

## Social Values and Education: A Brief Comparative Approach from Schwartz to White's and Hand's Theories



Dalavouras Georgios<sup>1</sup>, Kechagias Christos-Thomas<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Teacher, Department of Primary Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

<sup>2</sup>PhD., M.A., School of Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

**ABSTRACT:** This paper aims to present in brief the main researches about the prediction of social behavior through values and social axioms, to suggest their utilization in the field of philosophy and sociology of education and also to highlight the significant contribution of the educator in the moral edification of a person. Initially, it is being held a brief reference to Schwartz's theory of values and social axioms in order to show the important role they play in social behavior. Then, Schwartz's study of intercultural values as well as their outcomes is outlined in detail. The ensuing report refers to researches which took place both intercultural and in Greece about social axioms and dimensions that have been found. It is being accomplished an approach about researches that have been made intercultural and aimed at predicting the social behavior with the help of values and social axioms. In parallel, there is a brief survey of Michael Hand's theory about moral education and its criticism. By the literature review is being proved that there is a semantic correlation between values and social axioms, but there isn't a significant combination of social behavior. From their roots, both values and social axioms seem to affect social behavior.

**KEYWORDS:** *Schwartz, values, social axioms, social philosophy, education, philosophy of education, moral seriousness.*

### INTRODUCTION

A human belief system includes a set of ideologies, beliefs, values, opinions and behaviors (Gari, Panagiotopoulou & Mylonas, 2010; Chatzidaki & Kechagias, 2019; Kechagias, 2020, 2016). Beliefs express what a person believes that they "should" or "must" do according to the social rules or the social norm (Taber & Ben Akpan, 2017: 57). Between the ones that a system of beliefs includes, values are something very desirable, since they include the goals that apply to a wide range of situations (Gari et al, 2010; Bilsky & Schwartz, 1994). Value is a superior class concept that is thought to provide a structure for the organization of attitudes (Hogg & Vaughan, 2010: 231). According to some scholars values are emotion – linked beliefs that represent subjective ideals (Dragolov & Boehnke, 2015); but the issue of exploring values is of interest to ancient Greek thinkers and their societies (Gernet, 1981:141-276; Tzani & Kechagias, 2009; Κεχαγιιάς, 1995) already from the Homeric epics (Adkins, 1960, 1971; Long, 1970: 121-139; Kechagias & Antoniou, 2019). For Heraclitus, an ancient Greek philosopher, 'pyr' (=fire) is an ontological equivalent of everything, a measure of comparison of ethical actions, (fragments, Diels, DK 90). Socrates refers to the values-virtues gathered in the model of the "good-natured citizen, (Plat. Protagoras 318e), as Aristotle does in his later works who systematizes the virtues and vices for every human being (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, see: Kechagias, 2009, 2016). In modern times, it is remarkable the reification of value ("Wert-form") in the work of Marx (Das Capital).

Marx believes that: (a) The first peculiarity of the equivalent form of the "wert-form" is that "the use-value becomes the form of appearance of its opposite, Value". Value ("Wert-form") is the form / substance / essence of value, in the language of Marx's Capital. (b) The second peculiarity is that "this particular work is the form of the appearance of the opposite of abstract human labor". (c) The third is that "private labor is a form of the opposite, work in direct social form". Kastoriadis (1975) considers that Marx replaces the 'fire' of Heraclitus with the 'general equivalent' and this concept is established in both Sociology and the Political Economy (see: Kechagias, 2009).

In general the study of values has a long tradition in Social Sciences as in Psychology and Sociology. These two disciplines looked at values from a different perspective, with psychology giving more emphasis to the exploration of values at the individual level, while sociology explored in a more social perspective (Hogg et al, 2010: 762). Values express everything that people think they are doing or what they ought to do to avoid being inconsistent with the social norms and rules governing the society in which they live. Therefore, values are a "guide", that is, "guidelines" in the life of a person, which they must follow in order to keep pace with the social desirable (Gari et al, 2010; Bilsky et al, 1994). Values are conceptual constructs that can be used to predict and interpret specific attitudes and behaviors (Hogg et al, 2010: 762).

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The systems of values vary between individuals, groups and cultures. Hofstede (1980) and S. H. Schwartz (1992) have argued that entire cultures can be characterized by creeping values structures (Hogg et al, 2010: 232). In 1980, Hofstede proceeded to a study of values among 40 different cultures. Four dimensions have been formed from the survey conducted (IBM): (a) "power distance", (b) "uncertainty avoidance", (c) "masculinity" and (d) "individualism". In a further Hofstede survey in 1983 in 50 national cultures the formation of the same dimensions was confirmed (Smith & Bond, 2011: 87; Hogg et al, 2010: 762).

The "power distance" dimension refers to the extent to which one can accept an unequal power in institutions and practices. The "uncertainty avoidance" dimension is related to how a person is planning to cope with the uncertainties he will encounter in his life. The dimension of "masculinity" refers to the attribution of value to attributes that are either male or female attributes, while the dimension "individualism" refers to the individual's identity and whether it is determined by personal choices or by collective (Hogg et al., 2010: 762). It is worth noting that later, in these four dimensions, surveys have added two more: "long – term orientation" and "indulgence versus restraint" (Dragolov et al, 2015).

### SCHWARTZ'S THEORY OF VALUES

Israeli psychologist Shalom Schwartz and his colleagues proceeded to a large-scale series of surveys aimed at approximating values. In particular, Schwartz argued that only when all the key-issues facing mankind are identified, we will be able to judge whether the investigations made or being made now about values cover sample sizes of all dimensions of values (Smith et al, 2011: 96). Schwartz identified 56 values and designed a questionnaire in which the participants reported to what extent this set of values was a guiding principle in their lives. This research covered a wide range of regions from around the world (Smith et al, 2011: 96; Schwartz, 2012). In this specific intercultural research, Schwartz had to examine the psychometric tools used to find out if they were the same for the participants of all the countries under study. For example, the value "freedom" could be given different meanings by an American participant and a South African participant. For this reason, Schwartz proceeded to analyze the correlations of one value with the other in each of the studied countries separately, using the statistical method of "analyzing the minimum intervals" (Smith et al, 2011: 97).

### VALUE TYPES

Through this process, Schwartz found what values create clusters of each other, but not which ones were most important in each culture. The result of this analysis was the creation of ten sites that they named value types. In every value formula he gave a name-label, which sums up the values it contains (Smith et al, 2011: 97; Schwartz, 2012; Bilsky et al, 1994). In particular, the types of values are: "security" (e.g. public order), "stimulation" (e.g. exciting life), "self-direction" (e.g. independent), "universalism" (e.g., world full of beauty), "benevolence" (e.g., forgiveness), "conformity" (e.g. self-control), "tradition" (e.g. respect for tradition), "power" (e.g. social order), "achievement" (e.g., success) and "hedonism" (e.g., enjoyment of life) (Leung, Au, Huang, Kurman, Niit & Niit, 2007; Schwartz, 2012; Bilsky et al, 1994). Schwartz proposed another organization with regard to the group of ten value formulas. In particular, some value formulas, such as "power" and "achievement", reflect the motivation to reinforce itself, while the values of "universalism" and "benevolence" reflect the motivation to overcome one's self.

At the same time, the values of "tradition", "conformity" and "security" reflect the motivation for conservation while the values of "self-direction" and "stimulation" reflect the openness to change. Finally, there is a value formula, "hedonism", which could belong to two larger categories: «self-enhancement» and «openness to change» (Leung et al, 2007; Schwartz, 2012; Bilsky et al, 1994).

It seems that there are probably similarities between the dimensions of Hofstede and Schwartz. Schwartz in his research found two dimensions with firm meaning: "receptivity to change" or "openness to change" (as mentioned earlier) and "self enhancement". These two dimensions contradict the dimensions of "conservatism" and "self-transcendence". Compared to the dimensions of Hofstede, there are similarities in the dimensions of "individualism-collectivity" and "distance of authority" respectively (Hogg et al, 2010: 762).

### SOCIAL AXIOMS

The official definition of social axioms is that they are "general beliefs about oneself, society and the natural environment, or the spiritual world, and have the form of a claim about the relationship between two entities or concepts" (Leung, Bond, De Carrasquel, Muñoz, Hernadéz, Murakami, et al, 2002; Dragolov et al, 2015). An axiom is a statement for which no proof is required (Gari et al, 2010). Social axioms, due to the fact that they are a truth, a "reality" for an individual, but this has not been the result of any confirmation, have been argued to resemble the "faiths." "Faiths" refer to beliefs that are accepted by someone as right, good and desirable, regardless of social consensus (Gari et al, 2010).

Surveys on beliefs and social axioms were conducted only in Europe and North America. In order to achieve cultural balance, two more surveys were held involving individuals from other cultures also (Leung et al, 2002). As for the first survey, a total of 358 people, 163 men and 195 women participated in Hong Kong, while 203 people, 93 men and 110 women participated in Venezuela. The survey used the final version of the SAS (Social Axioms Survey) consisting of 182 items, all of which are in plain language (Leung et al, 2002). In the first survey, the social axioms found were grouped into five dimensions: social cynicism, social

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complexity, reward for application, spirituality - religiosity and fate control (Bond, Leung, Au, Tong, De Carrasquel, Murakami, et al, 2004).

However, it was considered necessary to carry out a second survey that took place in Japan, Germany and the US, to confirm the existence of the five dimensions in other cultures. In this survey, 114 people from the USA (25 men and 89 women), 99 people from Germany (45 men and 54 women) and 211 people from Japan (93 men and 118 women) participated in this survey. The results of the survey confirmed the existence of the five global dimensions as they were formed during the first survey (Leung et al, 2002).

### **DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL AXIOMS**

The dimension of "social cynicism" refers to a negative view of human nature, a view that life causes misery, that people take advantage of others as well as disbelief about social institutions. The dimension of "social complexity" refers to the belief in the multiple ways to achieve a result, as well as to the agreement that human behavior varies depending on the situations. The "reward for application" dimension refers to the general belief that effort, knowledge and careful planning will lead to positive results. The dimension of "spirituality-religiosity" refers to the belief in the existence of a Supreme Being and the positive functions of religious practice. The "fate control" dimension refers to the belief that life events are specified and that there are ways for people to influence these predestinated results (Bond et al, 2004a; Dragolov et al, 2015).

Also, in Greece, after two major researches (Gari et al, 2010), a unique dimension of social axioms, called «Cynicism and Competition», emerged. This includes four social axioms from the dimension of "social cynicism", a Greek social axiom, as well as one of the dimensions of "reward for application" (ibid).

### **SOCIAL AXIOMS AND SCHWARTZ'S THEORY**

The combination of values and social axioms in research can significantly help to predict social behavior (Bond, Leung, Au, Tong & Chemonges-Nelson, 2004b; Bilsky et al., 1994). It seems that social axioms are a new "weapon" of social science, and therefore we must use them in the interpretation of human behavior (Bond et al, 2004b). The members of a culture are in constant conciliation with the social context in which they live and act. This conciliation occurs with the people around them, but also with the media, educational and working groups, etc. (Dragolov et al, 2015).

Bond and his colleagues (2004b) conducted a survey of 180 people to determine whether the combination of values and social axioms could predict social behaviors. Research has shown that there was no significant "co-operation" between the values and social axioms of participants in predicting behavior (Bond et al, 2004b). However, value formulas (Leung et al, 2007) seemed to be semantically combined, in terms of content, with some specific dimensions of social axioms. For example, "social cynicism" was significantly related to the values of the values' types «power» and «achievement» of the Schwartz organization group (Leung et al, 2007), namely of «self-strengthening of the self» (Bond et al, 2004b).

One more study confirmed the low correlation of values and social axioms in prediction of behavior (Leung et al, 2007). A strong semantic relationship was observed, as in the previous research (Bond et al, 2004b). Values were related to a large number of behaviors and preferences, but this association was not strong enough. On the contrary, social axioms have provided a new perspective in understanding and anticipating behaviors, preferences and crises.

In addition, the semantic relationship of social axioms with values emerged in the survey. This relationship confirms the validity and universality of intercultural dimensions of social axioms (Leung et al, 2007).

### **DISCUSSION ON THE EXPLOITATION OF VALUES IN EDUCATION – EDIFICATION OF CHILDREN**

It is worth mentioning the philosophical importance of values in pedagogy, their contribution to socialization and the formation of personalities of individuals (Stamelos, 2009: 108). According to Krivas S. (2007), "the main purpose of the education is the conscious and planned process through which the teacher seeks to influence and guide the students." Through this process, children internalize values, rules, attitudes and behaviors that can be accepted socially (Krivas, 2007: 130). Therefore, the educational system is aimed not only at the cognitive guidance of the students but also in the creation of people who will later be able to become critical thinkers and to make their own thoughts on social, political, economic issues, etc (White, 2015a).

There is therefore an issue that will concern us: how can the educator "lead" to socially acceptable personalities who will live in harmony? (Tzani & Kechagias, 2009). The reconsideration of values and social axioms, as we have mentioned earlier in this paper, can help the philosophers of education to answer this question. In the direction of conformation "people" it contributes significantly both the educational system and the family (White, 2015a). As far as the educational system is concerned, Hand (2014) has developed his theory of "Moral Education". The issue of Hand is whether ethics can be taught to students and in what way. It contrasts with the traditional form of learning about ethics, indoctrination. He thinks that students have to do ethical actions, such as not stealing or lying, but at the same time knowing why they have to (Hand, 2014). In the past, in England for example, the influence of the church on the formation of ethics was very intense (White, 2015a). However, the teaching of morality in this way, that is to say the religious punishment and the fear of the divine punishment (White, 2015a), conflicts with what Hand desires: avoiding indoctrination (Hand, 2014).

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Analyzing Hand's theory even further, we observe that it separates moral education into two categories: moral information and moral inquiry. The first category aims to point out that children are "enrolled" in certain ethical standards, in which they consider that all other people are involved, for example, that we cannot lie. The second category refers to moral standards in which students are or are not included, depending on whether they are proven or not. This one can take two forms: "directive" and "non-directive". In the first, the teacher is called upon to persuade students whether an ethical standard is or is not proven. In contrast, in the second form the teacher avoids promoting or supporting a view on the proven state of an ethical model (Hand, 2014).

In conclusion, Hand (2014) argues that moral education can be implemented in two ways. In one way, teachers lead students to come into contact with ethical standards through praise and admonition or familiarization and training, while the latter helps students to see the positive reasons for agreeing to ethical standards and to identify. Here, it is worth noting the importance of courses related to the fine arts, such as theatrical education, music, visual arts, etc. in the cultivation of ethics among students (White, 2015a; Hand, 2016). "Traditional" courses, such as mathematics and language, are particularly perceived as contributing greatly to students' cognitive development, containing undeniable truths, but they seem to "barely" touch children's feelings and imagination (White, 2015a).

At the same time, parents, sometimes also teachers, consider these courses to be less important. Unfortunately, this is directly related to the 'principle of work', meaning that pupils have to deal with mathematical operations, linguistic exercises, etc. However, every form of work does not necessarily lead to learning. The only certainty is that through this process there is no time left for students to play and entertain themselves (White, 2015a; Hand, 2014).

On the other hand, White (2015b) finds several gaps and omissions in Hand's theory. In particular, he argues that the opportunity of training ethics is debatable, while he argues that supporting moral standards is not an easy process.

Using as an example the moral model of "we must not kill" argues that in our attempt to integrate students into this, there is the danger of giving them an explanation for why this rule exists (survival, social equilibrium, etc.) instead of why it is proven and justified (White, 2015b). He also identifies key gaps in Hand's structure. For example, there is nowhere reference to the target age of students. From which age does a teacher have to practice their students in ethics and social behavior (White, 2015b)?

In conclusion, this brief comparative approach attempted to highlight the contribution of values and social axioms to the moral conformation of a person. This debt is assumed by both the family and the educators, who, following the theories, such as Hand's or White's, are called upon to achieve their goal, which is the creation of people ready to integrate smoothly into society, having acquired critical skills that will enable them to move into their lives in harmony and wisdom. Both values and social axioms, as found in researches, can contribute to this direction. Philosophers of education and educators are therefore invited to take considerable account of Schwartz's theory of values, attempting to use it in teaching.

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