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## RESEARCH REPORT

# Political and religious group membership, value priorities and educational values

Aikaterini Gari[a]*, Kostas Mylonas[a] and Despina Karagianni[b]
[a]*University of Athens;* [b]*Ministry of Health, Athens*

Value priorities and educational value patterns are explored in respect to university students' active membership to religious and political groups. The sample was 117 students of the University of Athens, Greece, with 39 of them being active members of Christian Orthodox religious groups, 34 active members of political groups or unions, and 44 students acting as the 'control' group, since they were not members of such religious or political groups. Group membership—religious or political—was found to be associated with the systems of value priorities and educational values, with specific value combinations differentiating between religious group membership and political group membership.

## Introduction

Values are defined as abstract ideas, positive or negative, that represent beliefs about ideal modes of conduct and ideal terminal goals (Rokeach, 1968). A value system is the hierarchical organization of values in subsystems—within individuals, groups or societies—in terms of their importance or evaluative priority (Rokeach, 1968, 1973, 1979). Kluckhohn defines values as 'conceptions of the desirable means and ends of action' (1951, p. 395), within a certain society. Under a cross-cultural perspective, values are usually examined as a broad array of beliefs related to general life events, life goals and social situations (Schwartz, 1994; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001) or as value priorities across cultures (Rokeach, 1973; Feather, 1986), under the scope of exploring cultural differentiation or describing a number of universal human values that satisfy biological needs, social interaction norms and social demands for group welfare and survival.

In regard to religious values and attitudes, as early as in the 1940s, Woodruff has asserted that 'religious experience has an important effect on the value patterns of

*Corresponding author. Department of Psychology, Panepistimiopolis, Ilisia 15784, Athens, Greece. Email: agari@psych.uoa.gr

young people' (1945, p. 147). More recent studies have addressed religious values and religiosity for specific populations, such as college students, and related them to personality parameters (Heaven, 1990) or have pursued psychometric targets in studying religious values (Gorsuch & McFarland, 1972; Richards, 1991). Gorsuch (1988) supported the intrinsic and extrinsic dimension as two facets of religious behaviour, that is a bipolar dimension related to specific behavioural patterns, namely, prejudice and altruistic behaviour. Political attitudes, also an early issue, are expected to be strongly influenced by the values people may have internalized. Smith's (1949) early conclusions illustrated that there is a strong need for the politically driven individuals to become members of a political group, as a need for triggering engagement and feedback of their political values. During the last few years, political values have received a more cognitive and social-psychological emphasis (Losier *et al.*, 2001). Moreover, other studies have linked political with religious issues and their relative importance to behavioural patterns (Leege & Kellstedt, 1993).

A theoretical framework for value hierarchies has been proposed by Spranger (1928) and further elaborated by Allport *et al.* (1951) through the Study of Values Test (AVL). They suggested that each person consists of a value combination of six value types or 'ideal types' of personality: Theoretical, Economic, Aesthetic, Social, Political and Religious. It is of importance for this study to note that the Political type is mainly related to power acquisition and is interested in public influence and involvement in decision-making. The Religious type is attempting to comprehend the universe in its totality, using transcendental ways in this attempt. Through a few Greek studies (Passakos, 1974; Mylonas, 1994), with samples of university students, based on the six-value type theory and the 'AVL', social, aesthetic and religious values have been associated with the 'female image' but political, theoretical and economic values have been associated with the 'male image'.

Another value framework (Lasswell, 1957) has proposed eight value categories: power, wealth, respect, love, morality, security, professional specialization and a different facet, values 'of education'. These referred to ideal goals or conceptions of the desirable means and ends of action for acquiring and transmitting knowledge. The internalization and retention of educational values among individuals and groups is achieved through the supportive system offered by educational institutions, within the procedure of 'secondary socialization'. On the other hand, the internalized educational values facilitate the functioning of educational institutions and the interpretation of their symbols, rules and norms (Dowling & Osborne, 1985). Educational values are frequently studied on a continuum between the poles of traditionality versus modernity (Segall *et al.*, 1990). A set of theories on modernization argues that changes from traditional 'views of life' to less traditional ones are produced by shifts in the economic and political environment, as opportunities are offered to individuals only when they adopt those attitudes, values and beliefs that respond successfully to any opportunities of change (Kahl, 1968; Dawson, 1973). Research on traditional values has shown that females in Greece seem to reject traditional family and educational values more easily than males (Georgas, 1989; Gari, 1992). For samples of

Table 2.  Pearson *r* correlation indices for the six value priorities with the ten educational values, for each of two groups of participants

| Groups: Educational values | Theoretical | | Economic | | Aesthetic | | Social | | Political | | Religious | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | R | P | R | P | R | P | R | P | R | P | R | P |
| It is not necessary for females to get educated because marital & maternal duties are their predestination | .03 | –.18 | .21 | –.20 | –.10 | .01 | –.01 | –.29 | –.17 | –.24 | –.01 | –.13 |
| Males who study at the university offer higher social status to themselves and their family | .23 | **.55** | .11 | .28 | .08 | –.20 | .22 | .11 | .34 | .36 | .24 | .20 |
| Parents should always urge their children to enrol in university | .20 | **.57** | .25 | .02 | .09 | –.05 | .07 | .27 | .22 | .22 | .30 | .40 |
| University studies guarantee a successful career | –.05 | .35 | .39 | .42 | –.06 | –.16 | –.03 | –.01 | .11 | .14 | .33 | .09 |
| Females must be always prepared to abandon their career in order to devote themselves to their family | .00 | .11 | .18 | .01 | .12 | .31 | .15 | .01 | .11 | .03 | .36 | .44 |
| Studying at the university is a precious life goal | .14 | **.51** | .23 | .10 | .10 | .07 | .18 | .26 | .18 | .34 | .28 | .42 |
| University education is the key for an individual to being a respectable person | .08 | **.53** | .24 | .17 | –.15 | .02 | .19 | .17 | –.03 | .30 | .38 | .32 |
| University professors are outstanding people | .01 | **.49** | –.17 | **.44** | .37 | .08 | –.28 | .39 | –.11 | **.48** | .13 | .37 |
| University's goal is to shape reliable personalities | .13 | .36 | .14 | .38 | –.28 | .25 | –.16 | .21 | –.14 | .32 | .05 | .28 |
| Intellectual professions are better than handcraft professions | –.07 | **.45** | .06 | .12 | –.17 | –.15 | –.29 | –.01 | –.20 | .22 | –.13 | .02 |

Key: R = Religious group, P = Political group
All underlined correlation indices are statistically significant at the .05 level.
Correlation indices printed in boldface are statistically significant at the .01 level.