

VALUES, BEHAVIOR AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM: A REVIEW OF SOME MECHANISMS

Shestakovskiy O.P.

Кандидат соціологічних наук, викладач кафедри соціології Факультету соціології і права,

Національний технічний університет України «Київський політехнічний інститут»

Values are of a great importance today for both public discourse and scholar research. One of the most developed values theories that caused the revival this area of studies is basic value theory suggested by S. Schwartz (1992). Among other things, values can explain a wide variety of politically relevant attitudes and behaviors (Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione, & Barbaranelli, 2006; Davidov, Schmidt, & Schwartz, 2008). In particular, its explanatory power for political activism is at least no less significant than traditional socio-demographic variables (Vecchione et al., 2015). Here I briefly review the theory itself, conceptualizations and empirical findings of the links between values and political activism.

According to Schwartz' theory, values are abstract beliefs about desirable, trans-situational goals that are emotionally linked, arise from basic needs, transcend particular norms and motivate behavior being guiding principles in human lives (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992).

They represent a motivational continuum that resembles a circumplex, where particular value domains can be separated. One of the most popular version of the theory singles out 10 value domains (basic values) that are organized in higher order values (Figure 1). Adjacent values correlate positively and can be maintained together. Opposing values are conflicting and can be maintained only at the cost of one another. Recently the refined value theory was suggested; according to it 19 more narrowly defined values can be separated (Schwartz et al., 2012).

Values do not predetermine motivations ultimately. However, values-behavioral correlations that are significant and consistent with the theory in most cases (e.g., Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Schwartz & Butenko, 2014). These relationships can be mediated by less abstract values or attitudes that refer to a certain activities. Moreover, values can show little or no relation to behavior in situations of strong pressure of (group) norms that impose restrictions on a given type of behavior.

There is numerous evidence that Schwartz values relate to a wide set of political attitudes, choices and behaviors, such as right-left orientations, voting, activism, opinions on immigration, human rights, welfare, war etc. (short review in (Davidov, 2010). Moreover, basic values can account for substantially more variance than age, gender, education, and income. Basic values structure political attitudes in a consistent way and/or underlie political ideologies (Converse, 2006; Feldman, 2003; Schwartz, 1994). They can be fully mediated by particular political values, such as traditional morality, human rights or equality, but basic values strongly predict political ones (Schwartz et al., 2013).

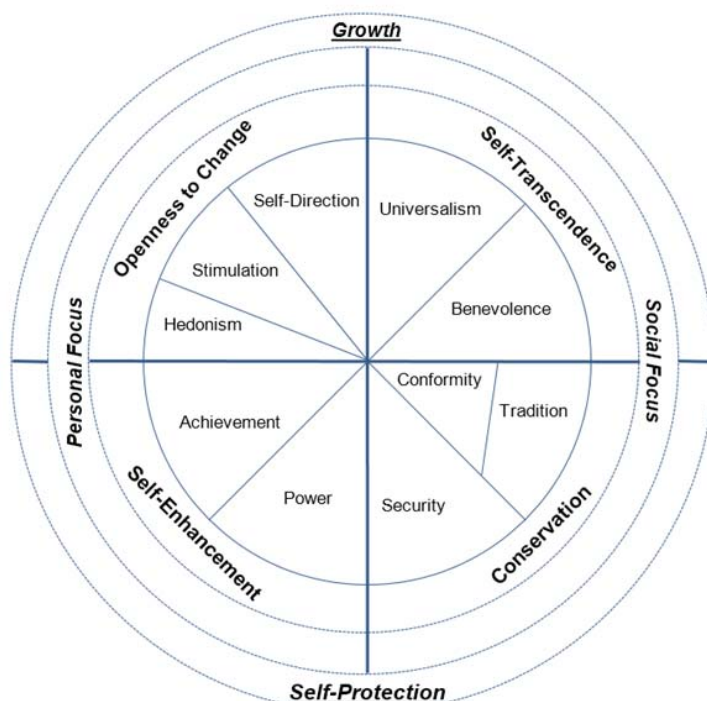


Figure 1. Values and their circular organization according to S.Schwartz. Source: Magun, Rudnev, & Schmidt, 2015.

As in any other sphere of human behavior, people tend to act and support or counteract political agenda according to what goals and end states they want to pursue. The effect of values in political sphere is contextual and depends on the central issues of a given national political life. For example, Conservation values relate positively to emphases to national security and military strength, and Self-Transcendence values relate to support for freedom for all, equity, welfare and human rights (Barnea, 2003; Caprara et al., 2006). Relationship between political attitudes and the corresponding behavior is also dependent on political history and culture. In particular, post-communist countries demonstrate a number of opposite relations between values and attitudes in comparison with western democracies. (Schwartz et al. 2013).

As for political participation and activism, recent cross-national study show that political activism related positively to Growth values, Universalism and Self-Direction in particular; and negatively to Conservation values (Vecchione et al., 2015). In addition to it, one should consider that relations are stronger in societies that are more democratic for they put fewer constraints on politically motivated actions of their citizens. Anti-governmental protests imply low trust to political institutions correlates with higher importance of Hedonism, Self-direction and Universalism values and lower – of Conservation values (Devos, Spini, & Schwartz, 2002).

Protests usually break conditional social norms about civic obedience. Therefore, the importance of participants' values related to public issues that caused disobedience might be different from those of general population. Such protests per se assume lower importance of Conformity value and, considering personal threats, lower importance of Security. These associations also should be higher in societies that are less democratic. The latter provide higher value consensus and more political restrictions, thus norm and situational pressures are stronger here. One may assume that anti-governmental protest also relate to importance of what S. Schwartz called macro-worries, rather than micro-worries (Schwartz, Sagiv, Boehnke, 2000). Those who wish to replace government and/or change a political regime presumes rather than dealing with a particular law or regulation can think about it as an important thing for all population, not only for themselves. In this case, anti-governmental protests participation may relate negatively to Self-enhancement values (especially to Power, and to Achievement and Hedonism), and positively to Self-Enhancement (especially to Universalism). In addition, they should correlate negatively with Stimulation values.