

**Value theory and research in sociology**

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**One leading question :**

**Persisting, increasing, or declining cultural distinctions ?**

**Three ‘separate worlds’ in study of cultural diversity :**

**-postmodernists**

**-particularists**

**-dimensionalists**

**Four key dimensionalist concepts of comparing cultures :**

**-Hofstede, Triandis, Schwartz, and Inglehart**

**-similarities and dissimilarities**

**-lessons to be learned**

## **Three separate worlds ?**

### **Postmodernists :**

- cultures do not exist: no unifying pattern**
- no strong internal homogeneity**
- no direct power to shape people's identity**
- individual producing hybrid, ambivalent cultures**

### **Particularists :**

- upholds beliefs in value patterns**
- stress on domains (work, religion, politics, etc.)**
- no overarching cultural canopy (unrelated patterns)**
- individual no important constructing role**

### **Dimensionalists :**

- culture as a unifying pattern**
- system crossing life domains and groups of individuals**
- search most frugal, meaningful set of value axes**
- individual absent – “culture is superorganic”**

**Do dimensionalists allow framing cultural change and productive role individual, better : groups of individuals ?**

## **Dimensionalists**

### **Geert Hofstede**

- culture directs individual and group behavior
- values core of culture
- cultures at nation-level, well-defined, stable patterns
- 5 dimensions on which 50+ countries vary :
  - power distance : acceptance power inequality
  - uncertainty avoidance : fear for unknown
  - individualism / collectivism (I/C) : loose-tight ties
  - masculinity : unequal gender roles
  - long-term orientation: future vs past/present

### **Harry Triandis**

- focus on I/C construct: i.e. in-/interdependent selves
- I or C cultures depend on tightness and complexity
  - tight : consensus on norms, countermeasures deviation
  - complex : high functional differentiation  
(many open in-groups, many behavioral options)
  - tight and simple : C ; loose and complex : I
- I/C = multidimensional : horizontal/vertical
  - horizontal I : independence and sameness/equality
  - horizontal C : interdependent and oneness
  - vertical I : independence and distinction
  - vertical C : interdependence and acceptance inequality

### **Shalom Schwartz**

- culture 40+ nations structured at individual and culture-level
- values adjacent and opposite (form a circle)
  - individual level : 10 value constructs that all recognize, and 2 axes : openness to change vs conservatism and self-enhancement vs self-transcendence
  - culture-level : 7 value types results of 4 basic societal issues : in- vs interdependent individual, equality vs inequality, change vs preservation, self- vs generalized other-directedness

### **Ronald Inglehart**

- values on 1 bipolar dimension materialism-postmaterialism
- scarcity and socialization hypotheses : value scarce goods and values reflect condition pre-adult years
  - scarcity : materialist cohorts (security)
  - prosperity : postmaterialist cohorts (quality of life)
- later work: 2 dimensions in modernization process
  - from survival to well-being : includes materialism-postmaterialism dichotomy
  - from traditional (hierarchy, male dominance, authoritarian attitudes) to secular-rational authority : equality, opposition to centralization and 'bigness'

## **Similarities / Dissimilarities**

### **Similarities**

- the etic/emic : what is general vs what is specific in cultures
- values at core : debate on what values, are all values values ?
- stable early socialization effects : childhood internalization
- family socialization : if childhood, family crucial only ?
- other: survey approach, national boundaries

### **Dissimilarities**

- order/structure in dimensions :
  - some only culture-level (Hofstede), others 1-on-1 relationship culture-/individual level (Triandis, Inglehart), other distinct dimensions at both levels (Schwartz)
  - some hierarchical (Schwartz, Triandis?), some not; some bi-polar (Hofstede, Inglehart), some both multi-polar/circular (Schwartz)
- nature of values :
  - desired / desirable (what people want vs think they should want) : Hofstede and Triandis focus on desired, Schwartz, Inglehart on desirable (guiding principles)
  - personal vs societal goals (Schwartz vs Inglehart)
- other: ranking (Inglehart) or rating (others)
- AND: their way of dealing with cultural change

## **Dealing with cultural change**

### **Cultural change :**

- Hofstede : national cultures transform in similar directions : diversity remains : relative cultural stability
- Triandis : recognizes value heterogeneity, but people 'sample' I/C themes in line with national cultural character : cultural stability
- Schwartz : universal structure by definition stable : overlap individual and culture-level pursuits : cultural stability
- Inglehart : explicitly incorporating change, but no role individual (falls back on processes such as economic growth) : cultural change, without the vehicle of change.

### **Some lessons :**

- focus on vehicles of change : generational units
- focus recruiting power of generational units for generations they are born in and for succeeding generations brings 'individual back in' in sociology of values : the bearers and followers of change
- focus on interactions between local, national, and supranational (regions within nations, nations, regions of nations)
- develop value theory combining concepts of dimensionalists

