Sociology and Value

Steinert, S.

DOI
10.1007/978-3-031-10733-7_3

Publication date
2023

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
Interdisciplinary Value Theory

3

Sociology and Value

Abstract This chapter traces the development of value theory in sociology and opens with Weber's influential ideas about value rationality and value spheres. The chapter then outlines Parsons' idea that values are abstract goals that play a crucial role in explaining social action. Like psychologists, sociologists acknowledge values as essential aspects of the self and have conceptualized the relationship between individual and social value systems. Sociologists are interested in the relationship between the social and the individual, and some suggest that changes in the value systems of individuals are linked to cultural, social, and economic changes. In a section on value change, the chapter focuses on the influential modernization theory (Inglehart).

Keywords Sociology • Value change • Value theory • Value • Modernization theory

I would like to express my gratitude to Steven Hitlin and Nathalie Heinich, who provided valuable feedback.

S. Steinert, *Interdisciplinary Value Theory*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-10733-7_3

3.1 Introduction to Sociology

Since its inception in the nineteenth century, sociology has taken a keen interest in the relationship between values and society. Sociologists have always considered values to be crucial for social groups and society. For instance, Émile Durkheim, the founding father of sociology, was aware that values are connected to norms and behaviors, and differences in values can explain the differences between groups. Max Weber, another father of sociology, called values the "hapless problem child of our discipline" (Oakes, 1988, p. 40) but devoted much of his writing to examining values and their role in social action. Weber introduced two influential ideas to sociology. First, there are different value spheres and, second, there is a difference between value rationality and instrumental rationality.

As we delve deeper into value theories of sociology, it will become clear that psychologists and sociologists have overlapping interests. Especially social psychology and sociology are closely related. For example, social psychologists and sociologists want to know how the individual relates to the group and society. However, although social psychology and sociology ask similar questions, they have different focuses. Whereas psychologists focus on the internal psychological mechanisms and how the social world influences behavior and decisions, sociologists focus on social relationships, groups, and social processes. Despite these differences, it is common for sociologists to draw on insights from other disciplines, including social psychology, to make sense of the social world.

This chapter will review influential sociological theories of value and how sociologists distinguish values from related concepts. One section will be devoted to sociological approaches to value change.

3.2 Value in Sociology

Value has always played an essential part in sociological theorizing. However, one needs to proceed with caution here because there is a distinction between value (singular) and values (as abstract plural nouns). Value in the singular is about an ultimate end, whereas values (plural) are

principles. Some authors do not make it entirely clear whether they talk about value or values, and we will see this shortly when we focus on Max Weber's ideas about value. The focus of sociologists has shifted over the years, and many sociologists concentrate on values (plural) as legitimizing and guiding principles (Martin & Lembo, 2020). There has also been a 'pragmatist turn' from values to valuation in sociology. Building on the ideas of pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, pragmatist approaches shift attention from value to valuation and concentrate on the processes by which people attribute value to something (Heinich, 2020). Accordingly, we must distinguish between sociological accounts that focus on values as guiding principles and accounts that focus on valuation.

With these distinctions in mind, let us turn to German sociologist Max Weber, probably best known beyond sociology for his treatment of the relationship between Protestantism and the rise of capitalism (Weber, 2002). Weber provided one of the most influential but hard-to-understand accounts of the role of value in society. His main contributions to sociological value theory are the notion of value spheres and the distinction between value rationality and instrumental rationality.

Alas, Weber's elaborations about value are hard to follow, and as Michael Cuneo has put it, "Weber's treatment of this subject is unsystematic and without concentrated focus." (Cuneo, 1990, p. 84). Nevertheless, it is possible to outline the crucial elements of Weber's account and the role he thinks values play in modern society. Weber diagnoses that rationalization and intellectualization, in the shape of science and technology, have dissolved universal standards and objective values in modern society. According to Weber, what is left is a plurality of irreconcilable values (Weber, 1981, pp. 148–149).

What does Weber mean when he talks about value? Recall the distinction between value and valuation introduced above. Weber seems to think about values in terms of valuation. Things are subjectively valued, and subjects believe their valuation has validity, but for Weber, there is no objective value. He writes that "[w]e ascribe 'value' to an item if and only if it can be the content of a commitment: that is, a consciously articulated positive or negative 'judgment,' something that appears to us to 'demand validity'" (Weber, 1975, p. 182).

Because there is no objective value, Weber thinks that values (the ultimate ends of actions) are non-rational. This means that choosing which values to endorse is a matter of subjective preference and that a conflict between values cannot be settled rationally. For instance, for Weber, there is no rational reason why someone should endorse the value of truth over the value of beauty. Alasdair McIntyre has put it like this: "Questions of ends are questions of values, and on values reason is silent; conflict between rival values cannot be rationally settled" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 26).

However, rationality still plays an important role, and Weber distinguishes between instrumental rationality and value rationality. Rationality here refers to an actor's subjective orientation towards an act. Instrumental rationality, in a nutshell, is the kind of rationality where the actor considers objects and other people as the means to achieve or realize their ends. Instrumental rationality is not limited to means and ends, however. Instrumentally rational actions may focus on obstacles that must be removed to achieve a particular end.

By contrast, value rationality means that the actor is oriented towards unobservable and subjectively endorsed ultimate values. The subject considers value rational actions as expressions of values or as an enactment of a value (Weber, 1981, pp. 151–154). That means value-rational actions are not taken because of their consequences but because they are "determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior independently of its prospects of success" (Weber, 2013, p. 25).

According to Weber, the modern Western world is divided into different areas, or domains, of value rationality.[1] He uses the term '*value spheres*' to refer to these domains. Weber (1981, Chapter 13) distinguishes seven value spheres: religious, familial, political, economic, scientific, aesthetic, and erotic love. Weber distinguishes and defines the different value spheres by their ultimate values.[2] Each value sphere is characterized by one ultimate value to which people orient their actions. For instance, the

[1] For Weber, the value spheres of the modern West are historically contingent, particularly the rise of Christianity. Other historical and cultural developments, and other religions, could have produced different ultimate values and hence value spheres.

[2] At one point, Weber says that each sphere is the domain of a god, which only underscores that he talks about ultimate values. It also illustrates his assumption that ultimate the ultimate values of value spheres cannot be justified from within; they are a leap of faith.

ultimate value of the economic domain is to maximize financial gain. In the domain of politics, the ultimate value is domination by coercion based on force. The ultimate value of the domain of science is the production of truths based on factual evidence. The ultimate value of religion is care.

The value spheres, so Weber, are independent of one another and incommensurable. That means that the value spheres have their internal logic, and each one of them have their own rationality based on different ultimate values and ends. Because of these different rationalities, what is rational from the perspective of one value sphere may be irrational from the perspective of another. Each value sphere claims to be the ultimate source from which the values of the other value spheres derive, which means that other value spheres are subordinated. Because the principles of each value sphere are incommensurable, the "value spheres of the world stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other" (Weber, 1981, p. 147).

Weber's ideas about value and value spheres influenced generations of sociologists. Raymond Boudon, for instance, used Weber's ideas to understand how values affect social action and how value is related to the meaning of actions. In the book *The origin of values* (Boudon, 2001), Boudon presents his account of axiological rationality, which is strongly inspired by Max Weber. In contrast to Weber, Boudon is explicit about what he means by value. For Boudon, values are explicit normative beliefs. For instance, someone may endorse the normative belief that 'democracy is good'. His model of value expands the conventional rational choice model, which focuses on instrumental reasoning. The concept of axiological rationality, Boudon's translation of Weber's German 'Wertrationalität', not only points to the fact that people conform to internalized values but also indicates that axiological beliefs are grounded in strong reasons. Axiological beliefs are meaningful to actors, and they are meaningful because, for the actor, they are grounded in convincing and strong reasons (Boudon, 2001, p. 103). An action, so Boudon, can have meaning to an actor for instrumental reasons but also because the action is based on values.

After Weber, scholars in the tradition of structural functionalism[3] advanced the sociological theory of value. Particularly the ideas of twentieth-century American sociologist Talcott Parsons on the role of values in society greatly influenced sociology.[4] Parsons translated some of Weber's writings into English, and Weber's ideas considerably influenced on his thinking on values. Parsons introduced Weber to American sociologists, and put the notion of value on the map (Martin & Lembo, 2020). Parsons wanted to differentiate sociology from economics and proposed that value considerations distinguish sociological models of action from economic accounts. The normative order, to Parsons, is separate from mere individualistic means-ends calculations that economists focus on.

Parsons believed that values play a crucial role in the stability of society (Parsons, 1991). He argued that members of society internalize a limited set of core values provided by society. People orient and organize their actions and thoughts around these core values. Parsons rejects objectivizing notions of value. According to him, values are not objects but conceptions of the desirable that guide human behavior and choice. Furthermore, values are abstract and general, which means they are not specific to particular situations. Some readers may have noticed that Parsons's ideas about value resonate with psychological notions of value as abstract trans-situational goals.

Besides putting value center stage, Parsons was also one of the first sociological authors to distinguish values and norms (Spates, 1983, p. 32). Whereas values are trans-situational and abstract goals, norms guide concrete situations. They tell you what you should and should not do. The value is about a desirable end, whereas norms tell you how to achieve this end. According to the functionalist idea of value, values are abstract. Still, they influence the norms of society, which in turn affect people's behavior. Core values, which members of a group share, have a double

[3] Structural functionalism is the position that society is a system, much like an organism. The parts of this system, like institutions, roles, and norms, have a function and all parts depend on one another for their existence. Furthermore, all parts contribute to the persistence of the whole system.

[4] Scholars have pointed out multiple problems with Parsons's view, and functionalism has fallen out of favor (for more on the difficulties of Parsons's account, see Miles, 2015; Spates, 1983). For instance, society is not as stable as the structural-functionalist account assumes. Furthermore, the theory makes highly abstract claims that are hard to investigate empirically, and empirical research casts doubt on the structural-functionalist assumption that people are always rationally motivated.

function. On the one hand, they provide internal motivation for the people who have internalized them; on the other hand, they ground social norms that keep up the social order.

Recall that Max Weber argued for the crucial place of ultimate values in the sociological understanding of social action. Parsons wanted to contribute to this understanding. In a 1935 essay entitled 'The place of ultimate values in sociological theory", Parsons proposes an account of how individual human action is embedded in society. He maintains that if we want to explain human action, our explanation must include ultimate ends. Please note that Parsons uses the terms 'ultimate ends' and 'ultimate values' interchangeably.

Ultimate ends are ends in themselves, which means they are not means to another end. To Parsons, the system of ultimate ends can include empirical and transcendental ends. We can investigate empirically whether an empirical end has been attained, which means we can determine whether we have reached it. In addition to these empirical ends, humans are motivated to pursue transcendental ends, which are "outside the empirical sphere" (Parsons, 1935, p. 290). They are outside the empirical sphere because we cannot determine by empirical observation if we have achieved these ends. Eternal salvation, for instance, is a transcendental end in this sense. It is important to note that although transcendental ends are outside the empirical sphere, their achievement implies empirical ends as means. Would they not implicate empirical ends, the transcendental ends would lose their connection to our actions; they would not even be ends because we could do nothing to realize them.[5]

Parsons notes that people do not randomly choose their ultimate ends and the means to achieve them. People are social animals, and society provides a "common system of ultimate ends" (Parsons, 1935, p. 299) from which individuals choose. Parsons was well aware that there is a diversity of value systems and that sociology should acknowledge this plurality. He proposes that focusing on systems of ultimate values helps

[5] Because transcendental ends have this connection to empirical ends, empirical and scientific knowledge is important. Although scientific knowledge alone cannot determine the ends we should strive for, once the ends are established, science can help us choose the best means to attain these ends. Ends are outside of the scientific analysis and science can only help to evaluate whether the means are appropriate and to what degree the end has been achieved.

us to understand different societies. He gives the example of ancient Greek civilization, which focused on the value of the polis, and societies in the Middle Ages, which focused on values related to the church (ibid., 296). We can understand these societies by focusing on the ultimate values that shaped them.

Values are essential for the understanding of social action and according to Parsons, ultimate ends (ultimate values) relate to actions in two ways. First, an ultimate end can serve as the actor's immediate end. This is an instance of Max Weber's value rationality (or axiological rationality), where action is oriented towards subjectively endorsed ultimate values. Parsons gives the example of a general's actions in a religious war. When the general is a true believer, as opposed to a hired gun, the general's actions are supposed to immediately further ultimate religious values. Second, ultimate ends and actions can be indirectly related. He acknowledges that the pursuit of immediate ends can be "removed by a very large number of intermediate links from any system of ultimate ends" (ibid., p. 298). The example he provides is that of a coal miner. The mined coal can contribute to railway transportation, which may be the ultimate end. However, the miner's action is removed from the ultimate value of railway transportation. Because actions can be removed from ultimate actions, the question is how the pursuit of immediate ends are integrated with ultimate values.

Parsons's answer to this question of integration is that pursuing immediate non-ultimate ends is linked to ultimate values via institutions. Institutions are the normative rules ensuring individual actions conform to the ultimate value system. Institutions define what immediate ends should or should not be pursued and restrict the means that can be used to achieve them. Actors, so Parsons, adhere to institutions for two reasons. First, the institution may have inherent moral authority because it is derived from the common system of ultimate values. Second, actors may conform to institutions because it serves their interest, for instance, to acquire social esteem or to avoid sanctions.

In his writings, Parsons wanted to carve out values' role in action and to provide an account of the relationship between society, ends, and means. He also acknowledged the variety and plurality of value systems influencing human action. All of this made his ideas attractive for scholars outside sociology. For instance, his proposal that values are abstract ideas

has influenced anthropological approaches to values, for example, the influential account of the social anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn (1951). According to Kluckhohn, a "value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action" (Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 395). We will consider Kluckhohn's research on values later in the chapter on anthropology and value.

Although eminent and influential scholars like Max Weber and Talcott Parsons focused their attention on the issue of value, the popularity of the concept of value in sociology fluctuated. Robert Wuthnow reviewed the sociological study of values between the 1950s and early 2000s. He divides sociological attention to value into three periods (Wuthnow, 2008). In the first period, from the 1950s to the 1970s, value took a central role in sociology, with many empirical studies investigating values and value differences across countries and social groups.

During this period, only some scholars shared enthusiasm for the topic of value. For instance, Franz Adler (1956) critically assesses the concept of value at the time. He reduces the value concepts used in sociological writings to four basic types: (1) values considered as absolutes (e.g., eternal ideas); (2) values as inherent in the object, whether it is material or immaterial; (3) values as located within man (either in individuals or the group); and (4) values as identical with actions.[6]

According to Adler, sociology should become 'natural science sociology' that uses a behaviorist approach and must always refer to observable behavior. Accordingly, "…action is the only empirically knowable aspect of value" and "… for the purpose of sociological scientific discourse, values and actions may safely be treated as identical" (Adler, 1956, p. 276; 279). Hence, Adler argues that value in the sense of (1) is not a suitable focus for sociology because it is not accessible through the methods of natural sciences but only via intuition and speculation. Similarly, the notions of (2) and (3) are not suitable for the methods of natural sciences either because we cannot discover value by observing them directly.

Between the late 1970s and 1980s, many scholars took a skeptical stance toward value like Adler. Some of these scholars even questioned

[6] Adler contends that there can be mixed types. For instance, absolutes may be inherent in objects.

the usefulness of the concept of value. Ann Swidler (1986), for instance, claimed that values are of little explanatory worth, and she criticized the dominant view at the time that values, or ultimate goals, play a central causal role in shaping human action.

The debate about the usefulness of the notion of value for sociology is ongoing, and some sociologists would like to retire the concept. Recently, John Levi Martin and Alessandra Lembo (2020) proposed that sociologists should reject the notion of value to advance the sociological theory of action. The concept of 'value as abstract principle,' to Martin and Lembo, does not help to predict what people will do. Furthermore, researchers often use value as a placeholder for everything that causes behavior, which leads to conceptual inconsistencies.[7] Martin and Lembo recommend replacing the concept of value with the notion of interest. However, not all scholars agree that sociology can and should do without the notion of value. For instance, Andrew Miles (2015) claims that values are a crucial part of culture that can predict actions. Because of the supposed explanatory power, Miles suggests that sociologists include values in their theories of culture and action.

After the first and second phases of the sociological study of value and the slump in sociological interest in value, the investigation of value picked up again in the late 1980s. Sociologists began to study the distribution of values, the link between value and economic development, and focused on value conflicts. This period also witnessed massive surveys on value. For instance, in the 1980s, Ronald Inglehart initiated the massive World Values Survey. The World Values Survey is a global research project that measures values and beliefs in almost 100 countries.[8] Below, we will consider modernization theory in more detail in the section on value change.

[7] Their critique of the concept of value does not apply to all value theories in sociology. As Stephen Vaisey (2021) correctly points out, Martin's and Lembo's criticism of the concept of values is aimed at a Parsonian conception of value. It seems to miss the mark when it comes to current value research.

[8] The World Values Survey is not the only large-scale collection of human values. Since 2002, the European Social Survey maps the attitudes, beliefs, and values in European countries every two years. This data allows social scientists to track the development and change of values over time and relate value change to economic and political change. For an overview of some recent findings, please see The Human Values Scale. Findings from the European Social Survey (2021). Available here: http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS_Findings_HVS.pdf

3.3 Values and Related Concepts

Conceptual confusion lurks whenever people think and write about value. For instance, writing in the 1970s, Pat Hutcheon (1972) noticed much confusion in sociology because scholars used the term '*value*' to refer to many different things. For instance, scholars used value to refer to norms, cultural ideals, assessments of action, beliefs, objects, value orientations, behavior possibilities, or generalized attitudes. Fortunately, to avoid confusion, sociologists also tried to do some terminological housekeeping. An early attempt comes from Jay Meddin (1975), who extracted the main themes from the literature on value. Meddin used these themes to create a framework to organize the terminology. He noted a hierarchical continuum from the concrete to the abstract. For instance, value orientations, as introduced by Clyde Kluckhohn and colleagues (Kluckhohn, 1951), are more abstract than concrete values and the former are the organizing principles for the latter. Similarly, values are more abstract than attitudes, and attitudes are more abstract than opinions.

Some sociologists, like Boudon, also distinguish between value and preference. Compared to preferences, so Boudon, values are axiological beliefs that have attached to them a feeling of universality, or what he calls a "trans-subjective dimension" (Boudon, 2001, p. 124). That means we expect others to endorse the same axiological beliefs. In contrast, we do not feel that others should endorse our preferences, and we often accept that they have vastly different, and even opposite, preferences. For Boudon, the difference between axiological belief and preference is grounded in the fact that we perceive our beliefs as grounded in reasons and because we expect others to be convinced by these reasons.

Despite attempts to clarify the value concept and to distinguish it from related concepts, some authors, like Nathalie Heinich, observe that many scholars still conflate values with norms, traits, and beliefs (Heinich, 2020). However, there are attempts to remedy this confusing situation.[9]

[9] Not all sociologists agree that these attempts have been successful. See Martin and Lembo (2020).

Drawing on works from sociology and social psychology, Steven Hitlin and Jane Allyn Paliavin (2004) propose that compared to attitudes, values are more abstract and focused on ideals. Furthermore, values are more durable than attitudes; we do not expect our values to change because values are a significant part of who we are. Although traits are stable aspects of our personality, they are more like enduring dispositions, whereas values are enduring abstract goals. In contrast to norms, values are trans-situational, extending across situations. Because values are a part of personality, they are perceived as intrinsically motivating, whereas people often perceive norms as an external force that puts pressure on their behavior.

3.4 Value Change

Sociologists were always interested in change. For instance, influential authors like Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx have focused on social changes, like the transition from pre-modern to modern capitalist society. Because of this interest in change and value's role in sociology, one would expect to find sociological theories of value change. However, it is astonishing that scarcely anything is written on the theory of value change and the temporal dimension of values (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004).

There are notable exceptions to this lack of theoretical attention to value change. For instance, Pat Hutcheon (1972) proposed one of the earliest sociological models of value change. In the account, Hutcheon focused on the relationship between the individual's value system and the group's ideological system. An individual's value system, which for Hutcheon is a particular organization, or constellation, of values, is a defining aspect of the self. The individual value system includes normative and descriptive beliefs, which means beliefs about what is good and right, and beliefs about what is real, respectively. Similarly, the ideological system of the group comprises a knowledge system and a normative system. The first includes factual knowledge, and the second contains norms and ideals.

The individual's value system and the group's ideological system shape individuals' actions and thoughts.[10] For instance, the culture's ideals partly determine how the individual evaluates things and what the individual thinks is good or bad.

Crucially, the individual value system and the ideological system of the group are not static, and they can influence one another. So how do values change according to Hutcheon's model? She assumes that humans, like other organisms, are affected by changes in the environment. The environment includes both the natural environment and the social environment. The individual value system must adapt to these external changes (p. 182). Hutcheon was inspired by Thomas Kuhn's ideas about paradigm shifts in science (Kuhn, 1996). Kuhn argued that when a paradigm continuously fails to solve problems, it is replaced by one that does a better job.

Similarly, Hutcheon suggests that because the environment changes, people encounter problems that the old ways of thinking and doing things cannot solve. Consequently, the knowledge system adapts to the changes, and people create new paradigms of thought. Thus, the changes in the knowledge system will lead to transformations in the value systems. But, alas, Hutcheon does not provide details about how changes in the knowledge system transform the value system.

Other scholars have tried to provide a more fine-grained account of the relation of macro-level changes to micro-level individual value change. For instance, the political scientist Dennis Chong (2000) provides a model of individual choice that takes the influence of culture and environment seriously. Chong combines sociological thinking about social and cultural elements, like norms and values, as motivating factors, with rational choice thinking that conceives social action as determined by interests and incentives. The result of this combination is a model that can help understand the dynamics of value stability and change.

Chong makes the case that people's choices are based on individual dispositions and the situation's material and social incentives. Dispositions, for Chong, include personal traits and knowledge but also values and

[10] For a schematic rendering of how value system and ideological system relate to one another see Hutcheon (1972, p. 183).

group identification.[11] Social processes shape these dispositions, and Chong argues that dispositions can change, given rational incentives. Incentives are the costs and benefits the individual estimates based on the desire for material rewards and to achieve social goals, like social acceptance (Chong, 2000, p. 213). Chong argues that changes in values should be explained by a mix of new social or material incentives, altered social norms, and dispositions. However, it may take some time for norms and values to fit the changing conditions better because dispositions can frustrate adopting new values.

Sociologists are interested in the relationship between the social and the individual, and some suggest that changes in the value systems of individuals are linked to cultural, social, and economic changes. How should we understand the connection between these macro- and micro-changes?

Modernization theory accounts for how individual value change and socio-economic change are related. It is no overstatement that modernization theory is one of the most influential theories in the social sciences today. The main idea is that so-called system-level changes, such as economic and technological development, can lead to individual-level changes, including values. In turn, changes on the individual level can have system-level consequences, like changes in the political agenda (Inglehart, 2015).

In his seminal treatment, Ronald Inglehart (1997), one of the founders of modernization theory and creator of the World Values Survey, distinguishes between materialist and postmaterialist values. Modernization theory posits that economic development, accompanied by rising living standards, leads to changes in values from materialist values, which are focused on survival, to post-materialist values, which are concerned with personal freedom and quality of life, for instance, protection of the environment, self-expression, and gender equality. In a nutshell, one could say that modernization theory posits that economic development

[11] It should be mentioned here that putting different things into the category of 'dispositions' is one of the crucial shortcomings of Chong's proposal. He seems to treat norms and values as the same thing but it seems more correct to treat norms, which are backed by social sanctions, as incentives.

facilitates a cultural change toward autonomy, gender equality, and democracy (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

Empirical investigations corroborate the shift in value that modernization theory proposes. For instance, Ronald Inglehart and Wayne Baker (2000) present evidence for the connection between economic changes and the change from materialistic to post-materialistic values. Recently, Inglehart (2018) has traced the global shift from materialist to post-materialist values, which seems to support his view that people's values are shaped by how secure their survival is. Other studies also support modernization theory. For example, by studying the values reflected in Japanese newspaper editorials from 1945 to 2000, Masaki Taniguchi (2006) shows that value change occurred in phases of economic development. Furthermore, Scott Flanagan and Aie-Rie Lee (2000) present evidence that changes in the techno-material circumstances and economic development in Korea and Japan contributed to a shift from authoritarian values to libertarian values. Changes in social and political attitudes that drive democratization and political reform accompanied this value shift.

3.5 Summary

Early on, thinking about value played an essential role in sociology. This chapter opened with Max Weber's ideas about value rationality and value spheres. Although interest in value never wholly disappeared from sociology after Weber, the attention to value was revitalized by functionalism. Talcott Parsons believed values are abstract goals and emphasized the role of ultimate goals and values in explaining social action. Like psychologists, sociologists acknowledge values as crucial aspects of the self. They have tried to make sense of how individual value systems relate to the value systems of the group (e.g., Hutcheon).

Sociologists also acknowledge that values can change. Although detailed theoretical models of value change have yet to emerge, sociologists have also focused on the link between macro-level and micro-level value change. For example, the influential modernization theory (Inglehart) proposes that socio-economic change contributes to value change.

Like psychologists, sociologists are sensitive to the cultural dimension of value. However, it is anthropologists who want to understand humans as cultural beings. Accordingly, anthropological theorists have developed exciting accounts of the role of value in culture and how value is created and reproduced. We will turn to anthropology in the next chapter.

References

Adler, F. (1956). The Value Concept in Sociology. *American Journal of Sociology, 62*(3), 272–279.

Boudon, R. (2001). *The Origin of Values: Sociology and Philosophy of Beliefs*. Transaction Publishers.

Chong, D. (2000). *Rational Lives: Norms and Values in Politics and Society*. University of Chicago Press.

Cuneo, M. W. (1990). Values and Meaning: Max Weber's Approach to the Idea of Ultimate Reality and Meaning. *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, *13*(2), 84–95. https://doi.org/10.3138/uram.13.2.84

Flanagan, S. C., & Lee, A.-R. (2000). Value Change and Democratic Reform in Japan and Korea. *Comparative Political Studies, 33*(5), 626–659. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414000033005003

Heinich, N. (2020). A Pragmatic Redefinition of Value(s): Toward a General Model of Valuation. *Theory, Culture & Society, 37*(4), 75–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276420915993

Hitlin, S., & Piliavin, J. A. (2004). Values: Reviving a Dormant Concept. *Annual Review of Sociology, 30*(1), 359–393. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.30.012703.110640

Hutcheon, P. (1972). Value Theory: Towards Conceptual Clarification. *The British Journal of Sociology, 23*(2), 172–187.

Inglehart, R. (1997). *Modernization and Post-modernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, R. (2015). *Silent Revolution*. Princeton University Pres.

Inglehart, R. (2018). *Cultural Evolution: People's Motivations Are Changing, and Reshaping the World*. Cambridge University Press.

Inglehart, R., & Baker, W. E. (2000). Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values. *American Sociological Review, 65*(1), 19. https://doi.org/10.2307/2657288

Inglehart, R., & Welzel, C. (2005). *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge University Press.
Kluckhohn, C. (1951). 2. Values and Value-Orientations in the Theory of Action: An Exploration in Definition and Classification. In T. Parsons & E. A. Shils (Eds.), *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Harvard University Press.
Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
MacIntyre, A. C. (2007). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (3rd ed.). University of Notre Dame Press.
Martin, J. L., & Lembo, A. (2020). On the Other Side of Values. *American Journal of Sociology, 126*(1), 52–98. https://doi.org/10.1086/709778
Meddin, J. (1975). Attitudes, Values and Related Concepts: A System of Classification. *Social Science Quarterly, 55*(4), 889–900.
Miles, A. (2015). The (Re)genesis of Values: Examining the Importance of Values for Action. *American Sociological Review, 80*(4), 680–704. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122415591800
Oakes, G. (1988). Rickert's Value Theory and the Foundations of Weber's Methodology. *Sociological Theory, 6*(1), 38. https://doi.org/10.2307/201912
Parsons, T. (1935). The Place of Ultimate Values in Sociological Theory. *International Journal of Ethics, 45*(3), 282–316.
Parsons, T. (1991). *The Social System*. Free Press.
Spates, J. L. (1983). The Sociology of Values. *Annual Review of Sociology, 9*(1), 27–49. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.09.080183.000331
Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies. *American Sociological Review, 51*(2), 273. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095521
Taniguchi, M. (2006). A Time Machine: New Evidence of Post-Materialist Value Change. *International Political Science Review, 27*(4), 405–425. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512106067362
Vaisey, S. (2021). Welcome to the Real World: Escaping the Sociology of Culture and Cognition. *Sociological Forum, socf.12770*. https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12770
Weber, M. (1975). In G. Oakes (Ed.), *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics*. Free Press.
Weber, M. (1981). In H. Gerth & C. W. Mills (Eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Oxford University Press.
Weber, M. (2002). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Other Writings*. Penguin Books.

Weber, M. (2013). In G. Roth & C. Wittich (Eds.), *Economy and Society*. University of California Press.

Wuthnow, R. (2008). The Sociological Study of Values. *Sociological Forum, 23*(2), 333–343. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1573-7861.2008.00063.x