

Psychology of environmentally and socially sustainable behavior

ENS291

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Contact info: gunne.grankvist@hil.no or gunne.grankvist@hv.se



Høgskolen
i Lillehammer

Lillehammer University College • hil.no

On today's agenda

- What is Sustainable development?
- Some examples of psychological studies related to sustainable development



Environmentally and socially sustainable behavior

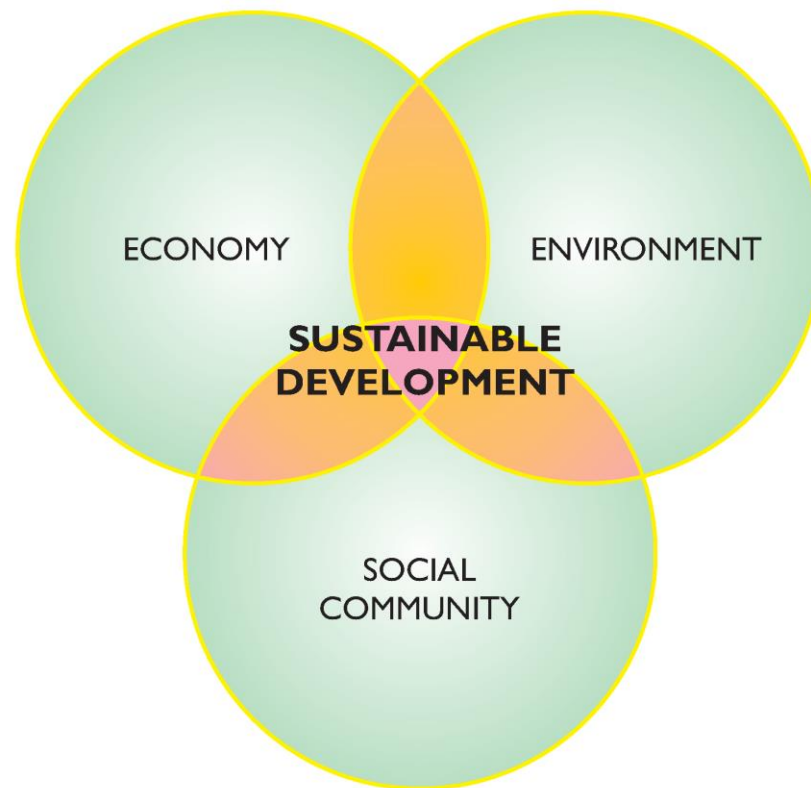
Sustainable development is defined in the [Brundtland Report](#) as

“[development](#) that meets the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of [future generations](#) to meet their own needs”.

Butlin, John (1989-04-01). "Our common future. By World commission on environment and development. (London, Oxford University Press, 1987, pp.383 £5.95.)". Journal of International Development 1 (2): 284–287. doi:10.1002/jid.3380010208. ISSN 1099-1328.



Environmentally and socially sustainable behavior



Overview – trends in sustainable development

- Leiserowitz, A. A., Kates, R. W., & Parris, T. M. (2006). Sustainability values, attitudes, and behaviors: A review of multinational and global trends. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.*, 31, 413-444.
- Lots of statistics and information about international trends related to sustainable development
- Dont memorize all this information



Sustainable development values

- Shepherd, D. A., Kuskova, V., & Patzelt, H. (2009). Measuring the values that underlie sustainable development: The development of a valid scale. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 30(2), 246-256.
- See Table 1 for a definition of such values
- See Table 2 for survey questions used to measure importance attached to such values
- E.g. the value "Respect for Nature". That is "to strive to respect Nature"

Sustainable development values

- E.g. Respect for Nature
- People need only make minor changes to their current consumption out of respect for nature (1)
-
- People must make major changes to their current consumption out their respect for nature (7)



Sustainable development values

- E.g. Respect for Nature
- Well, - - - do we really measure importance attached to sustainable development values with this kind of questions?
- Comments? Thoughts?
- Results presented by e.g. Leiserowitz, A. A., Kates, R. W., & Parris, T. M. (2006). Sustainability values, attitudes, and behaviors: A review of multinational and global trends. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.*, 31, 413-444. are, partially, based on these kinds of survey questions....



Environmentally and socially sustainable behavior

- Idea: You can support sustainable development by choosing product options with different types of environmental or social labels

• E.g.



Fairtrade

- Is the dominant label associated with socially sustainable development
- Fairtrade is about better prices, decent working conditions and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in developing countries



Environmentally sustainable behavior

- There are a number of product labels...
- E.g.



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Wait!

- Are choices of products with these labels really a way to support environmentally and socially sustainable behavior?
- Well, I am into psychology....
- My interest is in why some people are more positive towards products with environmentally friendly or Fairtrade labels
- More positive towards, and willing to pay (WTP) more ...



- Can psychology explain differences in attitudes towards, and willingness-to-pay extra (WTP) for
- **products with labels** that presumably are associated with being more **eco-friendly** or more supportive of **social aspects** such as “better prices, decent working conditions and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in developing countries”
- **That's what this course is all about**



And now

- Some examples of psychological studies related to sustainable development

Some research findings

- “**Traits** refer to what people are like, **values** to what people consider important” (this is true by definition)
- A trait is a tendency to show consistent patterns of thought, feelings and actions. E.g. extraversion (warmth, activity, excitement seeking, positive emotions) or on the opposite introversion.
- A value is a desirable guiding principle, e.g. to strive for power (social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources)
- Grankvist, G., & Kajonius, P. (2015). Personality traits and values: A replication with a Swedish sample. *International Journal of Personality Psychology*, 1(1), 8-14.



Some research findings

- Preference for Fairtrade labelled products have been shown associated with values, but not with traits.
- Especially; **not to strive for** the power value, e.g. social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources, have been found associated with a stronger preference for Fairtrade labelled products.
- So those who more strongly support socially sustainable development seems to strive less for the power value
- Grankvist, G., & Kajonius, P. (2015). Personality traits and values: A replication with a Swedish sample. *International Journal of Personality Psychology, 1*(1), 8-14.



Some research findings

- I.e., if you have more or less of the traits extraversion or neuroticism doesn't seem to be associated with preference for Fairtrade-labelled alternatives
- If you strive less for the power value (social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources) you are however more likely to support, and WTP more for, Fairtrade-alternatives
- Grankvist, G., & Kajonius, P. (2015). Personality traits and values: A replication with a Swedish sample. *International Journal of Personality Psychology*, 1(1), 8-14.



Some research findings

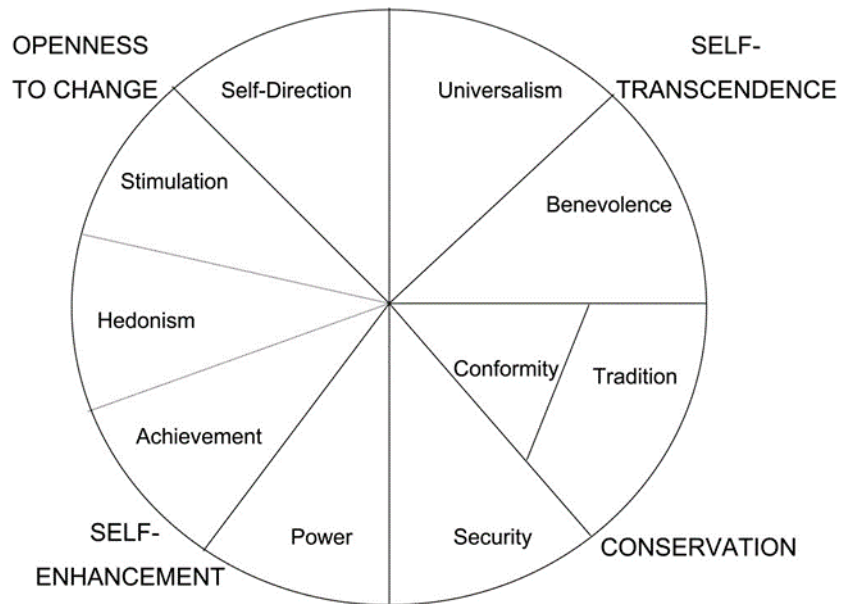
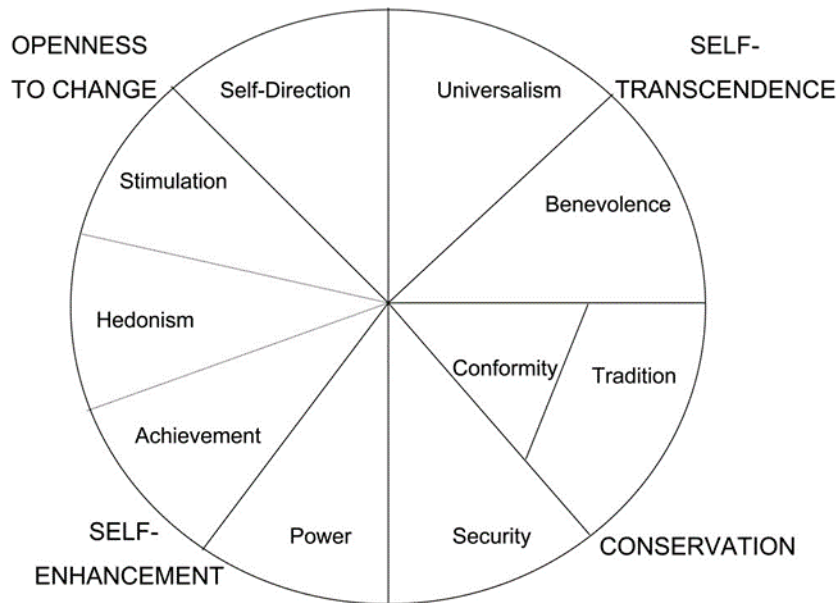


Figure 1. The Schwartz's (1992) value model

Some research findings

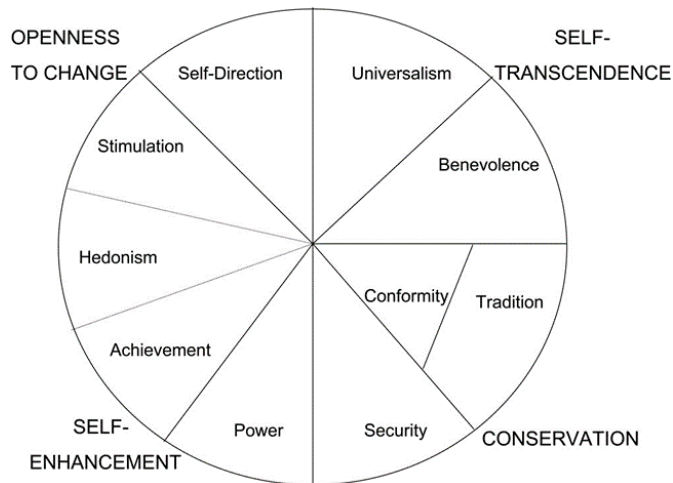


Power: Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources

Universalism: Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection, for the welfare of all people and for nature

Benevolence: Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact

Some research findings



Power: Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources. **NOT positive towards FairTrade/socially sust dev**

Universalism: Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection, for the welfare of all people and for nature. **YES, clearly positive towards FairTrade/soc sust dev**

Benevolence: Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact. **Somewhat positive towards FairTrade/soc sust dev**

Reference: Doran, C. J. (2009). The role of personal values in fair trade consumption. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84(4), 549-563. and Grankvist, G., & Kajonius, P. (2015). Personality traits and values: A replication with a Swedish sample. *International Journal of Personality Psychology*, 1(1), 8-14.



Gender and age?

- Research results.....
- In some studies - no gender differences, in other studies - **women** have been found more positive towards activities/alternatives associated with sustainable development, e.g. eco-labeled or Fairtrade-labeled alternatives
- Age; mixed results. No clear trend is visible
- Grankvist, G. (2012). "Consumer attitudes to ethically labelled products". Research report. University West, Sweden

(www.hv.se). Available at <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:hv:diva-5126>



Doomsday Prophecies?

- How vulnerable is nature? There are different opinions on this issue
- Oskamp, S. (2000). A sustainable future for humanity? How can psychology help?. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 496
- In this paper psychology professor Stuart Oskamp paints a picture of acute threats of ecological disasters, and urgent and large changes in our lifestyle is required!
- Does he exaggerate and dramatize?
- (I don't know)



Positive and negative labels?

- Grankvist, G., Dahlstrand, U., & Biel, A. (2004). The impact of environmental labelling on consumer preference: Negative versus positive labels. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 27, 213-230.
- Today product-labelling is entirely voluntary, and actually involves an additional cost.
- As a consequence only positive labels are used. "Choose this product, it is more "ethical" than the average product.



Positive and negative labels?

- Grankvist, G., Dahlstrand, U., & Biel, A. (2004). The impact of environmental labelling on consumer preference: Negative versus positive labels. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 27, 213-230.
- In this study it was found that to avoid negative outcomes was more important than to achieve positive outcomes. That is, negative labels were more "effective"
- Consequences? Thoughts? Ideas? Comments?

Positive and negative labels?

- In an evolutionary perspective...
- To avoid dangerous animals



Positive and negative labels?

- Or to find advantageous outcomes



Positive and negative labels?

- It was probably more important to avoid negative outcomes
- And, as a consequence, we are "programmed" to avoid negative outcomes (e.g. close contact with Lions)
- To avoid the negative is more important than to achieve the positive
- And, today almost all labels are "positive" labels.... Comments?



Religiosity

- Are religious people more positive towards activities associated with sustainable development?
- In a study from USA. Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, Catholics, Jews and non-religious. Almost no differences between these groups
- In a study from UK. Being Cristian was weakly, and positively, related to preference for Fairtrade-alternatives
- Grankvist, G. (2012). "Consumer attitudes to ethically labelled products". Research report. University West, Sweden (www.hv.se). Available

at <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:hv:diva-5126>



Religiosity

- In the study UK study. If God was viewed as ...



Antiques

