



Functional theory of human values: Testing its content and structure hypotheses



Valdiney V. Gouveia^{a,*}, Taciano L. Milfont^b, Valeschka M. Guerra^c

^a Department of Psychology, Federal University of Paraíba, Brazil

^b School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

^c Department of Psychology, Federal University of Espírito Santo, Brazil

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 17 March 2013

Received in revised form 4 December 2013

Accepted 9 December 2013

Available online 29 December 2013

Keywords:

Human values
Value functions
Value content
Value structure

ABSTRACT

A theoretical analysis of the functions values fulfill is described by focusing on two widely accepted value functions: values guide actions and express needs. The interplay between these two functions yields a three-by-two framework differentiating values according to their pursued goals (personal, central or social goals) or their expressed needs (survival or thriving needs). The three-by-two framework results in six subfunctions or basic values (structure hypothesis) assessed with specific marker values forming the Basic Values Survey (content hypothesis). The present paper tests these theoretical hypotheses in a large national sample of Brazilian physicians ($N = 13,414$). The results support both hypotheses and provide further empirical evidence for the functional theory of values. Discussion centers on the theory as a refinement of existing value models due to its parsimonious and theoretically-driven approach, and its merit as an additional theoretical tool for understanding the structure of the value domain.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Schwartz's theory of values is an important legacy in social psychology that provides conceptual, methodological, and empirical contributions to map a set of universal values (Maio, 2010; Schwartz, 2011). Throughout the years the theory has promoted multiple configurations of the value domain, including seven (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987), ten (Schwartz, 1992), eleven (Schwartz, 1994) or nineteen (Schwartz et al., 2012) motivational value types. As a result of these multiple (and somewhat conflicting) configurations, some researchers have tried to identify a congruent pool of dimensions, suggesting between six and eight motivational types (Hinz, Brähler, Schmidt, & Albani, 2005; Perrinjaquet, Furrer, Marguerat, Usunier, & Cestre, 2007), whereas others have preferred to consider only the two bipolar higher-order dimensions of self-transcendence/self-enhancement and conservation/openness (e.g., Caprara, Alessandri, & Eisenberg, 2012; Strack & Döbwall, 2012).

We believe these multiple configurations lack parsimony and theoretical focus, and might also hinder scientific advancement when studies are to be compared or meta-analyzed. In the present article we discuss a parsimonious and theory-driven approach explaining the functions values fulfill that can be useful in integrating previous theoretical value models. In particular, the theory

integrates models that conceptualize values as guiding actions and expressing needs. We start by describing the functional theory of human values (Gouveia, 1998, 2003, 2013), and then report a study gathering empirical evidence for its appropriateness in a large national sample of Brazilian physicians by testing two specific theoretical hypotheses.

2. Primary functions of values

The functional approach is popular in attitude research (Maio & Olson, 2000), but research examining the functions that values fulfill has received less attention (Gouveia, 2013). Nevertheless, two primary functions of values can be identified in the psychological literature: values guide actions (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992) and are cognitive expressions of needs (Inglehart, 1977; Maslow, 1954). The recognition of these two value functions has led to the development of the functional theory of human values (Gouveia, 1998, 2003, 2013; Gouveia, Milfont, & Fischer, submitted), which attempts to explain the underlying characteristics of the value domain structure.

The parsimonious selection of these value functions is in line with research showing that the general structure of motivational systems is consistently subsumed by a two-dimensional structure (Fontaine, Poortinga, Delbeke, & Schwartz, 2008; Grouzet et al., 2005; Ronen, 1994). However, a theoretical and explicit explanation of the underlying functional characteristics of this structure has not been explored by the extant literature.

* Corresponding author. Address: Department of Psychology, Federal University of Paraíba, 58.051-900 Joao Pessoa, PB, Brazil.

E-mail address: vvgouveia@gmail.com (V.V. Gouveia).

¹ URL: <http://vvgouveia.net/>

The theory posits that the two value functions form distinct functional dimensions. The first dimension outlines ‘circle of goals’ based on the type of orientation values serve when guiding human behaviors (personal, central or social goals). The second dimension outlines ‘level of needs’ based on the type of motivator values serve when cognitively representing human needs (survival or thriving needs). These value functions most likely arise from evolutionary conditions associated with human development.

In order to survive in a hostile environment, humans need to: (a) establish bonds with others, while being able to make personal decisions for one’s own survival, (b) resist threatening group demands, and (c) make sense of the multiple meanings present in social interactions (Baumeister, 2005; Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). This demand to simultaneously act autonomously and bond with a larger group leads to a functional and integrated set of values that guide actions. The second functional dimension underlies the expression of needs that would threaten the survival of the individual, the immediate social group, and the species if not fulfilled, such as basic biological and social needs (e.g., food, self-control) as well as needs that become more important once the basic needs are addressed (Baumeister, 2005; Maslow, 1954; Welzel, Inglehart, & Klingemann, 2003).

2.1. Guiding actions

Personal and social values are the two terminal value types identified by Rokeach (1973). Individuals guided by personal values (e.g., an exciting life, inner harmony) are self-centered or intrapersonal in focus, while those guided by social values (e.g., true friendship, a world of peace) are society-centered or interpersonal in focus. Personal and social values lead individuals to emphasize respectively themselves or the group as the principal unit of survival (Schwartz, 1992). Empirical studies have also identified values that are neither completely social nor personal, such as personal stability, health, knowledge and maturity (Mueller & Wornhoff, 1990). Although some scholars refer to this set of values as representing mixed interests (e.g., Schwartz’s universalism and security value types) and in opposition to other values (e.g., Schwartz’s stimulation value type), a different perspective is taken here.

According to the functional theory, values that are neither exclusively personal nor social are located almost exactly between personal and social values because they are not restricted to the dichotomy of self-centered or society-centered interests. This set of values is thus congruent (and not in opposition) with both personal and social goals. The theory further posits that this set

of values is the central reference source for the other values in the sense that they express general purposes of life corresponding to basic needs (e.g., survival) and more general needs (e.g., self-actualization). Therefore, the first functional dimension differentiates values according to the orientation of their pursued goals (type of orientation: personal, central or social goals).

2.2. Expressing needs

Although the correspondence between values and needs is proposed (Maslow, 1954; Rokeach, 1973), there is little empirical research on values as based on needs (Calogero, Bardi, & Sutton, 2009). Nevertheless, the literature suggests that all values can be classified as materialistic (pragmatic) or humanitarian (idealistic) based on the needs they express (Braithwaite, Makkai, & Pittelkow, 1996; Inglehart, 1977). Materialistic/pragmatic values express basic biological and social needs such as food and control acquisition, ensuring the survival of the individual, the immediate social group and the species. Humanitarian/idealistic values express needs that become more salient when the basic needs have been addressed (Inglehart, 1977; Maslow, 1954), including needs for information, self-esteem and intellectual and emotional stimulation (Baumeister, 2005).

Materialistic values imply an orientation toward specific practical goals and normative rules. Individuals guided by materialistic values tend to think in more biological terms of survival, emphasizing their own existence and the conditions to secure it. Humanitarian values, in contrast, are based on more abstract principles and ideas. Emphasizing humanitarian values is associated with creativity and open-mindedness, suggesting less dependence on material goods. Compared with materialistic values, humanitarian values are not necessarily directed toward concrete goals, and are generally non-specific (Braithwaite et al., 1996; Inglehart, 1977). Materialistic values express survival needs while humanitarian values express thriving needs. The second functional dimension thus differentiates values according to their expressed needs (type of motivator: survival or thriving needs).

3. Content and structure of the value functions

The functional dimensions can be mapped on a three-by-two framework, with three broad pursued goals (personal, central or social goals) and two broad expressed needs (survival or thriving needs). The interplay between goals and needs yields six specific subfunctions or basic values. Figure 1 presents the three-by-two

		Values as guides of actions (circle of goals)		
		Personal goals (the individual by itself)	Central goals (the general purpose of life)	Social goals (the individual in the community)
Values as expressions of needs (level of needs)	Thriving needs (life as source of opportunities) ²	Excitement Values Emotion Pleasure Sexuality	Suprapersonal Values Beauty Knowledge Maturity	Interactive Values Affectivity Belonging Support
	Survival needs (life as source of threats) ¹	Promotion Values Power Prestige Success	Existence Values Health Stability Survival	Normative Values Obedience Religiosity Tradition

Fig. 1. Facets, dimensions and basic values. Note. (1) Under pressing conditions that impose existential threats. (2) Under permissive conditions that provide existential security.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/890516>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/890516>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)