

# **AN ASSESSMENT OF VALUE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT IN IRELAND**

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## **Introduction**

A substantial number of studies have identified cross-cultural differences in values (for example, Kluckhohn, 1951; Rokeach, 1973; Hofstede, 1980; Braithwaite and Law, 1985; Connection, 1987; Triandis *et al.*, 1990; Trompenaars, 1993). Essentially, these studies attempted to identify the *cultural* dimensions of values. Only in the past decade, however, has a systematic theory for value content and structure of individuals been proposed and empirically validated (Schwartz, 1992; Smith and Schwartz, 1997). Schwartz's contribution to the cross-cultural assessment of values is, first, that he moved the level of analysis from the cultural down to the individual, and second, that he developed a structure of 10 universal value types.

## **A Theory of a Universal Content and Structure of Values**

Individual values have been the focus of a considerable amount of research for some time. But none of the several theories that have sought to classify the substantive content of values (for example, Allport *et al.*, 1960; Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961) enjoys wide acceptance (Schwartz, 1994). In the last two decades, the dominant theoretical development in the field of cross-cultural psychology has been Schwartz's own work on values. He initiated a large-scale study of values based on a theory developed by a broad team of researchers (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987; Schwartz, 1990; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1990; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz and Sagiv, 1995). Human values are defined as desirable goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Kluckhohn, 1951; Rokeach, 1973;

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Schwartz, 1992). Values are characterized as relatively stable criteria that people use to evaluate their own and others' behaviour across situations (Schwartz *et al.*, 1990). Building on Rokeach's (1973) work, Schwartz derived a typology of 10 distinct value types, based on three universal human requirements with which all individuals and societies must cope: the needs of individuals as biological organisms, the requisites of coordinated social interaction, and the requirements for the smooth functioning and survival of groups. Schwartz (1992), however, postulates the existence of another value type – spirituality – but because of the absence of any grouping of potential spiritual values in many samples as well as the variability across cultures of the contents of the groupings found, spirituality was excluded as a universal motivational value. A set of 57 specific values was created to represent these value types. **Table 1** presents the definitions of value types in terms of their defining goals and a specific set of values that represent them.

In order to understand the conceptual organization of the value system, Schwartz postulated the existence of dynamic relations between the motivational types of values. Based on the assumption that values that serve individual interests are opposed to those that serve collective interests, both compatibilities and conflicts are expected to emerge. Values that serve both types of interests are hypothesized to be located on the boundaries of these regions. For instance, the pursuit of achievement values often conflicts with the pursuit of benevolence values; people who put their individual interests above those of others may obstruct actions aimed at increasing the welfare of others. The 10 value types could thus be organized in a two-dimensional structure that would explain the relationships along the values:

- Self-transcendence (Universalism and Benevolence) vs Self-enhancement (Power and Achievement);
- Openness to change (Stimulation and Self-direction) vs Conservation (Conformity, Tradition and Security)

**TABLE 1: UNIVERSAL VALUE TYPES: DEFINED BY MOTIVATIONAL CONCERN, WITH EXEMPLARY VALUES IN PARENTHESES**

**INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS**

**Hedonism, formerly called enjoyment:** Pleasure or sensuous gratification (comfortable life, pleasure [Broader Enjoyment includes, as well: cheerful, happiness])

**Achievement:** Personal success through demonstrated competence according to social standards (sense of accomplishment, successful, ambitious, capable)

**Self-direction:** Independent thought and action choosing, creating, exploring (creativity, independent, imaginative, intellectual, logical)

**Social power:** Status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources (authority, social power, wealth, preserving my public image)

**Stimulation:** Excitement, novelty and challenge (a varied life, an exciting life, daring)

**COLLECTIVE INTERESTS**

**Benevolence, formerly prosocial:** Prosocial refers to the preservation and enhancement of the welfare of others (equality, world at peace, social justice [universal subset]; forgiving, helpful, loving, honest [interpersonal subset]) whereas benevolence focuses on concern for the welfare of close others in everyday interaction.

**Restrictive conformity:** Restrain of actions, impulses and inclinations likely to harm others or violate social expectations (obedient, clean, politeness, self-discipline)

**Tradition:** Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion imposes (respect for tradition, accepting my portion in life, devout)

**BOTH TYPES OF INTERESTS**

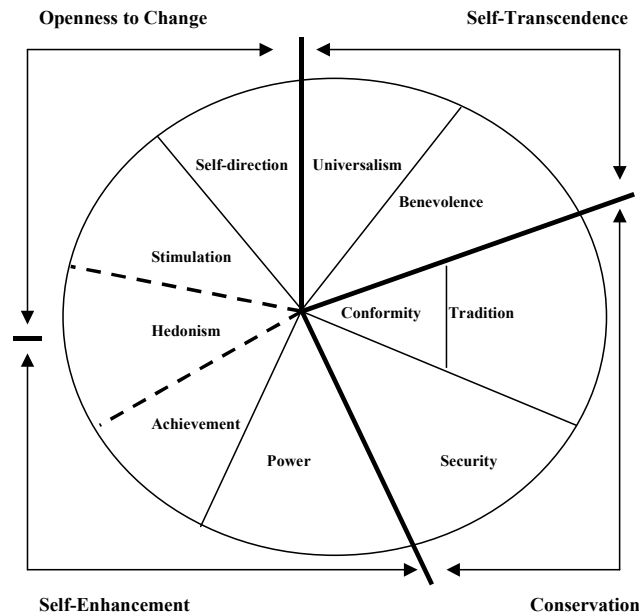
**Security:** Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of those with whom one identifies, and of self (family security, national security, social order, sense of belonging), Schwartz (1992) included individual security values.

**Universalism, formerly maturity:** Maturity refers to the appreciation, understanding, and acceptance of oneself, of others, and of the surrounding world (broadminded, world of beauty, wisdom, mature love) whereas universalism includes maturity and part of the former prosocial value type.

Source: Adapted from Schwartz and Bilsky (1990)

The Hedonism value type is enclosed by broken lines because it includes elements of both “Openness to change” and “Self-enhancement” dimension. The first dimension (Self-transcendence ...) opposes values emphasizing understanding and acceptance of others and concern for the welfare of all human beings, as against those emphasizing the interests of oneself and attaining social superiority. The second dimension (Openness to change ...) opposes values emphasizing own independent thought and action and favouring change, as against those that emphasize the preservation of established arrangements. The theoretical structure of relations among motivational types of values is presented in **Figure 1**.

**FIGURE 1. THEORETICAL MODEL OF RELATIONSHIPS AMONG VALUE TYPES**



Source: Adapted from Schwartz (1992)

## Method

### *Sample and Procedure*

The data was gathered in June and July 2000. The participants were 235 university students (104 male and 131 female), from three universities in Dublin, who were studying a variety of major subjects. The research examines whether the two basic dimensions and the 10 motivational types of values identified by Schwartz are present in this study. The mean age of the sample was 23.66 years (SD=4.30).

### *The Survey*

In order to measure each motivational type of value, the questionnaire included 57 specific values. Each of the 57 specific values was measured with a 9-point scale that ranged from "opposed to my values" (-1), through "important" (3), to "of supreme importance" (7). Following Schwartz, respondents who used response 7 more than 21 times, or used any other response more than 35 times were excluded before analysis. Those who responded to fewer than 41 values were also dropped. The proportion of respondents dropped from the samples based on these criteria was less than 1%.

### *Analysis*

The Euclidean distance model in multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) was used to verify the theoretical model of relations among motivational types of values. This model represents each of the 57 values by a point in a multi-dimensional space (a two-dimensional Euclidean space was used). The points (values) were arranged in this space so that the distances reflect the similarities between them – the greater the similarity between two values the closer they should be in the multidimensional space (Norusis, 1997). This enabled the researcher to analyse and explore their structure visually. Partition lines that separated the regions were drawn straight or curved, producing continuous regions that did not intersect with the boundaries of other regions (Lingoes, 1981). Since the theory identified in advance which set of specific values (out of 57) constitute the region of each of the 10 value types, it was possible to seek and draw regions according to the theory for each set of values. The value structure was also analysed to establish whether it formed a pattern similar to the theoretical structure shown in **Figure 1**.

According to Schwartz (1992), the following criteria were used to identify the existence of the various motivational values: (i) 60% of the

values postulated to constitute that type had to be present and (ii) no more than 33% of the values postulated to belong to another motivational type of value. In case of two regions combining, they had to have at least 50% of the values postulated to constitute each type.

## Results

In order to evaluate if the MDS solution is acceptable, Kruskal's "stress coefficient" was used. The stress coefficient measures the goodness of fit of the MDS solution. Kruskal (1964) suggests the following benchmarks for measuring the goodness of fit: .20 = poor, .10 = fair, .05 = good, .025 = excellent, and .00 = perfect. We should however keep in mind, before applying such measures, that the stress coefficient depends also – among others things – on the number of points ( $n$ ) and the dimensionality ( $m$ ) of the MDS solution.

In selecting the dimensionality of the map, a scree plot of the stress measure was used to specify the number of dimensions. There was a substantial improvement in the goodness of fit, with an increase from one (stress = .204) to two dimensions (stress = .131), but only slight additional improvement in fit as the number of dimensions was increased to three (stress = .093) or even four (stress = .074). These results show that, if the dimensionality of the MDS space increases, then the expected stress coefficient becomes smaller. One also notes that each additional dimension reduces the stress coefficient increasingly less. According to Kruskal (1964), a first criterion in selecting the dimensionality would be picking the solution for which further increases in the dimensionality do not significantly reduces the stress coefficient. The second criterion would be the interpretability of the coordinates, that is, "if the  $m$ -dimensional solution provides a satisfying interpretation, but the  $(m+1)$ -dimensional solution reveals no further structure, it may be well to use only the  $m$ -dimensional solution" (Kruskal, 1964). Considering this, and since a three-dimensional MDS configuration is usually hard to understand, a two-dimensional configuration seems to be the most appropriate to use. In selecting the two-dimensional solution, it could be pointed out that the stress coefficient is too high to be accepted (.131); however, as indicated above, stress coefficient depends also, among other things, on the number of points and the dimensionality of the MDS solution. That is, if  $n$  grows, then the expected stress coefficient also grows. Borg and Groenen (1997) consider therefore that "if  $n$  is much larger than  $m$  (more than 10 times as large, say), higher badness-of-fit values might be acceptable". In this study  $n =$

57, whereas  $m = 2$  (26.5 times as large); the result of .131 for the stress coefficient and .941 for the squared correlation coefficient is therefore considered to be quite acceptable.

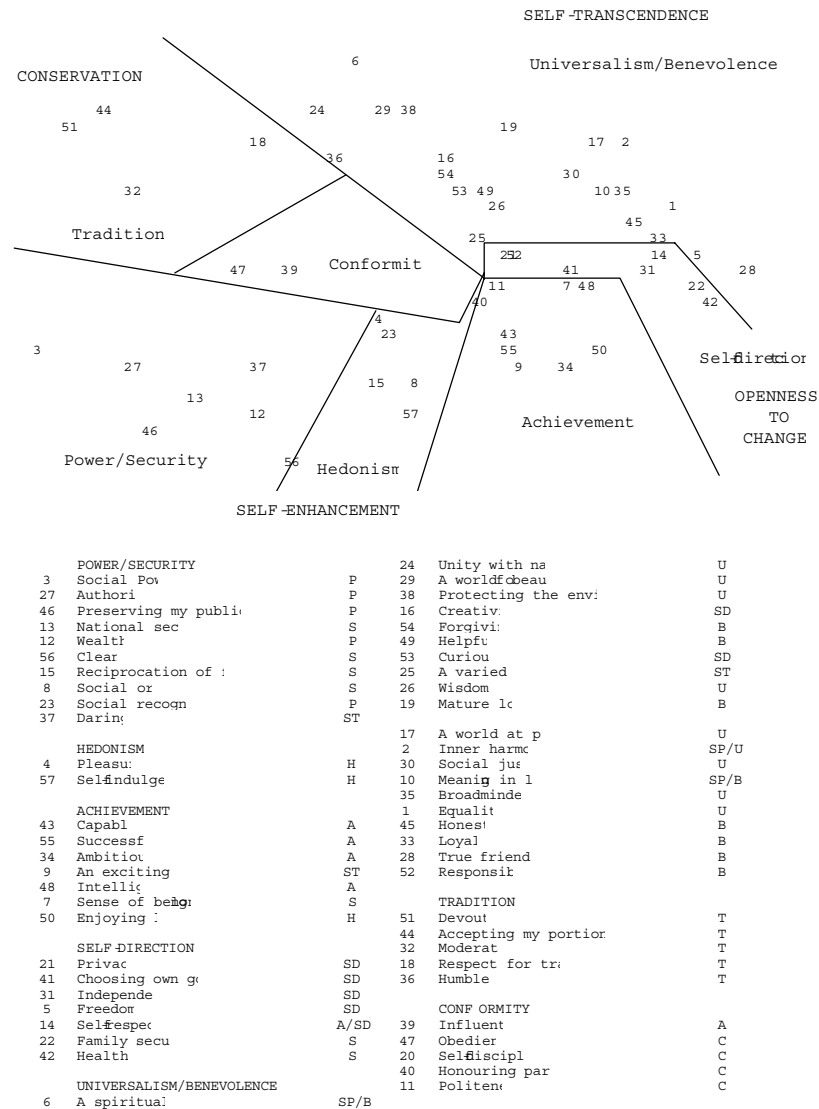
Furthermore, since each of the 10 value types involved a subset of specific values to represent them, it was decided to assess the degree of internal consistency. The rationale for internal consistency is that the variables in a scale should all be measuring the same construct, and therefore be highly inter-correlated. The value types in their order around the circle, and their internal reliabilities (coefficient alpha) were as follows: Universalism/benevolence – alpha = .85; Self-direction – alpha = .69; Achievement – alpha = .67; Hedonism – alpha = .50; Power/security – alpha = .76; Tradition – alpha = .51; Conformity – alpha = .61.

In general, the results show a reasonably large reliability estimate with only hedonism and tradition scoring less than .6. Considering the small number of items in hedonism and tradition, and since the value of alpha depends on the number of items in the scale, these reliabilities are quite acceptable. Another reason for the relatively low alphas of the value types is that several of them try to measure constructs that are broadly defined. That is, when value types are formed they include values that fall very near the boundaries of the type, sharing meaning with adjacent types. In order, to get very high alphas it would be necessary to drop those values near the partition lines. But, because such a procedure would yield too many types of values to work with, and dropping borderline items would leave out important value content, lower internal reliabilities are acceptable.

### *Value structure*

Applying the criteria indicated above for identifying regions, it was possible to distinguish 9 value types, although some regions were intermixed (see **Figure 2**). Overall, the two basic dimensions of value structure (see above, Openness to change vs. Conservation and Self-transcendence vs. Self-enhancement) could be identified. The expected order of value types around the circle differed from the theorized structure in the following ways: (i) the regions for universalism/benevolence and power/security were intermixed, suggesting that there may be some overlap between the goals they express; (ii) the location of hedonism and achievement appear to be reversed; and (iii) stimulation was not found because the criteria mention above for confirming a distinct region were not met.

**FIGURE 2. VALUE STRUCTURE IN THE IRISH SAMPLE**



Motivational types in bold represent misplacement.



### *Value Content*

Relatively few specific values were counted as misplaced – if they emerged in a region other than those corresponding to its postulated value type. In the Irish sample, 47 out of 57 values emerged in the postulated locations – 82% of the samples (47/57). This indicates a high consistency with the theoretical model.

The location of the specific values on the map allows us to analyse their meanings. As indicated above, values that are distinct should be located far apart from one another, and values that reflect similarities between them should be in close distance. This means that values at the edge of one region may be more similar to certain values on the edge of the neighbouring regions than with values of the same region. All three former spirituality values emerged in regions representing the benevolence and universalism types. This result is compatible with Schwartz's (1992) findings.

### **Discussion**

This study examined the degree of differences between the theorized structure (**Figure 1**) and the observed structure of values (**Figure 2**) by comparing their structure and content of values. We discuss the findings relevant to the value structure and value content in turn.

#### *Value structure*

Comparing the value structure of **Figure 2** with the theorized structure presented in **Figure 1**, it is possible to identify the two basic dimensions (Openness to change vs. Conservation; and Self-transcendence vs. Self-enhancement). Self-transcendence was identified according to the theory, although the two motivational types that comprise this dimension were intermixed. An explanation for the mixing of universalism and benevolence could be related with the sample characteristics – the assumption of collective points of view, which is a necessary condition for universalism, is only achieved later in life (Selman, 1980). Another explanation could be that Ireland is an individualist society (Hofstede, 1991). Hofstede (1991) found a strong relationship between national wealth and individualism. According to Hofstede, countries like Ireland that have achieved fast economic development have also experienced a shift towards individualism. Thus, the students are only reflecting the direction in which culture is changing towards a more individualist society, in which the difference between benevolence values (concern for the welfare of close ones –

ingroups) and universalism values (concern for the welfare of all people – outgroups) are not clearly distinct (Triandis *et al.*, 1990).

The security and power values, as mentioned above, were also intermixed impeding a clear identification of the Conservation dimension. In both cases (universalism/benevolence and security/power) however, the motivational types are postulated to be adjacent; these deviations could therefore be based more on chance variations rather than real cultural differences (Schwartz and Sagiv, 1995).

Openness to change and Self-enhancement were also identified in the Irish sample. An interesting finding is, however, that a distinct stimulation region could not be identified. Stimulation relates to the satisfaction of organismic needs, in which the goal is excitement, novelty and challenge in life. The three stimulation values emerged in the power/security, universalism/benevolence and in the achievement region. An explanation could be that for the Irish students, stimulation is not so important in life and that they prefer or expect the events to occur in a clearly interpretable and predictable way, showing a stronger relationship with order than predicted. Furthermore, hedonism was found in the centre of the Self-enhancement dimension instead of being located on the boundaries of this dimension, with the Openness to change dimension indicating a stronger similarity with the Self-enhancement dimension than is common. Nevertheless, the third hedonism value (“enjoying life” – 50) is located near the edge of the self-direction region – according to the theory between the Self-enhancement and the Openness to change dimensions.

Finally, following Schwartz and Sagiv (1995), we further assessed the reliability of the value structure by randomly splitting the sample into two subsamples (data not shown). The structure of values found for each of the two subsamples was quite similar to that in the whole sample, thus confirming the reliability of the value structure.

### *Value content*

As already indicated there were only 10 specific values that did not emerge in their postulated region – only 18% of the values were counted as misplaced. The value “creativity” (16) and “curious” (53) were both located in the universalism/benevolence region rather than in the self-direction region. Yet both values are located in a region postulated to be adjacent to their usual location in the theorized structure. The value meanings should therefore differ only slightly from their theorized meanings (Schwartz and Sagiv, 1995). The three

spirituality values were not counted as misplaced because of their location in the universalism/benevolence region – consistent with Schwartz's (1992) findings. The value "self-respect" (14) was also not counted as misplaced for his location in the self-direction region, because it emerged in Schwartz's (1992) study with almost equal frequency in the region of achievement and self-direction. Furthermore, self-respect emerged with more frequency in the achievement region for East European countries, whereas in the capitalist countries it usually emerged in the self-direction region (Schwartz and Sagiv, 1995).

The value "enjoying life" (50) is counted as misplaced, because it did not emerge in the region where the remaining two hedonism values are located; however, the location of this specific value between the achievement and the self-direction region is consistent with the theorized structure. The stimulation region could not be found, as already indicated, because all three-stimulation values emerged in three distinct regions. The values "sense of belonging" (7); "healthy" (42) and "family security" (22) were located outside the security region. Both "sense of belonging" (7) and "healthy" (42) are considered to be most directly concerned with individual interests (Schwartz, 1992); their location therefore in the achievement and self-direction region respectively which goals are personal success and independent thought/action could be explained. Furthermore, both these values were considerably inconsistent in their locations across samples (Schwartz, 1992). The location of the value "family security" (22) is, however, a surprise. This value should in theory be more concerned with collective interests (Schwartz, 1992); its location in the self-direction region appears to be because of the strong relationship with the value "healthy" (42). The maps of the random split halves of the sample (data not shown) confirm the strong relationship between these two values. These locations reflect a great concern for the wellbeing of the family – as regards physical and psychological safety – and family appears to play a more important role in one's action and thought than previously expected. The last value that was found outside his postulated region was "influential" (39). Its location in the conformity region appears to be unique. An explanation could be that the location on the map is a compromise of all its associations. Further research is therefore necessary to see if it is reflecting a culture-specific meaning.

### **Implications for Management**

Driven by the notion that, for an organization, today's students are tomorrow's clients, or even employees, it is important for them to have an understanding of students' values. Research (for example, Rokeach, 1973; England, 1975) supports the premise that values influence behaviour as well as managerial and corporate strategy decisions. Thus, it is of paramount importance that organizations understand and are aware of the diverse value systems of the students when shaping future strategies. It might be argued that the values of the students could change over time. To this, however, we would reply – as Schwartz (1992) and Hofstede (1980) have done – that values are stable criteria that are acquired early in our lives.

Current pressures toward globalization are increasingly forcing people to interact with people from other cultures. Working with people whose values are different from your own increases the likelihood of misunderstandings and frustration. Understanding the different value systems is, therefore, of utmost importance for an organization. The ways in which people interpret their surroundings and organize their activities are based on their value systems. One way for the organization to minimise the conflict between cultures is to commit resources in selecting staff who have sufficient cultural sensitivity that they are able to accept and work with people whose values are different from their own. The selection of staff is of crucial importance since the success of an organization depends above all on the recruitment of competent staff. Ignoring or mismanaging differences in values can lead to a lack of motivation in employees, selection of inappropriate marketing strategies, breakdown of cross-border alliances and ultimately to business failure. Thus, understanding the diverse value systems and being able to integrate them into management practices can help organizations to better cope with the management of their human resources, as well as with the difficulties in working in the international arena.

### **Conclusion**

The objective of this research was to examine the validity of Schwartz's (1992) theory in respect of Ireland. His theory of the psychological content and structure of human values was examined with data from 235 Irish students from three universities in Dublin. The results indicated a high consistency with the theoretical model proposed by Schwartz. In the Irish sample, 47 out of 57 values

emerged in the postulated locations, that is, 82% of the samples (47/57). The two basic dimensions (Openness to change vs. Conservation, and Self-transcendence vs. Self-enhancement) were identified and only one value type (stimulation) was absent in the value structure. Further research should attempt to find support for the theory in Ireland with a larger and more representative sample.

Implications for management are discussed at the end of this paper. The importance of values in business is stressed. Organizations should be aware of the influence of different value systems when shaping future strategies. The value system of students is particularly significant for management because they reflect the direction in which value systems are changing. Understanding these differences in values can help the organization, among other things: to better cope with the dynamics of cross-cultural negotiations; to adapt to culture differences within joint ventures; and to create effective multicultural team working and management of their human resources. Thus, learning about different value systems and being able to incorporate them into management practices will be a major challenge for the organization in the future.

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