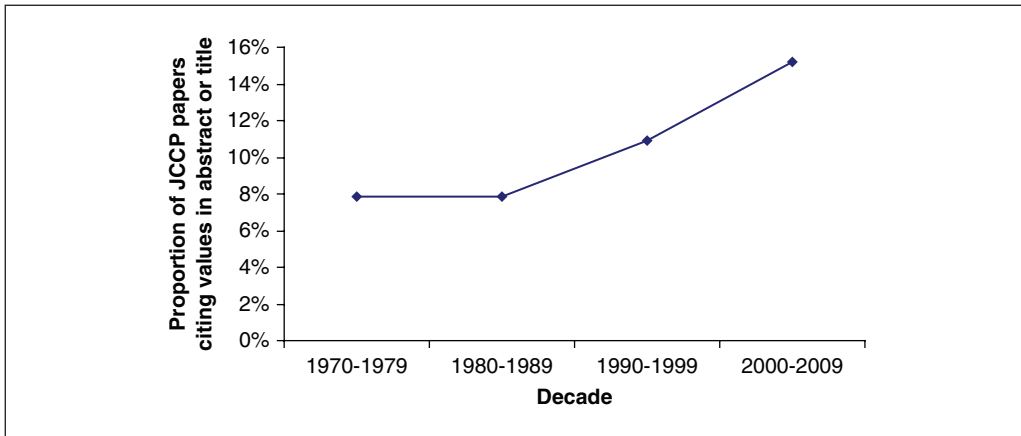


Figure 1. The Centrality of Values in Cross-Cultural Research, 1970-2009

The figure presents the proportion of articles published in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology (JCCP)* in which values were mentioned in the abstract or title. Instances in which the word *value* was used for another purpose, such as mentioning the value of a score, were not counted. The search was done using the ISI Web of Knowledge database.

emphasize mastery and autonomy (e.g., the United States and the United Kingdom) and those that emphasize mastery and hierarchy (e.g., India and China). The items used as measures of Schwartz's cultural dimensions have been validated for cross-cultural research and include only those items that were found to have a similar meaning across most cultures (see below).

In this issue, Vaclair, Hanke, Fischer, and Fontaine reproduce the Schwartz culture-level theory using a different data set. The researchers aggregate personal values of numerous samples from 37 countries. The respondents in these samples completed the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS, 1973). Analyzing these data, Vaclair et al. replicate Schwartz's (2010) circular structure and propose an additional cultural value orientation.

The theories of nation-level values have been used to predict a wide variety of individual, group, and organizational phenomena (e.g., see reviews in Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2001; Sagiv, Schwartz, & Arieli, in press). In this issue, Kasser investigates the impact of Schwartz's nation-level values on national indicators of law and policy regarding social and environmental concerns (e.g., maternity leave, advertisement for children, ecological footprint). Interestingly, the findings of this study show that even when focusing only on Western countries, national values explain a substantial amount of variance in societal rules, policies, and practices.

Although values are often considered the heart of culture (e.g., Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Schwartz, 1999), societies vary along additional—nonvalue—dimensions. Thus, for example, Bond and Leung (2004) studied *social axioms*—"pan-cultural dimensions of what people hold to be true" (p. 121) as an important nation-level (as well as individual-level) construct that serves to compare and differentiate among societies. Gelfand, Nishii, and Raver (2006), for another prominent example, suggested that societies differ in the strength of their social norms and in the extent to which individuals are likely to be sanctioned for violating them (i.e., the tightness-looseness cultural dimension). In this issue, Smith focuses on national differences in *communication styles* as reflected in the tendency to agree and to disagree, and in the frequency of extremity versus moderation. He shows that the differences in communication styles are not random. Rather, they

are systematically related to national values and thus are substantive and meaningful. These findings point to the importance of controlling for communication style when comparing findings for different cultural groups.

Individual-Level Values

Individual values are broad desirable goals that guide the way people select action, evaluate people and events, and explain their behavior and judgment (e.g., C. Kluckhohn, 1951; Rohan, 2000; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Values affect the way individuals perceive and interpret events and situations (e.g., de Dreu & Boles, 1998; van Lange & Liebrand, 1989; Sagiv, Sverdlik, & Schwarz, in press), as well as their attitudes, decisions, choices, and behavior (e.g., Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Feather, 1995; Knafo, Daniel, & Khoury-Kassabri, 2008; Maio, Pakizesh, Cheung, & Rees, 2009; Sagiv, Sverdlik et al., in press; Verplanken & Holland, 2002; see Schwartz, 2006a, 2006b, for a review).

The leading theory in understanding individual-level values was developed by Schwartz (1992). Schwartz took a cross-cultural perspective to studying values, both in conceptualizing the theory and in testing it empirically. By considering the universal requirements of human existence (see Schwartz, 1992), Schwartz identified basic motivations that characterize individuals in any society and derived 10 types of values that represent them. Thus, Schwartz moved from studying lists of values to developing a comprehensive set of motivational goals. This feature of Schwartz's theory is especially important in cross-cultural research, because sometimes a certain behavior is predicted by one set of values in some cultural groups and by another set in others (e.g., Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). Relying on Schwartz's comprehensive set of values allows researchers to identify such cross-cultural differences in value-behavior patterns.

Schwartz also analyzed the conflict and compatibilities between values: Actions taken in the pursuit of a certain value type carry social, psychological, and practical consequences that may either conflict or be compatible with the pursuit of other value types. The total pattern of conflict and compatibility among value priorities yields a circular (quasi-circumplex) structure of value systems, in which competing value types emanate in opposing directions from the center, and complementary types are adjacent going around the circle. Values thus form a continuum of related motivations that allows generating systematic, integrative hypotheses that link multiple values to other variables, such as behaviors, attitudes, emotions, or stable individual variables.

The Schwartz individual-level theory has been studied in an extensive cross-cultural research in samples of students, teachers, and in representative samples of entire populations. The findings provide strong support for the theory across the numerous cultures studied and indicate that the meaning of the 10 value types is similar across most cultures. This finding has crucial implications for cross-cultural research: That a value (e.g., freedom) has the same meaning in most cultural groups allows us to compare different groups with regard to that value (Davidov, Schmidt, & Schwartz, 2008; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995; Spini, 2003).

In this issue, Lee, Soutar, Daly, and Louviere present a new approach for the conceptualization and measurement of individual differences in values. Studying the United States and China, the authors identify value clusters drawn from value profiles. This approach is innovative in that it includes the consideration of individual differences as a comprehensive value system rather than in each value separately.

Personal values are a product of individuals' unique social experience and distinct genetic heritage (Knafo & Spinath, in press; Schermer, Feather, Zhu, & Martin, 2008). At the same time, however, personal values are a product of cultural socialization: Societal members are socialized in, and have to adapt to, cultural institutions (e.g., educational, legal, media, market and governmental systems) whose norms and practices share, to some extent, the same underlying, cultural value emphases (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007). In the present issue, Fischer, Milfont, and Gouveia present a study on the impact of the socioeconomic development on values. They argue that people who live with limited individual resources that strongly constrain their choices will not make strong differentiations between humanitarian and materialistic values. In testing their model, they show that living conditions is a proximal factor that mediates the effect of socioeconomic development on values.

Values are considered to be stable personal attributes, although some value-change occurs over the life span and in response to important changes in personal and social circumstances (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). Recently, researchers have explored the stability and changeability of personal values (e.g., Daniel et al., in press). In the current issue, Bardi and Goodwin propose an integrative model of value change. They reason that values can change through two main routes: They can change automatically or follow a conscious effort. The authors identify five factors that can facilitate value change (priming, adaptation, identification, consistency maintenance, and direct persuasion). They discuss how culture moderates the effects of each of these facilitators.

Value change is also the focus of the Danis, Liu, and Vacek study (in this issue). They examine the impact of the social context on value change among individuals in the Czech Republic who experienced rapid socioeconomic and political transitions of this country at different life stages. Findings indicate that the historical context can explain generational differences in values: Individuals whose main socialization occurred before the transition favored values oriented toward conservation and self-enhancement, whereas the post-transition generation favored openness to change and self-transcendence.

Summing Up and Looking Toward the Future

Although each article in this special issue provides an important advancement to the field, there is still a wide array of value research possibilities. In a concluding article, Schwartz (this issue) drafts a tantalizing road map for future research. Further identification of the social as well as genetic sources of individual differences in value priorities is a primary task. Schwartz calls for clarifying the interrelations of values with needs and traits, on the one hand, and well-being, on the other hand, and for advancing our understanding of the role values would play in a general theory of the structure of motivation. At the culture level, advancements should include understanding the origins and consequences of nation-level differences in values, as well as the topics of cultural distance and the cultural variation between groups within countries. Because Schwartz's project yielded theories at both individual and cultural levels, it provides researchers with the opportunity to explore issues at both levels simultaneously and to develop a better understanding of the interaction between the two levels. As the articles in this special issue show, individual- and culture-level values have a great value for cross-cultural psychology research.

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