IJMR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT REVIEWS
British Academy of Management
International Journal of Management Reviews, Vol. 16, 211–225 (2014)
DOI: 10.1111/ijmr.12017

Ideal Values and Counter-ideal Values as Two Distinct Forces: Exploring a Gap in Organizational Value Research

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Motives and values at work have long been key topics of business and management studies. In a focused review of the literature on the nature of human values, this paper identifies a disconnect with the literature on human motivation, despite the otherwise inherent relatedness of the two fields. Specifically, extant theory and research have conceptualized values generally in terms of ideals, namely desired end-states that individuals strive to approach. Although values, by this definition, express motivational concerns, theories of human motivation suggest that there are two forces to consider, i.e. approach and avoidance motivation. By applying this 'two forces' perspective to value research, this paper identifies a gap in the literature on values: namely, the idea that individuals are also influenced by counter-ideal values, i.e. end-states that they deliberately seek to avoid. The identification of this gap opens up new opportunities for value research in general and organizational value research in particular. To pave the way for future research, this paper critically discusses the few studies that have taken first steps in that direction and outlines research questions that may follow for issues such as employer branding and person–organization fit. This paper closes by providing suggestions on how to tackle the issue in organizational practice.

Introduction

Values play a central role in organizations. Engrained in mission statements and organizational guidelines, they define an organization's ideals and, as such, govern employees' perceptions and responses to the world around them. Value dynamics are hence partly responsible for employees' satisfaction with their jobs, their identification with their organizations, and their intentions to join an organization and to leave or remain with it (Judge and Bretz 1992; Kristof 1996; Kristof-Brown *et al*. 2005; Meglino and Ravlin 1998; Verquer *et al*. 2003). Such proximal outcomes are ultimately linked to more distal organizational outcomes, such as lower costs of recruiting and turnover, intra-organizational information exchange, as well as performance benefits via various forms of in-role and extra-role behaviors (Arthaud-Day *et al*. 2012; Cascio 1999; Michailova and Minbaeva 2012; Podsakoff *et al*. 2000; Riketta 2005).

Against this background, we take stock of the contemporary literature on organizational values and, in doing so, reveal that respective research has

This research was partially supported by a fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation awarded to Sebastian C. Schuh.

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predominantly conceptualized values as desirable ideals (Rokeach 1973; Schwartz 1992, 1994). Indeed, through mission statements and guidelines, organizations typically express what organizations want to become. Yet, our question is whether these statements and the underlying perspective on values adequately represent the human value system and, accordingly, are capable of visualizing the organization's full identity, or whether 'blind spots' remain (see Ashforth *et al*. 2008). To answer this question, we look into research on motivational systems, because the underlying notions of that literature largely mirror the ones in the organizational values literature. As Schwartz (1992, p. 4) aptly noted, 'the primary content aspect of a value is the type of goal or motivational concern that it expresses'. From this review, we delineate that human motivation is largely conceptualized as a two-forces system, with one force energizing approach behaviors, and one force energizing avoidance behaviors. This insight indicates an important gap in the literature on organizational values: So far, values have been represented in terms of ideals that people strive for. However, a second layer of values should exist that represents counter-ideals that people seek to avoid.

Having identified this gap, we describe some recent research evidence that can be interpreted to support the idea of a two-forces values system, and we continue with an outlook on how the literature on organizational values, once it follows the notion of two forces, may be able to take a significant step forward. By tying the literatures on values and human motivation back together, we want to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of human values. Such integration should not only create new research opportunities, but also provide organizations with a more rounded picture of how they can and should explicate their values in practice.

The nature of human values

Because the nature of human values has always been of great research interest, many conceptualizations of values have been proposed and explored (see Maio *et al*. 2003; Rohan 2000). Overall, researchers agree that values represent enduring beliefs or trans-situational goals that energize approach behavior (Rokeach 1973; Schwartz 1992). Allport (1961, p. 543) referred to values as the 'dominating force in life'. They function as ideal guidelines for human cognition, emotion and behavior and, as such, constitute a fundamental basis of human perceptions and reactions (e.g. Bardi and Schwartz 2003; Ravlin and Meglino 1987). As values can be held individually, but are also shared socially, they form a fundamental building block for not only individuals' personal self-conceptions, but also their social self-conceptions (Maio *et al*. 2003). In general, values are regarded as stable because they are learned in an absolute manner: People are taught to accept values without question (see Bardi *et al*. 2009; Maio and Olson 1998; Rokeach 1985; Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach 1989). Building on these views, previous research has shown that values operate as important bridging concepts between personality traits and attitudes (Olson and Maio 2003; Yik and Tang 1996). Values differ from personality traits because people explicitly refer to values when justifying the legitimacy of their actions (Roccas *et al*. 2002). Values differ from attitudes because they can transcend specific situations (Roccas and Sagiv 2010). As a result, values are among the most important predictors of attitudes and behaviors (Bardi and Schwartz 2003; Boer and Fischer in press; Maio and Olson 1995; Rokeach 1973).

A central definitional feature of values is that they are important to the focal person and that different values can be ranked according to their relative importance to the focal person or group (Schwartz and Bilsky 1988). Hence, value research often takes a descriptive approach when trying to understand what is important to certain people (such as employees, e.g. Mason 1994; Van Quaquebeke *et al*. 2009) or groups of people (such as cultures, e.g. Hofstede 1980; Triandis *et al*. 1985), or whether values themselves belong to different categories (e.g. instrumental vs. terminal values; Rokeach 1973). Yet, apart from a ranking or grouping, the relationship that the respective values have with each other is mostly not core to such research. In other words, most research does not investigate whether there is an inherent structure to value systems. One of the first attempts in this respect was undertaken by Quinn (1988) with his competing values framework that separated values into four quadrants split by the dimensions of flexibility vs. stability and external vs. internal focus. Another prominent example includes the World Value Survey that relates societal clusters and societal changes to aggregated values along the two dimensions of traditional vs. secular-rational values and survival vs. self-expression values (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Recent organizational research has, however, largely relied upon Schwartz's and

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colleagues value theory (Schwartz 1992, 1994; Schwartz and Bilsky 1988) and their idea of a value circumplex model (cf. Brown and Trevino 2009). The circumplex structure is proposed as a universal structure of values, meaning that all human values will find 'their place' within that structure.

Mirroring the above, Schwartz (1994) defines values as 'desirable trans-situational goals that vary in importance and that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity' (p. 21). Specifically, he argues that values express the three universal requirements of human existence: individuals' needs as biological organisms; the requirements of coordinated social interactions; and groups' survival needs. According to Schwartz (1994), these needs become enshrined in values that express the following ten value types: achievement, benevolence, conformity, hedonism, power, security, self-direction, stimulation, tradition and universalism. By means of Multidimensional Scaling, these value types can be plotted in a continuous circumplex structure. As such, they form the following four higher-order value types: self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement and openness to change (see Figure 1). These higher-order types, in turn, represent two bipolar dimensions of value conflict that cut orthogonally through the circumplex model: one dimension contrasts conservation with openness to change, whereas the other contrasts self-enhancement with self-transcendence. This structure has been studied extensively and replicated using data from over 200 samples in more than 70 countries (Schwartz 2006) and has recently seen a slight refinement with a differentiation of the ten continuous item types into 19 lower-order but more discrete singular values (Schwartz *et al*. 2012).

A central aspect of the circumplex model is the proposed structure of relations among these value types. According to Schwartz (1994, p. 23), 'the pursuit of each type of values has psychological, practical, and social consequences that may be congruent or incongruent with the pursuit of other value types'. The circular structure of these value types portrays the patterns of congruence and incongruence among human values. Congruent values lie next to each other in the circle, whereas incongruent values lie opposite one another. Schwartz's conceptualization contends that the entire circle of values constitutes a bipolar motivational continuum: 'The further away around the circle any two values are

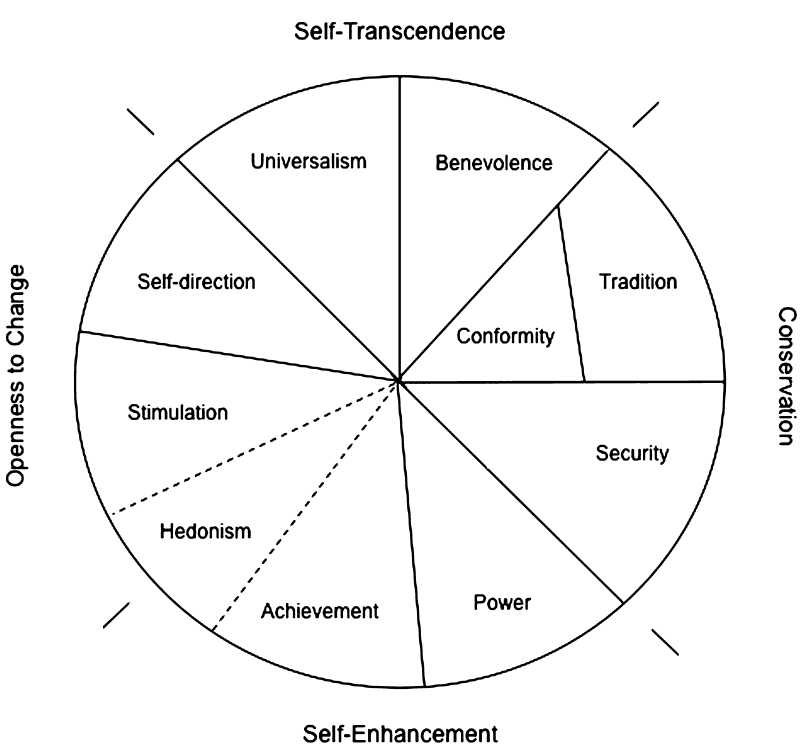


Figure 1. The Schwartz value circumplex model (according to Schwartz et al*. 2001)*

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located, the more dissimilar the motivations they express' (Bardi and Schwartz 2003, p. 1208). Evidence for the circular structure has been provided by Schwartz (1992) and others, showing that values located next to each other in the circumplex model tend to be positively correlated, whereas those located in opposite directions tend to be either uncorrelated or negatively correlated. Moreover, scholars have recognized that the relationships among these values predict related attitudes and behaviors (Roccas and Sagiv 2010). Consequently, these relations often follow moderate sinusoidal patterns when related to attitudes, for example, regarding religiosity (see Sagiv and Schwartz 1995; Schwartz and Huismans 1995) or regarding homosexuality and money-making (Schwartz *et al*. 2012). Even in the reverse, Roccas *et al*. (2010) were able to show that the manipulation of specific opposing values either increases or decreases the salience and degree of national identification. In summary, there is substantial evidence that values are among the most important predictors of individual attitudes and behaviors (Bardi and Schwartz 2003; Roccas and Sagiv 2010; Sagiv *et al*. 2011; Verplanken and Holland 2002).

The most notable feature of the motivational continuum, however, is that it only consists of values that people want to achieve or accomplish, i.e. approach (Bardi and Schwartz 2003). Those values that are not cherished by an individual are automatically considered to be less important for him or her. Indeed, on the operational level, the scale labeling in the popular Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ), which asks for the resemblance of the respective value types with 40 items (or a 21-item short form, respectively), only indicates options from 'not like me at all' to 'very much like me'. Hence, neither the existing operationalization of the circumplex model nor Schwartz's (1994) value theory itself allows certain values to repel individuals to the degree that people actually identify themselves by the values that they repel.

Theoretically, few researchers have thought about the possibility that value systems could also consist of values that people want to avoid through certain behaviors. Instead of providing a clear conceptualization of counter-ideal values, these previous explorations remain rather tentative. For example, Aavik and Allik (2006) were able to show via factor analysis on ratings of values that negative values (such as stupidity, hostility, laziness) did not map with reverse loadings into the positive values factor structure, but instead formed their own factor. Unfortunately, the researchers did not provide suggestions on how to integrate this insight into a broader theory of value systems. Instead, they stated that the hypothesized 'bidimensionality of positive and negative values still needs further investigation' (Aavik and Allik (2006, p. 186). Similarly, Van Dijk and Kluger (2004) argued that some values of the circumplex model represent promotion goals, whereas others represent prevention goals (cf. also Leikas *et al*. 2009). While this dichotomy stands in stark contrast to the original conception (Schwartz 1994), the authors refrained from a thorough integration by concluding that addressing this specific integration problem was 'beyond the scope of this research' (Kluger and Van Dijk 2005, p. 6).

We see the lack of a conceptual framework for the existence and functioning of counter-ideal values as a gap in Schwartz's circumplex value system. This is not to say that we believe the Schwartz's circumplex value system to be wrong, but respective researchers may have overlooked an important mirroring layer with a different orientation. We believe that this oversight may have occurred in part because the circumplex structure implicitly offers counter-ideal values as those outlined on the opposite side of the cherished ideal values in the circumplex model. However, as described above, neither operationalization nor theory can support such a claim. In addition, as we outline below, there is much potential in an extension of the circumplex structure into values of different forces. In order to identify the gap more specifically, we briefly review research on human motivation and, in doing so, we especially consider regulatory focus theory (Higgins 1997, 1998) to be essential, because this theory relies on the importance of values to human perception and behavior.

The distinction between two forces within human motivation and their relevance to organizational contexts

The concept of two distinct forces underlying human perceptions and behavior is not novel to psychological research (Cacioppo and Berntson 1994; Cacioppo *et al*. 1997). Indeed, the notion of two forces seems to be almost fundamental to human nature. Many researchers have even argued that the distinction between positive and negative forces underlies the basic structural dimensions of the human personality (Carver *et al*. 2000). In particular, this idea has long been discussed in the human motivation literature (for an overview, see Elliot 2008).

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The central tenet of theories in this realm is that two independent motivational systems form the core of affective and behavioral regulations. The first motivational system has been termed 'the appetitive system' or 'behavioral activation system' (BAS), which motivates movements towards specific states. This system is activated by external or internal reward signals. The second motivational system has been termed 'the aversive system' or 'behavioral inhibition system' (BIS), which inhibits movements towards specific states. This system is activated by signals of non-reward, punishment or novelty (Cloninger 1987; Fowles 1988; Gray 1981, 1987). Both systems operate as guiding principles that affect how people perceive and react towards their environment. Scholars have argued that the two systems are functionally independent and thus underlie the distinct affective qualities and behavioral reactions (Carver and White 1994) as well as the distinct dimensions of personality (Carver *et al*. 2000).

Variations of this notion can also be found in control theory (Campion and Lord 1982) or self-regulation theory (Carver and Scheier 1998, 1999). According to these theories, human motivation arises from the interaction of two distinct self-regulating feedback systems (Powers 1973). Human behavior consists of continuous attempts to align individual perceptions and evaluations of environmental stimuli with desired goals (Carver *et al*. 2000). In this sense, the distinction between discrepancy-reducing loops and discrepancy-increasing loops is similar to the distinction between the BAS and the BIS. Importantly, these two distinct feedback loops correlate with a person's experience of distinct qualities in affect (Carver and Scheier 1990). According to Carver and Scheier (1998), these qualities represent two distinct bipolar dimensions of affective experience. Thus, the experience of positive emotions can arise either from reaching a goal or from avoiding an anti-goal. Similarly, the experience of negative emotions can arise either from the failure to reach a goal or from reaching an anti-goal.

The second major body of theories that relies on approach and avoidance tendencies is composed of self-discrepancy theory and regulatory focus theory (Higgins 1997, 1998). According to these theories, individuals regulate their thoughts, feelings and behaviors to maintain or change their actual selves by comparing themselves with a particular reference self (Brockner and Higgins 2001). Self-discrepancy theory specifies that the process of self-regulation occurs with respect to at least two distinct types of reference points: ideal self-guides and ought self-guides. Ideals are qualities that individuals desire to attain, whereas oughts are qualities that individuals feel obligated to attain. Thus, self-guides can function as both standards and desirable or non-desirable end-states (Boldero and Francis 2002; Newman *et al*. 1992). Ideals and oughts are distinct because they represent qualitatively different psychological situations. Ideal self-guides motivate people to attain positive outcomes, whereas ought self-guides motivate people to avoid negative outcomes (Robins and Boldero 2003). Hence, individual self-discrepancies reflect the perceived differences between one's actual self and one's self-guides. Discrepancies between the actual self and an ideal self-guide result in a promotion focus that is characterized by an aspiration for accomplishment and advancement. Individuals in a promotion focus are primarily concerned with positive outcomes that they strive to gain or achieve. The presence of these outcomes is experienced as having a strong positive hedonic valence, whereas the absence of these outcomes is felt as unpleasant. Conversely, perceived discrepancies between the actual self and an ought self-guide reflect the presence of negative outcomes and result in a prevention focus (Higgins 1997, 1998). This focus is characterized by the pursuit of safety and the fulfillment of responsibilities. The prevention system focuses on negative outcomes – their presence (which is experienced as being painful) and their absence (which has a positive hedonic value; Higgins 1997, 1998; see also Lockwood *et al*. 2002).

Regulatory focus theory is one of the most comprehensive motivation theories, because its conceptualization seems to comprise the primary elements of human motivation. The implications that can be derived from its core assumptions are especially noteworthy, because the suggestion of two pathways (which vary in their magnitude and importance) to achieve the desired end-states is of central concern (Higgins 1997, 1998).

Despite a potential dispositional preference for one tendency over the other, both tendencies also have a considerable state component (Higgins 1997, 1998). State and trait approach and avoidance tendencies have been found to be important explanatory factors for processes in the organizational context (for meta-analysis, see Gorman *et al*. 2012). For example, approach and avoidance are influential for the leadership process (Bono and Ilies 2006; Ilies *et al*. 2006; Kark and Van Dijk 2007) as well as for broader employee responses towards the

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organization and its processes (Ilies and Judge 2005; Richer *et al*. 2002; Van Dijk and Kluger 2004). In general, regulatory focus theory is highly relevant to a variety of affective and behavioral processes and reactions in the organizational context (Brockner and Higgins 2001; Gorman *et al*. 2012). More specifically, it is generally recognized that a promotion focus, whether as a trait or state-induced, is related to creative behaviors, speed and eagerness, whereas a prevention focus is related to more conservative behaviors, accuracy and vigilance (Förster *et al*. 2003; Friedman and Förster 2002; Kluger and Van Dijk 2005). According to Johnson *et al*. (2010), a prevention focus is associated with a concern for avoiding mistakes, because failures at work are seen as costly and ominous. Such a concern causes prevention-focused employees to work slowly and diligently. By contrast, promotion-focused employees adopt an eagerness strategy that emphasizes speed, because they are rather concerned with accomplishing goals instead of accuracy (Förster *et al*. 2003). Thus, a promotion focus tends to have stronger and more favorable effects on performance, because the pursuit of approach goals specifies what should be done to approach accomplishment, whereas the pursuit of avoidance goals specifies what should be done to avoid failure (Carver and Scheier 1998). By applying these tendencies to different settings in the organizational context, scholars have found that regulatory foci account for important processes, such as information processing (Aaker and Lee 2001), decision-making (Crowe and Higgins 1997), feedback (Van Dijk and Kluger 2004) and goal-setting (Latham and Pinder 2005; Roe 1999). Thus, one can conclude that people's perceptions and reactions at work are substantially affected by differences in the nature and magnitude of their motivational tendencies, whether situationally induced or as a disposition (see Brockner and Higgins 2001; Gorman *et al*. 2012).

For the purpose of the present paper, we can summarize that various researchers have stated that values constitute a motivational continuum and influence motivational tendencies. (e.g. Bardi and Schwartz 2003; Schwartz, 1992). Yet, despite this conceptual relatedness, there is a growing distance between the literatures on motivation and values. As an improvement of this state of affairs, and based on the above review on human motivation, we posit the existence of a second orientation in value systems that relates to motivational *avoidance* tendencies, the likes of which complements the well-researched value orientation pertaining to motivational approach tendencies. In the next section, we outline the respective distinction.

A distinction between ideal and counter-ideal values

Most scholars believe that people are largely influenced by ideal values and act in ways that help them attain these ideals (Roccas and Sagiv 2010; Roccas *et al*. 2002). As argued above, however, theories of human motivation, including regulatory focus theory, clearly distinguish between two distinct types of goals: those that elicit approach behavior and those that elicit avoidance behavior (Higgins 1998). Current conceptualizations of ideal values hence fail to explain how values can energize avoidance behavior. This is why we propose the consideration of counter-ideal values as those that energize avoidance behavior.

Similar to the way in which approach and avoidance tendencies have generally been found to comprise two distinct motivational systems, we suggest that ideal and counter-ideal values form two independent value systems. In other words, a value universe ultimately consists of two distinct systems that do not simply constitute a bipolar motivational circular structure, as Schwartz (1994) suggested. Rather, ideal and counter-ideal values form two separate structures that each uniquely influences people's perceptions and reactions. Each of these value systems is multidimensional in nature. Thus, unlike some previous conceptualizations (Liberman *et al*. 1999; Van Dijk and Kluger 2004), we think one should not simply assume that specific values of the circumplex model exclusively underlie approach tendencies, while others pertain to avoidance tendencies. Instead, we propose that it depends on a person's preferences whether a specific value serves as a salient ideal or counter-ideal value. For example, some people might generally become energized to approach power values, whereas others might generally become energized to avoid power values. Any value can serve as an ideal value that people seek to approach or as a counter-ideal value that they seek to avoid. If one were to picture it visually, one could duplicate the circumplex model presented in Figure 1. If arranged as two layers on top of each other, one layer would indicate the ideal value system and the other the counter-ideal value system.

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In analogy to the classic expansion of the unidimensional motivation model by Frederick Herzberg (1968) into motivators and hygiene factors, the simplistic depiction in Figure 2 demonstrates that, traditionally, research assumes that one value can only be held weakly or strongly, and that the opposite of a strongly held value would represent things one wants to avoid on the same dimension. We believe, however, that individuals can independently hold (or not hold) both ideal values and counter-ideal values and that only a combination of the two value structures provides the complete view of the human value system.

This view is not in contrast to the general notion that certain values promote specific behaviors while preventing other behaviors associated with the opposing values in the circumplex model (see Roccas *et al*. 2010; Verplanken and Holland 2002). It simply says that, given the theoretical evidence in the field of motivation and the research evidence of low negative correlations across the circumplex model, counter-ideal values are by and large distinct from ideal values. Additionally, this view does not oppose the notion that certain values correlate positively with specific behaviors and negatively with others (see Roccas *et al*. 2002). Rather, our perspective adds to these notions by stating that value systems should be conceptualized in terms of two generally distinct systems that independently influence people's perceptions of and reactions to the world around them. Following initial research by Van Quaquebeke *et al*. (2010), which we describe later in more detail, we hence define counter-ideal values as 'enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially not preferable' (p. 295), whereas we view ideal values as 'enduring beliefs that a specific conduct or end state of existence is personally or socially preferable' (Rokeach 1973, p. 5).

The innovative contribution of this perspective is that it contradicts a fundamental assumption of Schwartz's (1994) value model. Indeed, one of the model's central characteristics is its circumplex form that is supposed to represent the dynamic relations (i.e. compatibilities and conflicts) between ideal value types. As noted earlier, previous research has provided considerable support for the structure of an ideal value system: values that are located in adjacent positions are relatively compatible and values that are situated in opposing regions of the two-dimensional value structure (e.g. power and universalism) tend to be in conflict. It seems, however, to be exactly this central tenet of the value model that may have caused scholars to overlook the existence of a second (counter-ideal) value system. Indeed, the circumplex structure suggests that all possible specifications of values are represented. Drawing on this structure, previous research has thus generally assumed that individuals who attribute high importance to a certain value are energized to approach this value. Conversely, individuals who are energized to avoid this value should emphasize the value that expresses opposing motivations (Sagiv and Schwartz 1995). Following this reasoning, one would assume that a person who cherishes power as a value would score high on attributes and actions affiliated with this value (i.e. wealth, authority, preserving one's public image, social power and social recognition; Schwartz 1992). Conversely, in the traditional view, a person who strives to avoid power should be able to express this counter-ideal by pursuing aspects and actions attributed to universalism (equality, unity

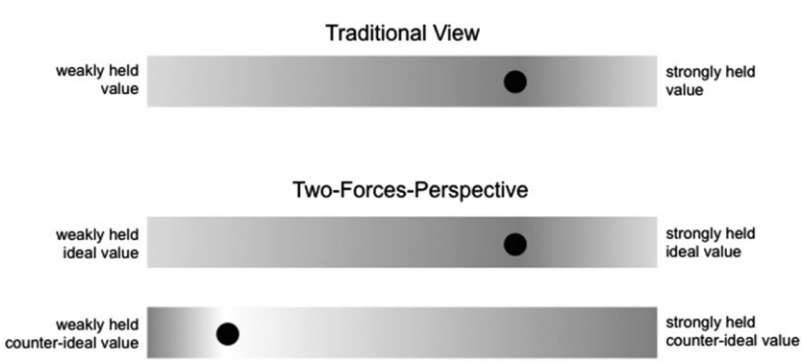


Figure 2. A simplisitic depiction of ideal and counter-ideal values in comparison to the traditional perspective on values, based on Herzberg (1968) theory of two factors for satisfaction

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with nature, wisdom, a world of beauty, social justice, broadmindedness, protection of the environment and a world at peace; Schwartz 1992). However, an inspection of the aspects associated with universalism suggests that they may not adequately reflect whether a person does indeed seek to avoid power. More specifically, it is possible that a person who seeks to avoid power may not necessarily strive for broadmindedness, a world of beauty, protection of the environment or a world of peace. Similarly, reversing the argument also implies that a high score on universalism may not fully express that individuals regard power as a counter-ideal state that they strive to avoid. Indeed, a review of the ten value types suggests that this imperfect match seems to hold true for all antagonistic pairs of values in Schwartz's (1992) value system, and the low negative correlations in the diagonals through the circumplex model provide empirical support for our skepticism (Hinz *et al*. 2005; Vecchione *et al*. 2009). Hence, our suggested two-layered values universe, with one layer pertaining to approach tendencies and the other to avoidance tendencies, seems best suited to integrating previous findings and at the same time accounts for the advances in the motivational literature.

Recent research and organizational practice on ideal and counter-ideal values

Researchers have provided some support for the existence of two distinct circumplex value systems in organizational contexts. In a study on the influence of different value systems on the leadership process, Van Quaquebeke *et al*. (2010) asked their participants to write down three values that a leader should represent (i.e. ideals) and three values that a leader should *not* represent (i.e. counter-ideals). Participants then rated the degree to which their leaders represent each value type. The results showed that both comparisons (i.e. between actual vs. ideal leader, and between actual vs. counter-ideal leader) independently influence employees' levels of satisfaction and identification with their leaders.

Further support has been provided by Graf *et al*. (2011).[1] Applying the 21-item version of Schwartz's PVQ, the authors asked participants to rate how strongly each statement (i.e. value type) represents the values (a) of an ideal leader and (b) of a counter-ideal leader. In line with our notion, the results showed only weak associations between the reported ideal values and their opposing ideal values (e.g. between the ideal value of universalism and the ideal value of power); the average correlation equaled $r = 0.05$. This finding suggests that the antagonist to a specific value (e.g. universalism as an antagonist to power) does not automatically and adequately represent the counter-ideal of this value.

Additionally, Graf *et al*. (2011) found only moderate negative correlations between ideal values and their corresponding counter-ideal values (the average correlation equaled $r = -0.29$). Thus, a shared variance of only 9% suggests that the meaning participants ascribed to the counter-ideal values went far beyond a pure negation of the respective ideal values. One should note, however, that these findings are based on values of imagined ideal and counter-ideal leaders and not on participants' own personal ideal and counter-ideal values, nor do they pertain to more general organizational values.

Further, albeit less applied, empirical support for the two forces notion exists. Aavik and Allik (2006), for instance, conducted a lexical analysis in which participants were asked to rate whether positive and negative values were either important to approach or important to avoid. Subsequent factor analysis showed that negative values did not reversely map onto the positive values factor structure, but instead formed an oblique second factor. The authors concluded that positive and negative values form two separate yet not completely independent factors.

Aavik and Allik (2006, p. 187) also point out that Rokeach (1973) used Anderson's (1968) list of positive and negative evaluative rankings, but the negative list was somehow excluded from further analysis. Hence, Rokeach's analysis did not pertain to the complete value universe. Later research by Vyrost *et al*. (1997) revisited the issue by investigating the importance ratings of antonyms of values in the Rokeach Value Survey (cf. Aavik and Allik 2006). Their results show that not all antonyms can be mapped as the opposites of positive values. Or as Aavik and Allik (2006, p. 186) put it, 'accepting Loving does not imply rejecting Cold, and avoiding Aimlessness does not imply that Ambition is also preferred'.

Finally, from a slightly different perspective, Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001) state in their analysis of organizational culture that a culture consists

[1]See also the doctoral dissertation by Matthias Graf (2011), online available at: http://publikationen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/files/24299/Dissertation_MGf.pdf

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of both the values that people actively identify themselves with (i.e. ideal values) and those that people actively disidentify with (i.e. counter-ideal values). According to the authors, if people perceive their ideal values in an organization, they will actively integrate themselves into the organization, whereas if people perceive their counter-ideal values in an organization, they will actively show avoidance tendencies (Bhattacharya *et al*. 1995; Brown and Williams 1984).

Moving beyond what can be found in research, organizations have already begun to illuminate such blind spots in their mission statements and organizational guidelines by complementing accounts of what they want to achieve (i.e. their ideal values) with statements of what they actively seek to avoid (i.e. their counter-ideal values). For example, Whole Foods Market Inc. (2013), the world's largest retailer of natural and organic foods, clearly states in its core value system what it does not want to be: 'We are buying agents for our customers and *not* the selling agents for the manufacturers' (emphasis added).[2] With this clear articulation of both an ideal that is worth approaching and a counter-ideal that is worth avoiding, Whole Foods Market Inc. presents its identity more comprehensively than other organizations. This may be part of the reason why Whole Foods Market Inc. ranked in the *Fortune* magazine's list of the '100 Best Companies to Work For' for the 16th consecutive year in 2013 and remains one of only 13 organizations represented on the list since its inception.

Several other companies across the globe have similarly conceptualized their counter-ideals and incorporated them into their core value guidelines. For example, the vice CEO of the German metal and technology enterprise Heraeus Holding GmbH, Jan Rinnert, stated that counter-ideal values are an active part of the strategic development process that helped determine what the organization should not become, for instance, *not* contributing to the production of weapons.[3] Similarly, Google Inc. (2013) states: 'We *never* manipulate rankings to put our partners higher in our search results and no one can buy better PageRank' (emphasis added), often summarized by Google employees as 'Don't be evil' (Levy 2011).

To summarize, it is frequently noted that the structure of human values resembles the structure of human motivation (Schwartz *et al*. 2012). In fact, researchers tend to view values as potent regulatory goals (i.e. desirable end-states) and thus directly relate them to regulatory focus theory and regulatory foci (e.g. Kark and Van Dijk 2007; Lord and Brown 2001). While values so far have only been recognized as affecting the valence of approach behavior (Feather 1994, 1995), the conceptualization presented above suggests that counter-ideal values have to be recognized as a distinct orientation. Entertaining this notion not only has the potential to drive research on values significantly forward, but, more importantly, may give organizations a true edge in practice – beyond well-rehearsed and often indistinguishable ideal-based mission statements.

Implications for future research

Although initial empirical attempts have been made to measure ideal and counter-ideal values simultaneously (Graf *et al*. 2011; Van Quaquebeke *et al*. 2010), future researchers are well advised to begin constructing and implementing sound measurement scales that would account for both value orientations. For instance, future researchers may adapt established and elaborated instruments, such as the PVQ (Schwartz 2005, 2006) or the Schwartz Value Survey (Schwartz 1992), in order to map the two value systems via the circumplex model. The PVQ is useful because it asks each participant to rate his or

[2]We emphasize that, although goals and values are related, they are regarded as distinct concepts (Rohan 2000). Both ideal values and ideal goals are defined as desired end-states that individuals seek to attain (Ford 1992; Rokeach 1973). However, whereas values are described as enduring and trans-situational principles, goals are more specific in their scope and are often limited to a specific domain. Despite these conceptual differences, both values and goals seem to follow the same circumplex structure (Maio *et al*. 2009) and, importantly, values often strongly influence the selection of goals (Lewin 1952). Based on these definitions, the ideals and counter-ideals stated by organizations frequently represent goals rather than values (even though in organizational practice they are often referred to as values). This also seems to hold true for the statements of Whole Foods Market Inc. and Google Inc. reported in this paper. However, given the conceptual similarities between the two concepts, and the fact that goals tend to be strongly influenced by and reflect (personal and organizational) values (Maio *et al*. 2003), we felt that these examples may be highly beneficial for illustrating the distinction between ideals and counter-ideals.

[3]See the interviews on leadership by Rolf van Dick (2013), online available at: http://www.sozialpsychologie.uni-frankfurt.de/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/LeadershipInterviews.pdf

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her similarity to the people described in each present item portrait. For organizational settings, we suggest that researchers can gather data by asking employees of organizations to fill in the instrument. Changing the instrument by replacing the fictitious portrait with imagined ideal and counter-ideal organizations would give an estimate on organizational ideal and counter-ideal values. In combination with personal values, such estimates could be used for polynomial analyses to assess a person–organization fit with regard to both ideal and counter-ideal values (cf. Graf *et al*. 2011).

In addition to measuring differences in ideal and counter-ideal organizational values, we suggest that future work should also explore differential effects of the respective value force on dependent variables. Such research may corroborate the links with different regulatory foci underlying each value force when, for instance, showing that ideal values primarily energize approach behaviors, whereas counter-ideal values primarily energize avoidance behaviors.

To corroborate the proposed reasoning even further, research may explore not only the extent to which both value forces independently affect people's perceptions of and reactions to the organizational world, but also which factors moderate these effects (cf. process by design, Jacoby and Sassenberg 2011; Spencer *et al*. 2005). For example, it might be fruitful to frame desirable and non-desirable end-states in terms of ideal goals and counter-ideal goals, respectively. In line with regulatory focus theory, which shows that different contextual cues elicit different regulatory foci and subsequently elicit behaviors of distinct qualities (e.g. Van Dijk and Kluger 2004, 2010), we would expect such experimentally manipulated situations to evoke either the ideal or the counter-ideal value system, with the respective consequences. Indeed, based on self-regulatory reasoning, we expect ideal values to be more influential in contexts or situations in which one wants to approach a desirable end-state, and counter-ideal values to be more influential in situations in which one desires avoiding a non-desirable end-state (cf. Higgins 1997, 1998).

Finally, the specific mediating mechanisms underlying the effects of both value systems remain to be investigated. Although variables such as trust and interpersonal attraction have been noted as potential mediators of ideal values fit (Edwards and Cable 2009), we expect different mediators to be of importance to the value fit of counter-ideals (cf. Van Dijk and Kluger 2004, 2010). At this point, we can only speculate that counter-ideals may also relate to trust and attraction, but with a different nuance that is more geared towards security such as predictability and accountability (cf. Edwards and Cable 2009).

Implications for organizational practice

Because values have thus far mostly been conceptualized as ideal end-states, counter-ideal values have largely remained a blind spot in terms of both their theoretical conceptualization and their application in practice (exceptions were discussed above). The conceptualization of two distinct value systems implies that organizations may want to deliberate several new issues.

Many researchers have outlined the importance of the match between personal value systems and organizational value systems. In particular, scholars have recognized that person–organization fit provides the foundations of organizational identities and, ultimately, organizational effectiveness (Edwards and Cable 2009; Kristof-Brown *et al*. 2005; Verquer *et al*. 2003). To harness the full effects of a person–organization fit, in a first step, organizations might want to explicate their counter-ideal values next to their potential or already existing ideal values. For this purpose, it might be fruitful to conduct in-depth interviews with the most representative or prototypical members of an organization (see Hogg and Terry 2001) on organizational taboos. Doing so may provide deeper insights into the core counter-ideal values of an organization. These interviews could then be internally and externally validated by letting other members and clients rate their results.

In a second step, 'bringing their values to life', organizations would seem well advised to include their ideal and counter-ideal values into their mission statements and organizational guidelines. To support this process, stakeholders, specifically leaders, should 'walk the talk' of ideal and counter-ideal values (Gehman *et al*. 2012; cf. Smith and Stewart 2011). For example, store managing teams at Whole Foods Market Inc. are encouraged to tell new and prospective recruits what it is and what it is not like to work at the company (Erickson and Gratton 2007; Pfeffer and Veiga 1999). As a result, the company seems to be highly attractive for applicants and employees, because its core value system provides a clear framework of what organizational life will be

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like and will not be like. Both customers and employees know what to hope for and what not to fear.

In addition to crafting more comprehensive mission statements and training leaders as value advocates, organizations might also want to align their core organizational systems and processes with their values (cf. Gehman *et al*. 2012). For instance, given that organizational reward systems are recognized as a very powerful means of influencing organizational culture (see Kerr and Slocum 1987; Kuhn 2009; Lawler and Jenkins 1992), organizations may want to consider incorporating both value types into their structures and performance review processes. On a related note, insights from regulatory focus theory show that some organizational settings tend to reward their employees for having a promotion focus, whereas others tend to reward their employees for having a prevention focus (e.g. Kark and Van Dijk 2007). As our analysis suggests, organizational reward systems that incorporate both foci (and hence both types of values) and evaluate their members accordingly are likely to be more comprehensive and, thus, more accepted by employees (see Brockner and Higgins 2001; Kuhn 2009).

Next to incentives, organizations might also want to reassess their selection processes because it is generally known that a perceived person–organization misfit leads to decreased motivation and increased turnover intentions (e.g. Arthur *et al*. 2006; Wheeler *et al*. 2005, 2007). As lived at Whole Foods Market Inc., potential employees should be introduced to both their organization's ideal *and* counter-ideal values. Subsequently, both the organization and potential employees can avoid a situation in which their ideal value systems might fit, but their counter-ideal value systems might not. Furthermore, introducing employees to a more rounded picture of an organization's ideal and counter-ideal values probably creates a stronger employer brand and hence a competitive advantage in the war for talent (Brannan *et al*. 2011; De Cooman and Pepermans 2012; Edwards 2010).

Finally, organizations more and more form networks with other organizations such as suppliers or competitors. Our notion of a fruitful combination of ideal and counter-ideal values might therefore also prompt leaders within such networks to define the ideal and counter-ideal value systems that are to hold across organizational boundaries (Müller-Seitz 2012) so that the efforts of one organization are not undermined by the actions of close collaborators.

In sum, identifying the content and exploring the implications of both value systems, ideal *and* counter-ideal values, seems to be a fruitful undertaking. A continuing effort toward a systematic understanding of their theoretical underpinnings will not only help to bring respective organizational value research forward, but it will also help practitioners to create organizations that more fully outline and express their identities (cf. Barrett 2006; Porter and Kramer 2006). First examples, such as Whole Foods Market Inc. and Google Inc., lead the way with their success stories.

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