



Values and Outdoor Learning for Sustainability



An overview of the methodology and findings of values workshops facilitated as part of the Real World Learning Network
January 2013 – April 2014

The highly respected British naturalist and presenter Sir David Attenborough wisely points out that *“No one will protect what they don’t care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced”*. The work of educators offering inspiring first-hand learning experiences for young people outdoors has never been more important than now, a time at which as a society we are in grave danger of losing our connection with the natural world upon which we rely (as a part of it of course) for our very existence.

It has been shown that understanding the scale of global issues such as climate change, resource exploitation and biodiversity loss is not enough to motivate meaningful positive changes in attitudes and behaviour toward the environment. However global research into understanding values and how they work (Schwartz 2012) has found that fostering and supporting the development of certain groups of values can lead to higher levels of positive environmental and social thinking and action. By recognising the importance of these values, and the “frames” that embody and express them; by examining how our actions help to strengthen or weaken them; and by working together to cultivate them, outdoor learning can play its part in supporting the development of a society in balance with itself and the natural world.



These research findings, made highly accessible in the Common Cause Handbook and Common Cause for Nature (Figure 1), has been used as the basis for 7 workshops attended by 199 members of the European outdoor learning sector.

The workshops offered the chance for participants to briefly explore the research findings relating to how values work, why they are important and how they develop. They also offered the opportunity to gather primary data relating to the views of the sector on values for sustainability that we should be supporting through our work.

Figure 1. Work by the Public Interest Research Centre making social science values research accessible to other sectors.

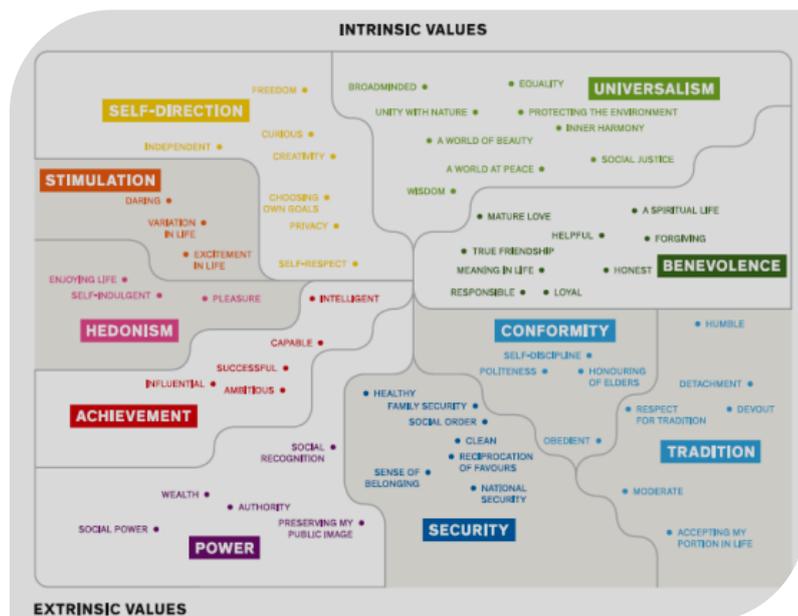
Exploring values with environmental educators

In order to explore which values should be fostered for a more sustainable future participants visualised two global societies; one faced with a host of global issues caused by unsustainable living, the other living in harmony with one another and the planet. Participants then used the 58 universal values derived from the research to reflect on which 5 would be held as core in the society of the unsustainable world (red stickers), and which 5 would be core in the sustainable society (green stickers). These were then plotted by all participants onto the values map from the same research (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. A poster from one of the workshops showing the distribution of participant’s opinions on values relating to sustainability.

Although not explicitly asked as such, this data can be tentatively taken to represent the views of the 199 educators that took part relating to core values for sustainability.



The workshop data highlights the value groups (of which the research outlines 10; see Figure 3) which were considered most and least desirable (taken from the raw data collected from the posters – see Figure 2 for example).

Figure 3. A statistical analysis of universal values and their relationship to one another, grouped into 10 values groups. (from Holmes et al 2011)

Those values deemed most desirable for sustainability show clearly that universalism; along the benevolence and self-direction are key values groups to support through learning for sustainability (Figure 4).

Most Desirable Values - all workshops

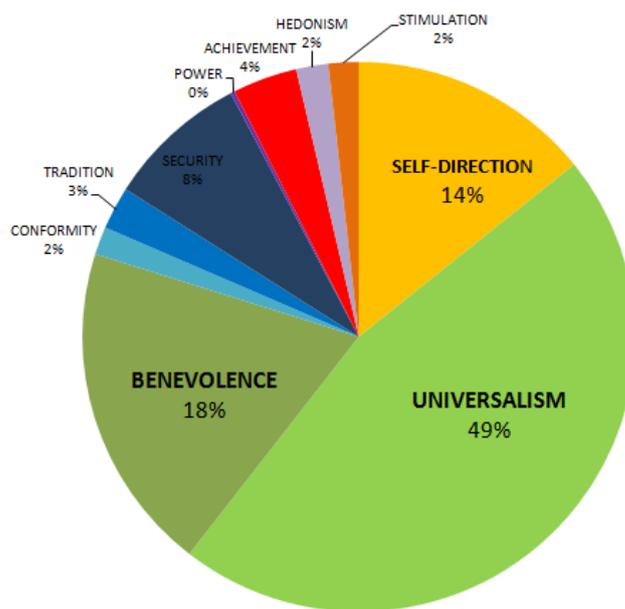


Figure 4. A pie chart showing the percentage breakdown of most desirable values for sustainability from all workshops.

Least Desirable Values - all workshops

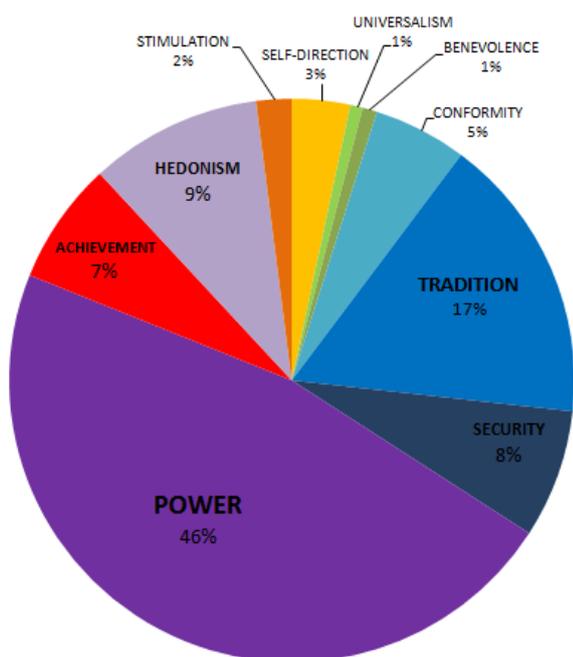


Figure 5. A pie chart showing the percentage breakdown of least desirable values for sustainability from all workshops

The data for those values that are least desirable (those driving unsustainable thinking and behaviour) shows strong agreement that power plays a central role in the current global problems (Figure 5). Other values groups that were shown to be counter-productive to sustainable thinking and behaviour are tradition, hedonism, security and achievement.

The data shown in Figures 4, 5 and 7 clearly highlights the importance of fostering, modelling and supporting self-transcendence (those values grouped under universalism and benevolence) and self-direction through our work in order to help create a world where people live in harmony with each other and the planet.

The data also clearly warns of the need for being mindful to avoid strengthening those values centred on self-enhancement such as power and achievement and the more socially conservative values of tradition and security.

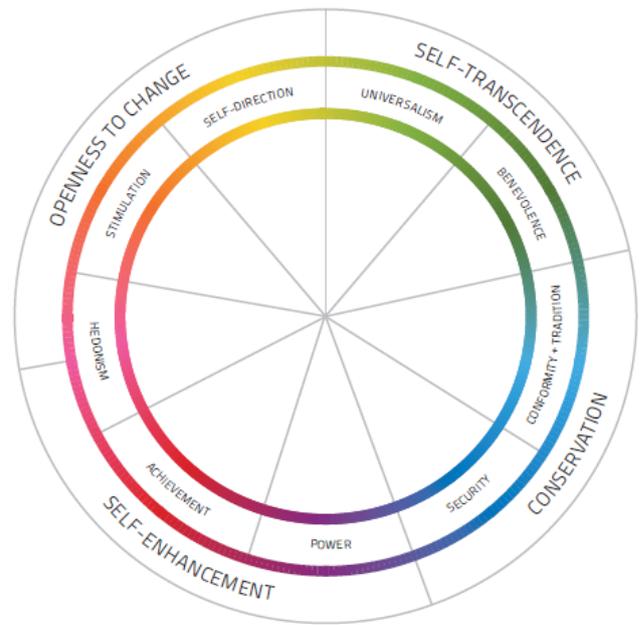
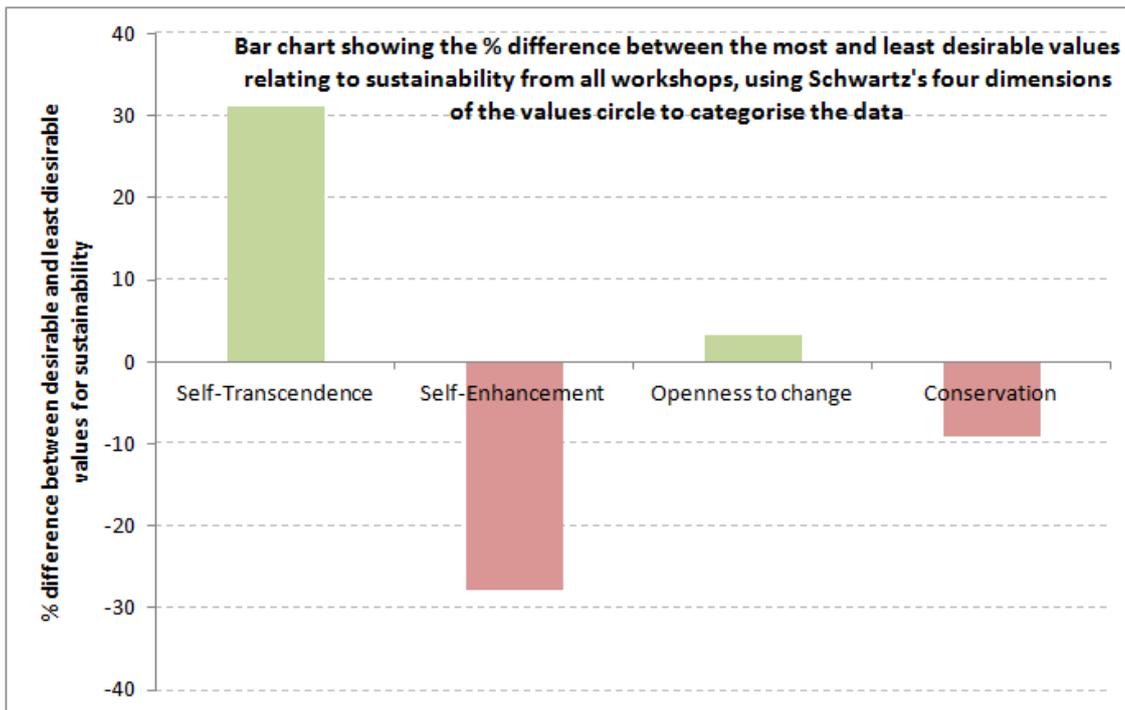


Figure 6. The values circle developed from the global values research, showing the motivational continuum between value groups and the broad categories these groups can be assigned to (Schwartz 2012) (from Holmes et al 2011).

Figure 7. A look at the workshop data in relation to the broad motivational groupings shown in Figure 6.



References

- Schwartz, S. H. (2012) An overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values. *Online readings in Psychology and Culture, Unit 2.*
- Blackmore, E., Underhill, R., McQuilkin, J., Leach, R., and Holmes, T. (2013) *Common Cause for Nature*. Machynlleth: Public Interest Research Centre (available at valuesandframes.org)
- Holmes, T., Blackmore, E., Hawkins, R., and Wakeford, T. (2011) *Common Cause Handbook*. Machynlleth: Public Interest Research Centre (available at valuesandframes.org)