Sex-differences in value priorities

Shalom Schwartz & Tammy Rubel (2005)
Introduction

• Sex- differences in the importance of 10 basic values as guiding principles:
  • -> is there any universal differences between the value priorities of women and men?
  • -> are there sex-differences in value priorities regardless of age, education or cultural background?
  • -> are the sex-differences small or large?
  • -> connection to debate about sex- differences in the moral orientation of care versus justice? (Gilligan)
10 basic values

- **Schwartz:** identified 10 motivationally distinct values that are recognized across societies:
  - **Power:** social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources
  - **Achievement:** personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards
  - **Hedonism:** pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself
  - **Stimulation:** excitement, novelty and challenge in life
  - **Self-direction:** independent thought and action—choosing, creating, exploring
10 basic values

- **Universalism**: understanding, appreciation, tolerance, protection of the welfare of all people and nature
- **Benevolence**: preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact
- **Tradition**: respect, commitment, acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self
- **Conformity**: restraint of action, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social norms and expectations
- **Security**: safety, harmony, stability of society, of relationships, and of self
The two bipolar dimension
Limitations in past research

• relatively small samples
• homogenous samples
• student samples
• instruments and measurement
• cultural groups studied (English speaking countries predominated)
Research

- compare the importance of each value to men and women
- Cross-cultural study: 73 countries or cultural groups (N=77,528)
- heterogeneous samples: students and people with different backgrounds
- multimethod study: three instruments
Research

• Instruments:
  - Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ), short and full versions
  - Schwartz Value Survey (SVS)

• iterated back- translations

• Strength of sex effects:
  -> effect of sex compared to effect of age, cultural group and education

• 4 studies, distinguished by instrument and sample type
Results

• Sex differences were highly consistent for power and benevolence
• differences are small:
  - compared to other sources of differences (age, cultural group, education)
  - benevolence values are the most important values for both women and men!
• no support to Gilligans moral orientation
• differences are consistent-> holds across a wide range of cultural groups
Results

- differences in two bipolar dimensions:
  - men: self-enhancement values: power, achievement, openness values: self-direction, stimulation and hedonism values
  - women: self-trancendence values: benevolence, universalism and security
  - differences in tradition and conformity values were not significant
Theoretical perspectives

• **Evolutionary psychology**: universal sex-differences are reflecting different adaptation problems faced by our ancestors -> different cognitive and affective mechanisms (value as behavior guiding mechanism)

• **Social role theory**: source of sex-differences are in division of labor -> occupational and family roles provides sex-differentiated experiences that influences to behavior, attitudes, identities and values (different gender role expectations and experiences)
Cross national variation

• the size and direction of sex-differences in value priorities varied across countries:
  -> smaller differences in more autonomous and individualist countries (Hofstede research..)
  -> but also sex-differences were bigger in countries with more equality..gender equality encourages women to express distinctive values than their husbands?!
  -> future research should study interactions between sex and variables like age, education, religion and social class