Attitudes, Values and Culture: Qualitative Approaches to 'Values' as an Empirical Category

by

David Evans

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Abstract

Within RESOLVE, it would be all too easy to conflate our interest in values with an analysis of attitudes or, worse still, treat values as 'given' and somehow external to our analysis. In doing so, we would obscure the complexity of the interactions between cultural values, attitudes and the practices that constitute any given lifestyle. This paper addresses some of the ways in which sociology (and related disciplines) approaches the study of values. The conceptual dynamics of 'values' are explored through reference to a range of theoretical perspectives alongside their relationship to other variables. In setting out a sociological approach to values, care is taken to distance the analysis from social psychology's accounts of attitudes by bringing culture back into the equation without neglecting the individual or treating values as 'social facts'. Crucially, the analysis considers the ways in which these insights can be translated and mobilised at the empirical level via a discussion of qualitative methods and *grounded theory*. In turn, this opens up the possibility for a distinctly sociological contribution to RESOLVE that *complements* the social psychologists' work on attitudes and behaviours.

Keywords

Introduction

As a research group on Lifestyles, *values* and the Environment, a proper appreciation of values falls well within our remit. One of our key objectives is to explore and understand the complex relationship between societal/cultural values and the practices that constitute different 'lifestyles'. Indeed, there is no doubt that existing lifestyles (however we define them) are having an adverse environmental impact and as such, we need to consider ways in which 'lifestyles' can be changed such that they are more conducive to the goals of sustainability. In terms of *values*, it is not difficult to imagine the ways in which existing lifestyles and the practices that constitute them are a property of wider cultural values. For example, lifestyles that are unsustainable could be associated with values such as materialism, rugged individualism and solipsism. It follows that the possibilities of and for sustainable lifestyles and lifestyle change could hinge on the extent to which we can institute values that are somehow conducive to sustainability. Of course, ahead of the research process we cannot know the relationship – if any – between 'values' and the practices that make up any give 'lifestyle'. As such, the purpose of this paper is two-fold. Firstly, to look back at important social theorists to explicate a sociological approach to the concept of 'values' alongside ideas of how they might relate to social practices. Secondly, to draw on these insights and consider strategies for developing these understandings through in-depth empirical work. In respect of the latter, it is argued that we can exploit the methodological divisions between social psychology and sociology for the wider benefit of the project.

Attitudes and values.

Presently, we seem to be using the term 'values' interchangeably with that of 'attitudes' and that is not wholly satisfactory. My first intention is to try and situate sociological and anthropological understandings of 'values' in relation to 'attitudes' which is, above all else, a variable used by social psychologists. The distinction that I wish to make derives – at the most basic (although by no means exhaustive) level – from both the differing disciplinary foci of sociology and psychology.

As I understand it, the term 'attitudes' suggests something that is very much the property of the individual. It is an individuals' evaluation – either positive or negative – of some person, object or issue (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002). It is in this sense that we think, at the day-to-day level- of 'attitudes' towards David Miliband, the Toyota Prius and recycling. At a more rigorous level, social psychologists treat this as a measurable variable that is addressed in a number of ways, such as:

I think higher taxation of car use is a good idea

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly agree			Neutral			Strongly disagree

For social psychologists, attitudes occupy a significant place within the *Theory of Planned Behaviour* (Ajzen, 1989). Put crudely, TPB looks at attitudes in relation to social norms and Perceived Behavioural Constraints (PBC). That is to say, attitudes are theorised in relation to (i) 'social norms' – one's sense of what other people think and one's own motivation to comply and (ii) factors that one perceives as limiting their ability to translate their attitudes into behaviour. Indeed, the 'attitude – behaviour' gap is a salient phenomena in relation to RESOLVE's subject matter. To give an example, social norms are the things that we associate with normality; the attitudes that we think everybody else has. If we believe that everyone around us holds the attitude that 'green is good' then we are more likely to express this attitude. If this gets translated into a positive attitude towards reducing car use we may well expect persons to use public transport. However, if public transport is poor in our area; we may well shift our attitude towards it on the basis of a perceived constraint to our behaviour (even if there are alternatives).

My attraction – as a sociologist - to TPB is that things outside of the individual are being brought back into the equation. Indeed, this talk of social norms and constraints sounds almost sociological. That said, TPB gives these social norms and constraints back to the individual in as much as the social norms are framed in terms of how one *thinks* other people are thinking whilst the constraints are framed in terms of *perceived* constraints (although the perceived and the actual are often the same). Within social psychology, attitudes are seen to be formed through a variety of processes – experiences, conditioning, social learning and socialisation which of course suggests *social* as well as psychological processes. Nevertheless, attitudes remain the preserve – at theoretical and empirical levels - of the individual within social psychology. It is interesting to note that attitudes are understood as 'relatively fixed' (i.e. not momentary feelings) yet the focus on attitude formation as a process suggests that attitudes are relatively malleable. We can see this at an *a priori* level. My attitude towards flying may well change in light of information about the damage it does to the environment just as my attitude towards fair trade produce may change in light of learning the circumstances under which Nestlé procure their coffee beans. Equally well, it may not. What is it then that would make me change (or not) my attitudes?

Well, in spite of the focus on attitudes, the term 'values' is not absent in social psychology. For Social psychologists, values represent a 'higher order' concept that structures and organises attitudes. This is problematic because (i) it reifies and fixes values as a known and measurable variable which in turn (ii) contradicts the idea (Schwartz and Bardi, 2001) that values are *abstract* concepts. The empirical implications are addressed later in the piece. As a theoretical issue, we can note that, in the eyes of social psychologists, 'values' is still a concept pertaining to the individual. For example, an individual's values, or 'terminal values' in Rokeach's (1973) terms, are broad and shape the individuals' specific values. For example, a terminal value such as 'equality' may shape one's attitude to fair trade produce just as a value such as 'environmentalism' may shape one's attitude towards reducing air travel. Moving away now from psychology to *sociology*, we see a degree of conceptual congruity as much as sociologists would most likely agree with the idea

that values shape attitudes in some way or another (of course, sociologists do not deal explicitly in attitudes). However, there is a difference in as much as sociology does not conceive of values as the sole preserve of the individual; they are understood to be broadly collective or cultural phenomena.

Values and Culture.

It would be misleading to suggest that social psychology ignores the significance of culture in its analyses of values. To the contrary, 'value systems' are understood to vary across groups and cultures as well as across individuals (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002) whilst some social psychologists go as far as suggesting that cultures are characterised by their underlying values (Hofstede, 1980 Schwartz, 1992). At this point, the distinction between sociology and social-psychology starts to become a little blurred, particularly if we go back to the founding fathers of each discipline. Wunt (1897) – the founding father of psychology as an experimental science – felt that social psychology was the science of *collective* phenomena such as culture which places him firmly in line with one of sociology's 'founding fathers', Émile Durkheim (who we will meet later). Nevertheless, social psychology has, in relative terms, 'neglected' culture (perhaps the paradigm has shifted away from this original ambition) and it seems that the extent to which culture figures is as something that *explains* variance in behaviours and attitudes. It is not something that figures *in its own right*, as the dependent variable. In sociology there are differences in emphases in approaches to values and culture. Firstly, there are empirical considerations: within social psychology, there are those who utilise and measure values but – as I will go on to argue – for our purposes it might be quite fruitful to situate values as a sociological variable to be understood through in-depth qualitative work to complement V2's quantitative analysis of attitudes and behaviours.

At a more substantive level, sociologists are very much interested in culture for the sake of culture and values for the sake of values. Furthermore, the analysis of one is tied inexorably to the analysis of the other. There is a rich tradition of values research/theorising in sociology that cannot be reduced to a neat and tidy quote. However, if we must attempt a stock definition, we could do a lot worse that Kluckhohn's offering:

'A Value is a conception, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of action' (Kluckhohn, 1951)

It is worth noting right now that they are conceptions of the desirable that *influence* human choice which is different to saying that they dictate human choice. In turn, we can take on board the ideas that (i) human agency should not left out of the equation and (ii) values are cultural *ideas* as opposed 'positive' objects. This issue – reification – will be dealt with below in a dedicated discussion of social facts. For now, we must stress that this definition of values distinguishes it from attitudes which – through a sociological lens – would be defined as 'an organisation of several beliefs around a *specific* object or situation' (Rockeach, 1973: p.18) whereas, as will be seen, values are holistic, generalised and abstract *conceptions*. So, how then does this relate to culture?

Well, focusing on the 'characteristic of a group' clause in the statement above, we can infer that distinctive values are associated with distinct cultures. We can tighten this up a little by looking at definitions of culture. Again, like values, it is hard to provide a succinct definition of culture and Raymond Williams has famously noted that it is 'one of two or three of the most complicated words in the English language' (1976: p.88). Whilst this is not the place to address these complexities, we *can* note that most sociological/anthropological approaches to culture highlight, at least at a tacit level, the role of values. For example, we can turn to Edward Tylor, the first social anthropologist, who defines culture thus:

"(culture) taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and abilities acquired by a man as a member of society" (Tyler, 1871: p. x)

From this, three things are of note. (i) There is the hint that culture is an abstract, holistic framework within which we can situate concrete practices and phenomena. (ii) That culture is acquired, suggesting a social process rather than a biological one which leads to the idea that culture is shared. In turn, this links neatly to Kluckhon's point that values are 'characteristic of a group' such that we can think of culture in terms of collective/shared values. (iii) The focus on morals, laws, customs and beliefs can be translated to approximate a focus on *values*.

Looking back to early anthropology (via Firth's 1953 review article on anthropology and values) – and anthropology takes culture as its subject matter – we can see a long standing concern with values as the stuff of which culture is made. For example, Brown (1922) suggests that members of a tribe come to know what has *value* through beliefs that are impressed on him by tradition. So, the suggestion is that members learn the values/what is valued by the collective through the 'force' (for want of a better word) of culture – a statement that applies as much to modern as well as to so-called primitive and tribal societies. Similarly, Benedict (1934) positions the study of values that are 'institutionalised' (in culture) at the heart of cultural analysis.

In respect of the latter point, there is something particularly pertinent for our purposes. Firstly, we can return to the distinction between individual values and cultural values alongside the necessity of understanding both. Here, V2 may well be interested in how individual values are predictors of attitudes and behaviours but V3 can concern itself more with *cultural* values and values in their own right. For example, we are more interested in *processes* that occur at a collective and societal level as well as questions of where it is that values come from and *how* certain values get institutionalised in our culture. For a start, we may wish to understand how values vary across cultures – for example, rural *versus* urban or different ethnic groupings (and we must bear this in mind when formulating a sampling strategy) - and consider the implications in terms of existing consumption patterns and the possibilities of changing them. Equally well, one of our main aims is to understand how values that are conducive to sustainability might get institutionalised in our lifestyles and culture. Indeed, such understandings are an absolute necessity if we

are to get everybody on board, as it were, in as much as it is not enough for these values to be 'institutionalised' only by marginal (sub)cultures.

The exact nature and mechanism of this 'institutionalisation' is most likely *very* complicated and reliant on any number of agents and processes (such as media, government, information availability and community). This, I imagine, is what a good deal of our empirical work (across all strands) will be trying to understand. Of course, we cannot ignore that some of the most powerful tools we have available are the fiscal ones which effectively instituting values through reference and appeal to *value*. At this juncture it is worth pointing at the etymological links between values and value: the word 'values' coming from the Latin *valere* – to value. It is natural to think about value in monetary terms and it is quite plausible that we might think about values in terms of *revealed preferences* through the price mechanism. However, as sociologists we know that both money and the market are embedded in a whole range of social and moral processes (Etzioni, 1988 Granovetter, 1985 Polanyi, 1944 and Zelizer, 1994) and that as far back as C.H. Cooley (1913) there has been recognition that there is a whole sphere of non-pecuniary valuation. This carries us straight back to the earlier point about values being conceptions of 'what is desirable'; values pertain to what is *valued* and this is something that is tied intimately to culture in so far as different cultures value different things.

We now need to return to and expand the above point about culture being a holistic framework in which we can situate concrete practices and phenomena. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) has famously suggested:

"[m]an is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an *interpretative* one in search of meaning" (Geertz, 1973: p.5 my emphasis)

The goal of cultural analysis, according to Geertz, is to not give up on the grounds that culture is abstract and ephemeral; rather, we should trace specific/concrete practices, via the meanings that they assume in context, back to a holistic framework. This situating of concrete instances within a wider abstract framework of meanings can be thought of in terms of *thick description* (Geertz, 1973) in contrast to a 'thin' description which would involve merely reporting specific practices. Essentially, culture is an unknowable and abstract set of meanings that we get at through a focus on concrete practices. The passage from concrete observations to abstract analysis is, as noted, an *interpretative* one (and account is going to be *partial*) and Geertz does not shy away from this:

"Cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the continent of meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape". (Geertz, 1973:p.20)

Nevertheless, qualitative cultural research can still be rigorous or else ethnographers and anthropologists would be out of a job! It requires systematic observation, immersion in the data and thoughtful, imaginative analysis. This is an empirical issue and as such, I discuss it in depth below but I want to make clear right now that

it is *not* a simple matter of inferring 'x' (culture) from 'y' (practices *etcetera*) without any degree of reflexivity and that the danger of doing this is far greater when doing quantitative work.

The analysis of culture can be thought of in the same way as the analysis of culture. Indeed, we have already seen how social psychologists theorise values in similar terms (as an abstract framework in which we can position concrete phenomena) and we will soon see that sociologists do likewise. And this makes very good sense for our purposes; it may well prove very fruitful to think of values as an abstract organising system in which we can situate – among other things - consumption choices, lifestyle practices and attitudes. Here, the term values can be seen to be doing similar work to the concept of culture. To make this move, we must make a departure from cultural analysis and note that values are *not* fixed, concrete and ripe for situation within an abstract framework termed 'culture'. Instead, we can think in terms of values as the abstract framework within which we situate concrete attitudes, behaviours, practices, norms and actions.

The trouble with these ideas- whether we are talking about values or culture- is that they *could* be read as placing too much emphasis on the 'collective' as some sort of patterned structural phenomenon which dictates individual actions and practices. As sociologists, we do not want to neglect culture but nor do we wish to deny the role of subjectivity and agency. The point is this: we do not want to reify culture as a fixed and towering phenomena but equally well, we do not want to give primacy back to the 'social actor'. One of the ways in which we can resolve this is to turn to some of Marilyn Strathern's writing (1995, 1996, 1999) where she seems to eschew tendencies towards both holism and atomism in favour of understanding culture in terms of *relations* (Strathern, 1995). So, culture cannot be theorised as a fixed and towering social fact because a lot of work goes into creating and recreating a sense of social order; nevertheless, individuals alone are not enough. It is the ordering of relations between persons that enable 'culture' (and indeed, the very notion of personhood) to be elicited – (re)produced – from moment to moment. To complicate matters further, Strathern introduces the non-human (material artefacts and much more besides) into the process through her concept of *extension* (1996). An understanding of this is useful given our concern with consumption *however* the complexity and subtlety of Strathern's analysis (not to mention my poor grasp it) requires a dedicated exploration elsewhere. For now, we *can* note that Strathern does not accord any primacy to materials in her analysis of culture; again, it is the ways in which we order and reorder our relations with human and non-human Others that constitutes culture. So, where does this leave values? Well, we have already established that – for our purposes- the concept of values can do similar work to that of culture; now, through Strathern's insights, we do not really need to make this distinction. A consequence of theorising culture in terms of relations is that we do not think of meanings as the starting point of culture (as a reading of Geertz would necessitate) but as the outcome of ordering and reordering relations. It follows that values – like culture – rely on the meanings elicited through processes of social ordering.

Of course, culture and values are *in practice* relatively enduring phenomena (and this is not a tacit acceptance of reification on my part), as such we must consider the ways in which they are reproduced. We cannot think about cultural reproduction without reference to Bourdieu who has written extensively on the reproduction of social 'structures' (and these are my speech marks not Bourdieu's) in relation to the issue of individual agency (1977a, 1977b and 1989). One of his (many) concerns are the ways in which individuals contribute creatively to the formation/transformation of the very 'structures' that enable and constrain them. Of particular note is the concept of *habitus* (1977) which, put crudely, pertain to the structured dispositions of an individual which in turn form the basis for ongoing processes of structuration. From this platform, Bourdieu theorises agency in terms of individuals (re)producing 'objective meanings' (1977a) and here he argues that individuals 'do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing…what they do has more meaning than they know' (1977a: 79). Essentially, Bourdieu gives agency and creativity to the social actor but suggests that they are involved, often unwittingly, in producing 'structures' of meaning. For our purposes, it quite useful to think of values in these terms such that they are understood as something more than just 'analytic abstractions' that we, the researchers, are using for pragmatic purposes.

The interesting thing is that by Spates' (1983) account, early sociological/anthropological approaches to values conceived of values as 'generated by people in concrete social settings for a host of purposes…unknown phenomena whose nature had to be ferreted out by careful in situ empirical analysis (1983: p. 34)'. The business of empirical engagement in depth below but it interesting to stress that by this reckoning values, whilst abstract, are negotiated and (re)produced in concrete social settings. This is significant because, in line with Bourdieu, we can retain (i) a focus on concrete and 'real' scenarios and (ii) the role of individual agency.

So, whilst we can readily accept that values are somehow more fixed and 'higher order' than specific attitudes (or norms, see below) we do not have to think of this apparent stability as a necessity. This is surely good news given our ambition to institute value and lifestyle change. It would also seem that individuals can play their part in this, making an understanding of individual values and value change essential. Here, it would be useful for V3 to draw on the insights generated by V2. Indeed, it stands to reason that values can be negotiated by the individual even when societal values are relatively fixed over time; it is just a matter of translating and institutionalising this (which is of course easier said than done). In turn, this begs the question 'where do values come from?' Of course, social psychologists can answer on the process of individuals acquiring cultural values (not sure about vice-versa) and would most likely argue, following Schwartz (1992), that it has to do with human needs. All well and good, but in V3 we must acknowledge that values – like culture - are relatively stable but also an ongoing accomplishment of the relations between persons. As such, we must accept that culture and values are tied to historical processes of *human* as opposed to a natural development rendering their present states arbitrary rather than necessary.

Values and Social Facts.

As noted, the study of values has a rich tradition within sociology (and anthropology for that matter). However, rather than starting at the beginning, it makes more sense to head for the middle and turn to the work of Talcott Parsons, in particular *The Structure of Social Action* (1937). Here, we find Parsons positioning *normative* affairs and agreements at the heart of human activity, suggesting that they are the very materials that create and maintain a sense of social order. Occupying pride of place among these normative (that is, non positive/utilitarian) arrangements are *values*, which Parsons presents in terms of moral beliefs that structure and rationalise actions. Interestingly, this is not a million miles away from the picture painted by social psychologists – as detailed above - where values are 'higher order' phenomena that structure attitudes and in turn behaviours. Parsons later (1966) makes this explicit through positioning values at the peak of the cultural 'cybernetic hierarchy of control' in as much they control 'norms' which in turn control 'action'. The parallels are striking. According to Spates (1983), the contribution of Parsons' theory of social action was to shift the meaning of the term *values*. Rather than viewing values in terms of *value* as the early utilitarian social scientists such as Smith and Spencer had done (although, I have already suggested that 'value' is not exhausted by 'pecuniary worth'); Parsons presented values as *cultural*. Although Parsons would later go on to reify values (everything for that matter) and position them within a structural functionalist schematic; in 1937 he was quite clear that values are *ideas* not objects, 'conceptions' of what is desirable (valuable) that influence (rather than dictate) human choice.

Working backwards from Parsons, we can see the emergence of values within sociology as far back as Giddings' *Elements of Sociology* (1907) in which he writes of a 'social mind' which at once echoes Durkheim's *conscience commune* (see below) and hints at the interface of 'society' and 'the individual'. In terms of values, Giddings' social mind is defined in terms of: 'resemblance between…ideas, emotions and preferences of any given individual and those of other individuals who live in the same group'. Like Parsons, Giddings is hinting that values are cultural; however, unlike Parsons, he seems to give primacy to the role of agency and subjectivity. Similarly, Spates (1983) suggests that we can turn to Sumner to find an antecedent of Parsons in his (Sumner's) definition of *mores*:

 'the ways of doing things which are current in a society to satisfy human needs and desires, together with the faiths, codes and standards of well living that inhere in these ways'. (Sumner, 1906: p.59 cited in Spates, 1983: p.29)

The focus on satiating (human) needs/desires and 'the standards of well living' has an obvious resonance with RESOLVE which hints that this is a pertinent definition for us to work with. For now, we can flag up the congruity between Parsons and Sumner through highlighting Sumner's idea that mores 'pervade and control ways of thinking' in as much they are 'holistic abstractions' that order and organise concrete and specific actions.

So, to turn to the more accepted 'founding fathers' to whom Parsons owes an obvious and explicit debt. We could, with good reason, include Pareto for in his *Mind and Society: Treatise on General Sociology* (1933), he posits that human beings are motivated not by logic or reason but by *sentiments* and that these sentiments are expressed outwardly in multitudes of action that he categorises into six groups and terms *residues*. The most important 'residue' for our purposes is the one that he terms *sociality*. As I understand it, this is the embracing of sentiments in support of both the individual *and* social discipline, in particular conformity to prevalent *norms* in society. It is this residue that – for Pareto – is essential to the maintenance of social order. According to C. Wright Mills (1959), one of the fundamental questions of sociology is how social order – its creation and maintenance- is possible and in Pareto we find a *non-rational* or affectual basis for social order (anticipating contemporary work in the Durkheimian tradition ranging from Maffesoli to Mestrovic). This is exactly what Parsons took from Pareto and with it arrived at the idea that values are the defining and distinguishing element of social existence. Indeed, Parsons holds that without common values, social life is not possible (Spates, 1983).

In ascertaining the significance of values, it certainly seems as if Parsons was reading early European social theorists and – as with Pareto – his engagement with Weber provided the tools to place values and culture at the heart of social analysis. For Weber (1978), sociology is a science of *interpretative* understandings focused on social action which implies (i) the social nature of action and behaviour (i.e. the interactions of individuals) and (ii) the subjective or interpretative nature of meanings. In respect of the latter, interpretations are always going to be guided by values no matter how much we try to resist it. In terms of theorising action (rather than observing and interpreting it), Weber stresses that very little social action is rational in the 'calculative' or 'formal' sense; rather, it is governed by values or 'ultimate values'. Of course the means to the end, as it were, may well be provided by *zweckrational* but the end point (or *telos*) of social action derives from ultimate values and as such, at source, much action is rational value orientated or *wertrational* (from the German: wert = worth). It is in this sense that action is always open to interpretation: different people have different motivations for action to our own precisely because they hold differing values. Confusingly, he also notes the existence of affective – deriving from emotion – action but does not seem to relate it to values whereas Pareto and Durkhiem most likely would. What is noteworthy here is that Weber's typology of action pertains to *individuals* and individual action as opposed to society and culture. For him, societies are characterised by the dominant types of/rationales for action within them. Of course, the most obvious and explicit discussion of values in Weber's work can be found in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930). It is here that he shows the direct link between religion/culture with a particular focus on values such as asceticism and demonstrates how they help shape and define modern society and industrial capitalism. From this, Parsons takes the idea that cultural ideas – particularly those with some sort of moral/ethical/value laden dimension - are central to distinguishing and defining a particular society.

Finally, we can now turn to the most obvious influence on Parsons, Emile Durkheim. Durkheim – like Parsons – theorised values in relation to the nature and possibilities of social cohesion. Famously, Durkheim outlined the role of the *conscience commune* (1893/1964) in maintaining social solidarity. The term translates as both 'collective conscience' and 'collective consciousness', which suggests (i) some sense of 'social mind' and shared awareness and understanding in addition to (ii) some sense of collective/shared morals and values. Durkheim notes that some societies are held together by similarity and shared values. As with Parsons, this suggests that shared values make social order (or cohesion) possible. He (Durkheim) calls this *mechanical solidarity* and suggests that traditional, pre-industrial 'gemeinschaft' communities are characterised by it. Such societies are conceived of as culturally homogenous with values being stable and static, enforced by moral custodians such as the church and the family (of course, the accuracy of this picture is seriously open to question). Equally well, Durkheim recognised the significance of values in modern, industrialised and heterogeneous societies. Admittedly, the idea of stable and shared values makes less sense in these societies and he is quite explicit that the *volume* (the extent to which individual consciousness is permeated by collective sentiments), *rigidity* (the clarity and sharpness of collective values) and *intensity* (the extent to which individuals adhere in practice to these sentiments) of the conscience commune are reduced considerably in modern societies. That is, individual consciousness is less pervaded by collective sentiments just as the extent to which persons adhere/have to adhere to them is relaxed whilst – in any case – the nature of these collective sentiments becomes increasingly vague and ambivalent (that is, institutions of moral custody lose their potency). Even so, Durkheim does *not* give up and suggest that social solidarity is impossible nor does he abandon the importance of values; for a start, he suggests that we move (via the division of labour) from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. Furthermore, he posits that this passage is a progression. So, rather than harking back to the old ways (as many critics think he does, consequently and incorrectly framing him as a conservative); he looks forward to the possibilities of creating new *content* for the conscience commune. 'Content' is the forth aspect of the *conscience commune* and it pertains to the actual nature of the values, morals and sentiments by which it is occupied. Rather than suggesting that content is in decline; he identifies opportunities for rejuvenation. Specifically (and this relates to the decline in volume, intensity and rigidity in as much as it represents an increase in 'individuality'), he suggests a content that respects the right of the individual and individuality (again, critics of Durkheim neglect the credence he accords to the individual). However, he does not disembed the individual from the collective as the then prevailing utilitarian theories of self interest; instead, he expressesed individualism in terms of *moral individualism*. This is a form of individualism that acknowledges the place of mutual self sacrifice for the good of the collective. His example of the division of labour shows how economic specialisation breeds mutual interdependence and self sacrifice. Consequently, values are not fixed and towering (as is the case with mechanical solidarity) and a matter of the collective imposing on the individual; they are the source of the individual's capacity for self-sacrifice and moral individualism which in turn makes organic solidarity possible. This has a strange resonance with some of Bauman's later work (1993, 1995) that addresses the limitations of moral theory.

Here, Bauman suggests we replace our concern with morality with a focus on *ethics* which, following Levinas (1996), he theorises as a pre-social impulse to be 'for' the other.

So, the Parsons of 1937 can be flagged up as a significant figure in the sociology of values. By Spates' (1983) reckoning, it was he who brought together disparate threads of analysis and ordered them coherently, putting values firmly on the agenda. So, what went wrong? Why is Parsons so universally disliked and held in such contempt? The answer lies in the Parsons of 1951 who writes *The Social System*. Here we see Parsons making several 'refinements' to his earlier work. In order to develop the idea that common values are essential for the creation and maintenance of social order, he suggested that values exist in linked, structural 'systems' and the choice that individuals have in terms of their own 'value orientation' is structured by these. He suggested that these values can be institutionalised by social groupings in as much as collective assent to these structured rules will produce perfectly harmonious social (inter)action. So, back tracking on his earlier work, Parsons is here positioning values as towering, imposing *social facts*. By 1951, he is presenting them as systematically organised structural reifications that are 'out there' exhibiting little variance, or indeed scope for negotiation, across persons. In doing so, he denies subjectivity/agency which – in true institutionalist fashion – suggests a model of social order that is premised on bureaucratic purity. A by-product of this is a fundamental misreading of Durkheim. Given the esteem in which Parsons places Durkheim, many have inferred that Durkheim himself makes similar points. One could perhaps claim this of the Durkheim writing *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1965) but certainly not the Durkheim of anywhere else. Indeed, as noted, in *The Division of Labour* (1893/1964), Durkheim does not seem to theorise values in contemporary societies as social facts (although it *is* clear that he does so in relation to mechanical solidarity) and by the time he writes *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915/2001), we have the idea that the categories of human thought - which we can assume include 'conceptions of the desirable' – are made, unmade and remade incessantly.

The critics of such a model are not hard to find. As an antidote to this structural-functional trend in American sociology; we can turn to the 'micro-interactionist' tradition that stresses the role of individuals in creating and recreating a sense of social and moral ordering. The so-called symbolic interactionists ranging from Mead and Goffman might be cited here but Parsons' own student Harold Garfinkel – drawing heavily on the phenomenology of Husserl and Schutz – is of particular note. His *ethnomethodology* (1967) stressed the role of 'members' – people – in creating a recognisable social world. So, rather than taking the 'objective reality' of social facts as *given* and somehow 'out there'; Garfinkel stresses that they are an ongoing accomplishment of members. It follows that values are not reifications; they are *emergent* and reliant on the everyday work of real world people. From a completely different angle, an attack on Parsons' celebration of following bureaucratic 'rules' to the letter can be launched (indirectly) from Bauman's brilliant analysis of the holocaust (1988 but see also 1994 and 1998) where he shows that certain forms of social ordering (bureaucratic and geometric) can neutralise individual's innate moral

capacity and distance them from accountability for the most morally repugnant acts. Essentially then, Bauman suggests that society is not a moralising entity - the source of values; rather it is something that can distance individuals from their *own* values.

With Parsons pretty much discredited, values became somewhat symptomatic of an anti-humanist, functionalist and worse still (!) *conservative* sociology. Sadly, Durkheim's legacy got dragged down with it. Nevertheless, values were not off the agenda and eventually there was to be a whole body (bodies) of literature concerning itself with values. For now, it is useful to look at the ways in which values remained an enduring subject/object of study throughout these Parsons induced difficulties. For a start, Kluckhohn, actually one of Parsons' 1951 collaborators, continued to work on American values and value change, arriving at the idea that distinct societies produce belief systems which precede and underlie all other aspects of culture, including values. This is interesting because it suggests (i) that values are culture specific and that cultural differences are reflected in value differences and that (ii) values are somehow related to *beliefs*. On the topic of American values, Riesman's immensely popular *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) addressed the changing nature of American values and flagged up the relationship between these social processes and the 'individual'. Most famously, he had the idea of *other direction* - that a fragmented culture means that individuals have a fragmented source from which to receive direction or values. That is, in place of a collective, unified moral custodian providing clear moral guidance; persons seek it from a variety of different and often contradictory sources. This chimes well with Durkheim and the weak rigidity of collective sentiments (vagueness, ambivalence and multiplicity) and leads to the idea that a fragmented culture leads to fragmented persons/fragmented character and this is picked up by the likes of Sennett (1998), Lasch (1979) and Susman (1972). More significantly, for our purposes at least, is the idea that culture is fragmented and as such *values* are fragmented. This links straight back to the idea that within a 'culture' there are many different values to be uncovered and understood which is why lifestyles – via subcultures- are significant.

Before moving onto some of the alternatives/criticisms of Parsons by his contemporaries; we can turn to some of the work that Parsons was doing in this period. One of the interesting things here is the distinction that Parsons draws between *values* and *norms*. For Parsons (1961), 'values' are once again positioned as an abstract concept (so, it is by now no longer a reification) and he suggests that they are appealed to as a general referent for thought and action. Conversely, the dos and don'ts of a specific situation are accounted for through reference to norms. Interestingly, this distinction paves the way for the aforementioned 'hierarchy of control' that Parsons offers in 1966 where values control norms which in turn control action. It is worth reiterating that this bears a startling resemblance to the social psychologists' hierarchy of values, attitudes and behaviour.

A very vocal opponent of Parsons can be found in Pitrim Sorokin, who is strangely neglected by the history of social theory. Sorokin (1985 [1957]) notes a relationship between how societies tend to make sense of reality and wider 'systems of culture' that include aesthetics, ethics, social relationships, law and the constitution of

character. Sorokin identifies three ways in which societies have historically comprehended reality: 'truth of the senses', 'reason and intellect' and 'faith and intuition'. Sorokin identifies systems of culture that derive from this typology: a culture that comprehends reality through 'truth of the senses' is a *sensate* culture whilst a culture that comprehends reality through 'reason and intellect' is known as an *ideational* culture. Clearly, different values exist in *sensate* and *ideational* culture; a sensate culture will have material values and place value on materials and mastery of the physical world whereas an ideational culture will not. They are intertwined in a wider consummate system of 'making sense' (which in turn places social actors, albeit at a collective level, as the architects of culture and values). So, for all the talk of values, culture and even *mores* being holistic/abstract systems we can perhaps use these abstractions as broadly interchangeable and this is something that has consequences in terms of empirical considerations (as hinted above and explained below).

One of the most famous criticisms of Parsons and his Structural Functionalism (and some of these comments could equally well apply to the likes of Sorokin) comes from Dennis Wrong's article *The Oversocialised Conception of Man in Modern Sociology* (1961). Wrong takes issue with the assumption that values have a determining and consensus forming 'function' in social life and questions the lack of focus on economic issues, conflict and above all the role of the individual and individual phenomena such as 'the passions' in determining social action. Similarly, we might wish to add that structural functionalism does not really address where these values come from; neglecting the role of history in addition to that of the individual. Looking back to 1946, we see Mukerjee echoing some of Parsons' points about values playing a pivotal role in processes of social ordering; however, he makes a significant departure from Parsons in stressing that (i) values are highly variant across time and space and (ii) there is huge role for conflict. Equally well, he stresses that values can be created from the bottom up as well as the top down (that is, personal circumstance as well as cultural imposition). So unlike Parsons, he cannot be accused of reification nor can he be accused of homogenisation. As we will see, these are very important pre-cursors to empirical engagement.

Discussion: empirical Issues.

The main problem with Parsons and a good deal of the sociological work on values is that it is a very grand theoretical notion. In itself, this is not a problem but none of this is any use without meaningful empirical engagement. Therefore, my intention in this final section is to draw on the understandings of 'values' offered here and consider briefly the ways in which an appreciation of these conceptual dynamics can be translated and mobilised at the empirical level.

One of the first things that can be noted in respect of the literature above is that the study of values should not be the study of 'social facts'. Most obviously, it makes little sense to neglect the role of social actor. Indeed, when we encountered Mukerjee (1946) earlier, we saw that values are 'bottom up' (from the individual) as well as

'top down' (dictated by culture). The interplay between the individual and the collective in respect of values is of paramount importance and it suggests a fruitful dialogue between sociology and psychology. Going back to Durkheim, on who so much of this discussion has drawn, we can turn to his notion of *homo-duplex*, a concept that positions values as a social engagement with human nature. Durkheim argues:

"Man is double. There are two beings in him: an individual being…and a social being which represents the highest reality in the intellectual and moral order that we can know by observation – I mean society (Durkheim, 1915[2001])"

Durkheim identified the capacity of human beings to be governed by egoistic impulses but also to reach beyond themselves and towards social and collective sentiments. Holding the homo-duplex in mind, it can be remembered that this attachment is both emotionally grounded in the individual and something that can impinge upon egoistic desire such that individuals are moralised as they are socialised (which suggests an attachment to collective values). In terms of our research, we are researching against backdrop of policy initiatives aimed at individual behavioural change. However, the concept of the homo-duplex forces us to recognise that (i) it is not enough to understand the individual in isolation and (ii) the study of values should focus on the interplay between the individual and the collective.

To give an insight from some anthropological work on values (Howell, 1997), it is suggested that values are something that continually change and adapt through choices and practices just as they (values) in turn shape choices and practices. Now, we can take this almost as a hypothesis; that values influence choices and practices *but* the choices and practices that are undertaken in actuality have the effect of (or at least the *potential* to) renegotiating values. For example, somebody's pro-environmental values will influence a range of behaviours and choices they make but the *actual* choices they have available (by virtue of any number of constraints) and the practices that they undertake may force them to renegotiate and reconsider their values. It not difficult to imagine a practical example here: for instance, a young couple holding 'green' values and attempting to live a 'green' lifestyle may be forced to change their practices once their first child is born (suddenly they *do* need a car and disposable nappies just aren't practical) which in turn may lead to them renegotiating their values. Certainly, the link between values and practice can be seen as dynamic whereas Parsons' inspired theorising positions values as social facts that dictate practice and create harmonious social action. There is mileage in uncovering the processes and tensions involved in translating these abstract things that we call values into concrete practice and again, insights from sociology and social psychology could enhance understandings of these processes. However, the point is this: we do not need (and do not want) this crude sociology = collective and psychology = individual approach to our understandings of values. Indeed, doing this would leave us at the rather easily arrived at position of thinking that we are talking about the same thing in a different language (using different abstractions) when in reality we have different *empirical* skills to bring to the table and engage

meaningfully with a real world issue. My thinking is that it is perhaps more fruitful to think about how an empirically informed sociology of values might look and how this might complement/be complemented by the work that social psychologists are doing on attitudes and behaviours. Of course, psychologists such as Schwartz (1992) do useful empirical work on values but I am trying to open up a dialogue here that makes for an interesting and useful piece of *interdisciplinary* work. Accepting that values are abstract implies that they are too ephemeral to capture with quantitative work and as such, they are crying out for some rich, in-depth and *engaged* qualitative research.

As noted, much of the work on values exhibits a deficit in empirical engagement. For all the grand theorising, there is not really a coherent thread of good sociological/anthropological engagement. Of course there are value surveys and empirical studies but these produce the same problem that Parsons and his epigone create (and suffer) and that is that they do not really get at values. That is, they suffer the problem of deductive imposition; in defining values by their own criteria, they assume what they seek to prove. Values are taken as given and used to explain a whole range of observed and observable phenomena (and the acknowledgement that they are abstract seems to give them licence to do so). I cannot help but think that it might be useful to examine values empirically as a *members' category* (i.e. as used by people 'out there') rather than taking them for granted (in line with a theoretically derived definition). For example, rather than just assuming we know people's values, it might be worth exploring how people frame their own values and relate this to other behaviours and actions. Of course, armed with some attitudinal data from the social psychologists, our task is much simpler. In turn, this set up the possibility of 'joining up' our analyses. Indeed, it makes little sense to just double up the social psychologists' job (or for them to double up ours); after all, they are the ones with the tools to measure attitudes and behaviours. Of course, the temptations is either to (i) conflate attitudes with values and argue the toss over how we are going to 'measure' (or otherwise) them or (ii) write values off as unobservable and therefore unusable at an empirical level. My feeling is that sociologists can use a mixture of ethnographic techniques (such as participant observation and in-depth interviews), the goal of which is to elicit and eventually evoke alternative realities (that is, Other to the researcher) alongside the premises that make these meaningful and desirable for the persons that we are studying. Specifically, it would be useful to look at *how* members use values in their narratives and accounts of the practices that make up their lifestyles. Indeed, this would allow us to tease out the links (if any) between lifestyles and values.

The interesting thing is that we – as academics- do not know the role of values in relation to energy behaviours. Whilst a decent quantitative study in V2 can get at the link between measurable phenomena such as attitudes and behaviours (in both cases, reported or actual); it cannot get at values. Now, it makes little sense to just assume – as sociologists and social psychologists alike will – that values are just out there as some kind of higher order organising system that impinges on and structures attitudes/norms and in turn behaviours/actions. It is therefore tempting to 'abandon them as causal agents and to recognise them frankly as sheer constructs by which we

attempt to fill in the subjective linkages in the analysis of social causation' (Blake and Davis, 1964) but this would be like throwing out the baby with Parsons' bathwater. The point is we do not know *a priori* the link (if any) between values and attitudes/behaviour and it is a matter for careful empirical engagement.

This is hugely problematic. If we are trying to establish some sort of causal relationship between the abstract and immeasurable - values (x) and the concrete and measured - attitudes and behaviours (y); we have no certain way of getting back to x from y when our only indicator of x is y (see Blake and Davis, 1964). This is the exact same problem that has long faced cultural analysis; nevertheless, anthropologists and ethnographers keep working. It is a matter of systematic and in-depth interpretative work that requires immersion in rich textual data and the use of the 'ethnographic imagination' (Willis, 2000) to make connections between the abstract and the concrete in an attempt to situate the concrete within a wider framework. Of course, any such account is going to be partial and interpretative and as such, will fall short of the 'scientific' standards demanded by quantitative researchers. Nevertheless it can still be *rigorous*. For a start, it is grounded in sound empirical data and close, in-depth, textual analysis. In fact I would argue that in the study of values, this is *more* rigorous than quantitative work in so far as we are all trying to get at 'x' from 'y' but instead of taking 'x' as given; qualitative researchers strive to arrive there through systematic and thoughtful analysis. Similarly, I would argue that open minded qualitative research is more 'objective' than ideologically loaded quantitative work in so far as our is to *understand* the nature and workings of values as opposed to positioning anything that is different to our own as somehow deviant.

Of course, there *are* problems with a qualitative approach to values. For a start, it may well not be the case that people directly use the term 'values' in order to account for behaviours and practices because values may be a form of *embodied knowledge* (Howell, 1997) that is embedded and held alongside other phenomena such as 'facts'. As such, it is unlikely that individuals will make the abstractions that we require for empirical purity when accounting for behaviours and practices. Similarly, if the term *is* used, it may just be used by respondents to rationalise the prevailing norms and their adherence to them (Blake and Davis, 1964). In respect of the latter problem, I would argue that this process is interesting in its own right. In respect of the former, this is where the skill of the qualitative researcher becomes pertinent. Indeed, if it were the case that values is a member's category that was used explicitly and reflexively in narratives and accounts then our job would be as easy as it is obsolete. The task of the qualitative researcher is to get totally immersed in the narratives and accounts in order to unpick, interpret and understand the role – if any – of values in relation to sustainable energy behaviours and attitudes.

On this note, I have already stated that we cannot assume what we seek to prove and one way to avoid this is to work from the ground up with a turn to the notion of *grounded theory* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss famously took issue with deductive imposition and suggested that qualitative researchers should abandon, as far as possible, existing categories, concepts and hypotheses and make sure that analysis is grounded in the data from the very beginning. They argue that

systematic observation will make clear what is important and then – and only then – can the researcher start to create categories (such as values) and make hypotheses about how they operate. For example, we might formulate hypotheses in respect of how societal values relate to 'lifestyles'. Of course, this is a process and the emerging categories must be re-thought continually in light of the emerging data. The idea is that this will generate a theory that 'fits' (i.e. the categories are readily applicable to the data) and 'works' (i.e. it is relevant, having a decent explanatory power across the range of observations within the data). For our purposes, it makes sense to use the in-depth textual analysis and the ethnographic imagination to systematically unpick the data and establish categories that make sense of values and allow us to theorise them *in their own right* and then use this in conjunction with the observed and measured data on attitudes and behaviours that the social psychologists are generating.

Of course, research that adheres strictly to the demands of grounded theory is highly unlikely. It is not possible to abandon existing knowledge and it is not desirable to efface what has gone before (although some *displacing* may well be in order). In reality, the creation of a 'grounded' theory is likely to be an iterative process that moves constantly between the field and the library with theoretical perspectives (even disciplinary perspectives) being mutually compatible rather than mutually exclusive (see Belk, 1989). So whilst I am adamant that one's analysis should be grounded in the data; the stock of existing knowledge can be used to make sense of emerging data and in turn inform further data collection and analysis. It follows that a grounded, qualitative study of values is not necessarily an antagonist of existing theories of values, even those that derive from another discipline or quantitative analyses (for example, the work of Schwartz). On the topic of creating 'categories' to account for values, it is worth noting that they are not necessarily arbitrary or purely pragmatic. The work of Bourdieu (1977, 1989) allows us to see that the prevailing or lived categories of values are more than just analytic abstractions that are made by the ethnographer/researcher. They can be seen, like all 'structures' of meaning, to be subtly (re)produced by subjects – often unwittingly – in concrete social settings and it is hoped that careful qualitative analysis will make it possible to capture some sense of this.

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