Personal value priorities of economists

Neil Gandal, Sonia Roccas, Lilach Sagiv and Amy Wrzesniewski

ABSTRACT
Economists often play crucial roles in designing and implementing policies in the private and public sectors; thus it is important to better understand the values that underlie their decisions. We explore the value hierarchies that characterize economists in five studies. Findings indicate that students of economics attribute more importance to self-enhancement values and less importance to universalism values than students in other fields. This profile is already apparent at the beginning of the first year of study and persists throughout the degree. The values distinctive to economists are related to work-related perceptions and attitudes and hence may influence the policy decisions and recommendations of economists.

KEYWORDS
economists • policy-makers • self-interest • values

Introduction

Policy decisions in the public and the private sectors are guided by complex specialized knowledge, often not easily understood by the public. Hence they depend to a large degree on the professionalism of decision-makers. Professionals’ decisions, however, are affected not only by the knowledge they hold: they also reflect their underlying beliefs, assumptions and goals. In other words, they reflect personal values. Consider for example, the dilemma faced by a CEO who has to decide on the number of employees she will lay off. Her decision is probably affected by the expertise needed to
discern the complex relationships between the number of employees and the company’s profits. We suggest, however, that the CEO’s decision is also affected by her personal values because it reflects the relative importance she attributes to maximizing the company’s profits versus making a commitment to the welfare of workers (Rubinstein, 2004).

In the current research we focus on the values of economics students. Economists play a central role in forming and implementing policy, both in the public and private sectors. They hold key positions in governmental and other public institutions where they advise policy-makers in diverse areas such as international trade policy, fiscal policy, and regulatory policy (e.g. Shultz, 1996). It is thus important to study the factors that implicitly affect the perceptions and attitudes of economists, which are likely, in turn, to influence the policies they adopt and endorse.

The training process of economists usually starts in university departments. Studying the values of economists at the earliest stage of their training has two main advantages. First, by comparing the values of economics students to those emphasized by students from other disciplines, we can identify the pattern of values that are distinctive to economists while controlling for other variables such as age and socio-economic status. In addition, studying students allows us to examine whether eventual differences in values are the result of self-selection and training processes.

This research is presented in two parts. In the first part (Studies 1–3) we examined personal values of economics students. In Study 1 we compared economics students to students in other social science fields. In Study 2 we compared economics students in their first week of study to economics students at the end of their first year. In Study 3 we compared first year economics students to students who will soon graduate. These studies were designed to identify the distinctive values of economics students and explore the effects of self-selection and early training on values.

In the second part of this research (Studies 4–5) we examined some implications of endorsing the value profile that is characteristic of economics students. We focused on work-related attitudes because economists often play a crucial role in shaping the work domain (e.g. Lazer, 1999). Their attitudes, views and perceptions of what motivates workers are likely to affect policies such as evaluation methods, incentive and reward systems, policies for hiring and promotions and employment arrangements such as guidelines for working hours, vacation time, and work–family policies. In the current research we studied two work-related issues. In Study 4 we examined the role of values in explaining the relationships between perceived status of a professional group and the extent of identification with it. In Study 5 we explored the relationships between values and work orientations.
Part I: Do economists have different values to other people?

Values are conceptions of the desirable that guide the way persons select actions, evaluate people and events, and explain their actions and evaluations (cf. Kluckhohn, 1951; Rohan, 2000; Rokeach, 1968, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). Due to their motivational nature, values affect people’s focus of attention (e.g. De Dreu & Boles, 1998; Ruscher & Fiske, 1990), the way they interpret information (e.g. Sattler & Kerr, 1991; Van Lange & Liebrand, 1989), the nature of their concerns (Schwartz et al., 2000), and their attitudes, decisions, choices, and behavior (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Verplanken & Holland, 2002). Values express what people believe to be good or bad, and what they think should or should not be done. Thus, examining the values of economists provides important insights for some of the factors underlying their perceptions, attitudes and decisions.

To conceptualize and measure values, we use Schwartz’s (1992) theory of universals in the content and structure of basic values. This theory has been tested in cross-cultural research in more than 200 samples from over 65 countries (Schwartz, 1992, 2005; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995; for reviews of the theory and its relations to other value theories see Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Rohan, 2000). According to Schwartz (1992), values differ in the motivational goals to which they are directed. Schwartz identified ten value types forming a circular structure. The distinctiveness of the ten values and their structural relations have been verified in the vast majority of the samples studied.

The relationships between the ten value types can be summarized into two basic conflicts. The first conflict is self-enhancement versus self-transcendence. Self-enhancement values emphasize the pursuit of self-interest by focusing on gaining control over people and resources (power) or by demonstrating ambition and competence according to social standards and attaining success (achievement). These values conflict with self-transcendence values that emphasize serving the interests of others: expressing concern and care for those with whom one has frequent contact (benevolence) or expressing acceptance, tolerance, and concern for all people regardless of group membership (universalism).

The second conflict is openness to change versus conservatism. Openness to change emphasizes openness to new experiences: autonomy of thought and action (self-direction), novelty and excitement (stimulation). These values conflict with conservation values that emphasize preserving the status quo: commitment to past beliefs and customs (tradition), adhering to social norms and expectations (conformity) and preference for stability and security for self and close others (security). Hedonism values share elements
of both openness and self-enhancement and are in conflict with self-transcendence and conservation values.

Although no study has assessed directly which values are important to economists, several studies have pointed to differences in values-related behavior between economists and other people. In the first study that compared economists and non-economists, Maxwell and Ames (1981) found that free-riding was significantly higher among economics graduate students than among other student groups. Using an ultimatum bargaining game, Carter and Irons (1991) compared the behavior of economics students with those from other disciplines and found that economics students exhibited the most self-interest. Using a prisoner's dilemma game, Frank et al. (1993) found that when it was not possible for respondents to commit to their strategies, economists defected much more often than non-economists. Finally, Rubinstein (2004) found significant differences in the approach to a dilemma of maximizing profits versus laying off workers between economics students and students in other fields. Collectively, these findings support the contention that economists are more likely than others to behave in a self-interested manner.

Other results suggest, however, that economists are no more self-interested than other groups. In the same study described above, Frank et al. (1993) also found that economists reported slightly more hours spent in volunteer activities than non-economists. In addition, Yezer et al. (1996) found that envelopes left in rooms about to be occupied by economics classes were slightly more likely to be returned than envelopes left in rooms about to be occupied by non-economics students. In sum, the results are inconclusive. In some settings, there is evidence that economists are more self-interested than others; in other settings no differences were apparent.

Five of Schwartz's ten value types are relevant to the investigation of self-interest versus altruism: power, achievement, and hedonism (self-enhancement values) emphasize enhancement of one's own personal interests, even at the expense of others. People who emphasize self-enhancement values want to be successful and powerful. They aspire to control people and resources, are ambitious, and wish to gain general acclaim for their successes. We expect economists to attribute great importance to these values relative to people from other disciplines.

Universalism and benevolence (self-transcendence values) emphasize promotion of the welfare of both close and distant others. People who attribute importance to self-transcendence values emphasize concern for others. They value social justice and equality, as well as responsibility, loyalty, and helping those who are in need. We expect economists to attribute low importance to these values relative to people from other disciplines.
Study 1: Value differences between students of economics and students of other social science disciplines

In our first study we compared values of students of economics to values of students from other disciplines.

Method

Two samples of Israeli college students participated in this study:

- **Sample 1**: 97 students of economics (65 female).
- **Sample 2**: 165 students from other social science disciplines, primarily communications, political science, and sociology (83 female).

Students completed the survey in groups of 30–40. They were approached at the end of class time and were offered the opportunity to participate in the study for a small payment (approximately $5). They were informed that participation in the study was voluntary, and completely anonymous. The survey began with the value measure, followed by several measures of identity and political attitudes that are not the focus of this research, and finally by demographic items. Survey completion took about 20 minutes.

Values instrument

Values were measured with the Schwartz (1992) inventory. Respondents rated the importance of 56 values as a guiding principle in their life on a nine-point scale that ranged from ‘opposed to my principles’ (−1), and ‘not important’ (0), to ‘of supreme importance’ (7). The asymmetry of the scale reflects the natural distribution of distinctions that individuals make when thinking about the importance of values, observed in pre-tests when constructing the original scale. Because values are typically seen as desirable, they generally range from somewhat to very important. The standard indices recommended in Schwartz (1992, 1994) were used to measure the priority given to each of the five value types: power (social power, wealth, authority, preserving my public image), achievement (ambitious, influential, capable, successful), hedonism (pleasure, enjoying life), benevolence (loyal, honest, responsible, helpful, forgiving), and universalism (equality, wisdom, world of peace, unity with nature, world of beauty, social justice, broadminded, protect the environment). For more evidence regarding reliability and validity, see Schmitt et al. (1993), Schwartz (1992), Schwartz and Sagiv (1995), and Schwartz et al. (1997).
Table 1  Mean importance attributed to value types by economics students and by students from other departments (standard deviations in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value type</th>
<th>Students from other social science departments</th>
<th>Economics students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of students</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonism</td>
<td>4.23 (1.27)</td>
<td>4.57 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>3.31 (1.21)</td>
<td>3.54 (1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>4.55 (0.95)</td>
<td>4.88 (0.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>4.73 (0.96)</td>
<td>4.80 (0.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>4.25 (0.94)</td>
<td>3.95 (0.78)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results and discussion

Column 2 of Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of the value types for the sample of economics students. Column 1 presents the value priorities of students from other departments. The differences between the values of the two groups were tested using a MANOVA analysis. The department (economics versus other departments) was the independent variable, and importance attributed to achievement, power, hedonism, universalism and benevolence values were dependent variables.

Economics students placed more value on achievement ($F(1,259) = 16.02, p < .001$), hedonism ($F(1,259) = 5.68, p < .02$), and power ($F(1,259) = 4.15, p < .05$). Similarly, economics students attributed less importance to universalism values than did students from other disciplines ($F(1,259) = 8.83, p < .01$). Contrary to our expectations, there was no significant difference between economists and non-economists in the importance attributed to benevolence ($F(1,259) = 1.43$, NS).

Economics students differed in their value priorities from other social sciences students: the former attribute importance to power, achievement and hedonism values more than the latter. The findings concerning altruistic values are more complex: students of economics attribute less importance to universalism values than did other students. However they attribute nearly the same importance as others to benevolence values. Universalism and benevolence values both place emphasis on care for the welfare of others. They differ, however, in the focus of their concern: benevolence values emphasize concern and care for those with whom one has frequent contact – family, friends, neighbors, and so on. Individuals who attribute high importance to benevolence values care about being honest, helpful and loyal. Universalism values, on the other hand, emphasize concern and care for
society as a whole — for humanity, and for nature. Individuals who attribute great importance to universalism care about tolerance, social justice, and equality. Thus we might summarize by saying that economists may make good friends or neighbors, but are relatively less concerned with the welfare of people who are not part of their in-group.

These findings may help interpret the inconsistencies found in past research: in mixed-motive games, economists behaved less cooperatively than others, while in other settings (mainly in field experiments examining altruistic behavior), economists behaved no differently than others. We argue that the two opposing patterns of behavior reflect two different situations: mixed-motive games represent a highly competitive setting that enables individuals who emphasize self-enhancement values (power, achievement and hedonism) to express them by competing with others. Thus, in such settings, economists tend to behave more competitively than others. In contrast, field experiments that examine altruistic behavior usually do not include explicit competition. Behavior in such settings may reflect the importance attributed to benevolence values; therefore no differences are found between economists and others.

Study 2: Selection and training effects

Our findings in Study 1 indicate that economics students hold different values than students in other disciplines. Two complementary processes could lead to these differences. First, these differences can result from a self-selection process. People typically choose vocational environments and organizations that are congruent with their interests, goals and values (Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al., 1995; Walsh & Holland, 1992). Thus a self-selection process may be operating in which students who emphasize self-enhancement values are particularly attracted to studying economics.

The value differences we found could also be the result of training processes. During their studies students undergo both formal and informal socialization processes that expose them, through norms, expectations, and explicit communication, to the values emphasized in their department. The training provided by economics departments could therefore affect the importance students attribute to different values. Indeed, researchers have expressed concern that the training provided by economics departments leads students to emphasize self-interest (e.g. Frank et al., 1993; Rubinstein, 2004).

When faced with environments that are personally incongruent, people either leave (Schneider, 1987) or adapt their personal attributes to the environment (Chatman, 1991; Holland & Gottfredson, 1976). Thus, economics students who initially attributed low importance to self-enhancement values may either change their values, or change their major. So far little
research has been done on changes in values (Hirtin & Piliavin, 2004). The few studies examining the impact of occupation on values indicate that in the long run, work conditions can affect values. For example, Kohn and Schooler (1983; Schooler, 1996) showed that men working in a complex work environment grow to emphasize values such as responsibility and curiosity, while minimizing their focus on conformity. It is therefore possible that values of economics students differed from those of students from other departments both due to self-selection and to training processes.

Past research has found some evidence for both processes. Frank et al. (1993) found that students generally showed a tendency towards more cooperative behavior in prisoner dilemma games the nearer they were to graduation, but this trend was absent for economics majors. The authors interpreted these findings as providing some evidence of a training effect (Frank et al., 1993). In contrast, Carter and Irons (1991) found in an ultimatum bargaining game that differences in behavior were already present in a group of entering freshmen. Thus, their findings provide support for the self-selection process.

To examine whether the value priorities characteristic of economics students were the result of self-selection and whether they resulted from the training students received, we compared two additional samples of economics students. Participants in one sample reported their values during the first week of their freshman year, while participants in the other sample responded at the end of that year. Finding that economists were already different from students from other fields at the beginning of the freshman year would indicate support for a self-selection explanation. Increased importance of self-enhancement and decreased importance of universalism values during the first year would support a training explanation.

**Method**

Two samples of Israeli college students participated in this study.

- **Sample 1:** 199 economics students (82 female) reported their values the first week of their freshman year.
- **Sample 2:** 152 economics students (62 female) reported their values two weeks before the end of their freshman year. During the first year of their studies, economics students take two significant introductory courses in economics, designed to acquaint them with the basic concepts and tools of economic analysis. In addition, students take introductory courses in mathematics and statistics.
Surveys were distributed to the students by their course instructors in groups of 30–50. The instructors emphasized that participation was voluntary, participants would remain anonymous, and students could choose not to complete the survey. Values were examined with the instrument used in Study 1. The survey given to the participants in the first sample included two additional measures. After reporting their personal values, participants received a survey measuring their identification with the economics department and their perception of its status (see Study 4).

Results and discussion

Column 1 of Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the value types for the economics students who participated in the study during the first week of their freshman year. Column 2 presents the value priorities of economics students sampled at the end of their freshman year. To examine whether the values pattern identified in Study 1 is the result of self-selection we first compared the responses of the economics students who reported their values the first week of their studies with the non-economics students in Study 1. The differences between the values of the two groups were tested with a MANOVA analysis. The sample (economics students at the beginning of the freshman year versus students from other disciplines) was the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value type</th>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Mean importance attributed to value types by economics students and by employees of an environmental organization (standard deviations in parentheses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Economics students:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Beginning of</strong></td>
<td><strong>End of</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>freshman</strong></td>
<td><strong>freshman</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>year</strong></td>
<td><strong>year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedonism</td>
<td>4.85 (1.26)</td>
<td>4.81 (1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>3.72 (1.08)</td>
<td>3.69 (1.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>4.91 (0.88)</td>
<td>4.84 (0.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>4.61 (0.82)</td>
<td>4.65 (0.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>3.87 (0.94)</td>
<td>4.01 (0.95)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
independent variable, and importance attributed to achievement, power, hedonism, universalism and benevolence values were dependent variables.

Economics students during the first week of their freshman year already attributed higher importance to self-enhancement values and lower importance to universalism (but not benevolence) values (all $F > 10.0$, all $p < .005$).

To explore for possible training effects we then compared the two groups of economics students, using a MANOVA analysis. The sample (beginning versus end of the freshman year) was the independent variable, and importance attributed to achievement, power, hedonism, universalism and benevolence values were dependent variables. There were virtually no differences between the value priorities of the two samples, and none of the differences was statistically significant.

Our findings indicate that the value differences between students of economics and students from other disciplines were already apparent before students were exposed to training in economics. These findings are therefore consistent with the idea that people who endorse self-enhancement values are particularly attracted to studying economics and self-select to this area of study. We found no differences between students sampled during their first week of study and those sampled at the end of their first year. This suggests that training received during the first year of undergraduate study in economics has little effect on values. Possibly, one year is too short a time to undergo noticeable changes in values. We therefore decided to examine the values of third year students as well.

Study 3: More on training effects

To further look for training effects we compared first year economics students to students in their final (third) year.

Method

Two samples of Israeli college students participated in this study.

- **Sample 1**: 123 first year economics students (82 female).
- **Sample 2**: 70 third year economics students (62 female). In Israel, the duration of the BA degree in economics is three years. We therefore compared first year students to those in their last semester of studies.

Surveys were distributed to the students in groups of 20–30, either during or after class. Participation was voluntary. Participants received either course credit or a small payment (a coupon for free coffee and pastry). Values were examined with the instrument used in Study 1.
Results and discussion

Column 3 of Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the value types for the economics students sampled in their freshman year. Column 4 presents the value priorities of economics students sampled during their third year. The differences between the values of the two groups were tested with a MANOVA analysis. The sample (first year versus third year) was the independent variable, and importance attributed to achievement, power, hedonism, universalism and benevolence values were dependent variables. Economics students during their final year of study did not differ from first year students in the importance attributed to power, achievement, hedonism and universalism. Third year students attributed lower importance to benevolence values \( F(1,192) = 29.29, p < .0001 \).

In sum, the findings of Studies 1, 2 and 3 indicate that economics students attribute more importance to self-enhancement values and less importance to universalism values than students from other areas of study. This distinctive value profile is already apparent during the first week of the first year of economics training, indicating support for a self-selection process.

Training in economics, at least at the undergraduate university level, had little effect on students' values. Value preferences did not change through the first year. Third year students still attributed great importance to self-enhancement values.\(^1\)

We do not claim that socialization cannot affect values of economists – training in economics lasts years, and its effects may become apparent only after a long time. We suggest however, that it is very likely that economists hold a value profile similar to that of students of economics in that they attribute particularly great importance to self-enhancement values.

Part II: Implications of emphasizing self-enhancement versus self-transcendence values

Taken together, the findings of Studies 1, 2, and 3 point out the unique value profile characterizing economists-to-be. But what does it mean to have such a value profile? What are the consequences of emphasizing self-enhancement values at the expense of self-transcendence values? In the second part of this research we examined some of the implications of holding this value profile. Due to the important role that economists play in the work domain – as policy-makers, finance managers, compensation analysts, or benefits coordinators – we chose to focus on work-related issues. We reasoned that economists' attitudes and opinions, as well as their perceptions of and insights on
what motivates workers, are likely to affect various organizational and social policies, which, in turn, may affect and shape people’s lives.

Values are strongly linked to the opinions people hold: in past research, values were found to be related, for example, to socio-political attitudes (Rokeach, 1973), religiosity (Roccas & Schwartz, 1997; Schwartz & Huismans, 1995), environmental attitudes (Grunert & Juhl, 1995), and decisions in social dilemmas (Feather, 1995). The values emphasized by economists are therefore likely to influence the way they think, and consequently, their attitudes and actions. In Studies 4 and 5 we explore the implications of endorsing self-enhancement values on two work-related issues: identification with one’s professional group (Study 4) and work orientation (Study 5).

Study 4: Values and the importance of status in identification with groups

Organizations are interested in employing people who are strongly identified with their workplace because identification is presumed to be related to less turnover, higher motivation, and higher satisfaction (e.g. Abrams et al., 1998; Moreland et al., 2001; van Dick & Wagner, 2002). Perceptions regarding what motivates people to identify with the groups in which they are members are likely to affect labor policies because organizations are likely to try and shape the labor environment in ways that will maximize identification.

In this study we focused on the relationship between the status of a group and the extent of members’ identification with it. Generally, people are motivated to identify with groups that are seen in a positive light rather than with groups that are seen negatively, because the former are more useful in maintaining a positive sense of self (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). An extensive set of studies consistently shows that people tend to identify more with high status groups than with low status groups (e.g. Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers et al., 1988, 1992; Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

The relation between group status and identification, however, depends on one’s personal value priorities (Roccas, 2003). The importance attributed to self-enhancement and self-transcendence values moderates the relationship between status and identification. People who attribute great importance to self-enhancement are much more sensitive to their group’s status than those who attribute low importance to these values. They pay attention to information related to the status of their group, and are affected by this information. Thus, the relationship between status and identification is much stronger among those who attribute great importance to self-enhancement.
values than among those who attribute low importance to these values (Roccas, 2003).

In this study, we examined the relationship between group identification and perceived group status in the context of the professional environment. We asked economics students about their identification with their department and asked employees of an environmental organization about their identification with the organization in which they worked.

As shown in the first three studies, economics students attribute particular importance to self-enhancement values. We chose to examine employees of an environmental organization because we expected them to emphasize opposing values of self-transcendence. We tested the hypothesis that identification with one's group would relate to the perception of the group's status among economics students, but not among members of the environmental organization.

**Method**

Two samples were included in this study:

- **Sample 1:** 199 respondents from Study 2.
- **Sample 2:** 124 employees of an environmental organization (72 female, mean age 30.41, SD = 11.12).

The employees were recruited by mail. To ensure anonymity, the survey was distributed by the organization, but the completed surveys were mailed directly to the authors (50 percent response rate).

Values were examined with the instrument described in Study 1.

Identification was measured with a 12-item measure ($\alpha = .85$), which assessed the degree to which the respondents attributed importance to their membership either as students of economics or as employees of the environmental organization. Sample items included: being a (name of group) is an important part of my identity; when I talk about (name of group) I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'; it is important to me that I am a (name of the group). Respondents indicated their agreement with the statements, on a seven-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

Perceived status was measured with a four-item measure ($\alpha = .86$). Sample items included: (name of group) is considered to be prestigious; members of (name of group) are considered to be successful. Respondents indicated their agreement with the statements, on a seven-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).
Results and discussion

Column 5 of Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for the value types of the employees of the environmental organization. We compared these values to those of the economics students sampled during the first week of their freshman year (column 1). The differences between the values of the two groups were tested using a MANOVA analysis. The group (economics versus environmental) was the independent variable, and importance attributed to achievement, power, hedonism, universalism and benevolence values were dependent variables.

The two groups differed extensively in their values: economists attributed a higher degree of importance to achievement ($F(1,318) = 38.03, p < .001$), hedonism ($F(1,318) = 37.61, p < .001$), and power ($F(1,318) = 103.38, p < .001$) values. Accordingly, employees of the environmental organization attributed significantly more importance to universalism ($F(1,318) = 84.90, p < .01$) and benevolence ($F(1,318) = 23.89, p < .001$) values.

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of identification and perceived status, as well as correlations between identification and status for the two groups. Respondents in both groups identified rather strongly with their respective groups. The two groups differed, however, in the extent to which identification was related to the perception of the status of the group.

As expected, among students of economics, identification was strongly related to the perception that the economics department had high status. Economics students identified more strongly with their department the higher they perceived its status to be ($r = 0.54, p < .001$). In contrast, among employees of the environmental organization, the correlation between perceived status and identification with the organization was close to zero ($r = 0.12, NS$). These findings are consistent with those of Roccas (2003) who

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Mean identification, perceived status and correlation of status and identification (standard deviations in parentheses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Economics students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.02)</td>
<td>(.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived status</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.13)</td>
<td>(1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation of identification and status</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
found in a series of studies that the importance attributed to self-enhancement and self-transcendence values moderates the relationship between identification and perceived group status.

The two groups in our study differed on other dimensions besides their values. The members of the environmental organization were older, had significant work experience and were asked about identification with their work organization rather than their university department. Could any of these variables account for the weak association we found between identification and status in the environmental organization sample? Findings from previous studies provide some evidence to the contrary: positive relations between status and identification were previously found in adult samples—both when asked about their profession (Roccas, 1997) and when asked about their alma mater (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

These findings have implications for work-related policy. Managers who wish to enhance identification of their employees should be aware of both the advantages and limitations of enhancing perceived status of the organization. Emphasizing the organization’s status may be appealing to those who attribute great importance to self-enhancement values and low importance to self-transcendence values. It is not likely to be effective in increasing the identification of organizational members with other value hierarchies. Economists, due to their tendency to emphasize self-enhancement values, might overestimate the importance of perceived status. We discuss some practical implications of our findings in the general discussion.

The focus of Study 4 was the effects of values on the extent to which individuals identify with their organization. However, even among individuals who strongly identify with their organization, there might still be noteworthy differences in the ways in which they think about their work roles. In Study 5 we explored the relationship between self-enhancement versus self-transcendence values and work orientation.

Study 5: Values and work orientation

Drawing from the work of Bellah et al. (1985), Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) describe three dominant orientations toward work: job, career and calling. People who hold a job orientation focus on the material benefits of work and tend to de-emphasize benefits of different sorts. For them, work is a means to a financial end that allows them to survive, and provides them with resources to enjoy their time away from work. In contrast, people with a career orientation focus on the rewards that accompany advancement through an occupational structure. Work is a venue used to pursue the increased wealth, prestige, and status that come with promotion and
advancement. Finally, individuals with a calling orientation work not for financial rewards or for advancement, but for the meaning and fulfillment that work produces for them. They usually believe that their work contributes to the greater good and makes the world a better place. Thus, for them, work is an end in itself.

Why is work orientation important? Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) reason that work orientation influences the ways people craft their work roles: how they structure their work, define their responsibilities and work objectives, and design their roles and tasks. Thus, work orientation determines, for example, what task structure is likely to yield optimal performance, and which pay-off structures are likely to effectively motivate employees. In Study 5 we examined the ways in which self-enhancement and self-transcendence values are related to work orientation.

Self-enhancement values reflect the motivation to gain power and control over other people and resources, to express competence and success. These motivations are most compatible with a career work orientation. This orientation focuses on promotion and advancement which brings higher self-esteem, increased power, and higher social standing (Bellah et al., 1985; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). In contrast, emphasizing power and achievement values is inconsistent with a job orientation, which views work as a means to obtain sufficient financial revenue. This view contrasts with the core of self-enhancement values which emphasize striving for self-advancement, personal achievement and power. Finally, we expected no relation between self-enhancement values and a calling orientation. The latter reflects viewing work as a path for fulfillment and meaning in life. This perception does not promote nor does it block the attainment of self-enhancement goals. We therefore hypothesized that emphasizing power and achievement values will correlate positively with a career work orientation and negatively with a job orientation. We expected the relation with calling orientation to be near zero.

Self-transcendence values reflect care and concern for the welfare of those close to oneself (benevolence), motivation for tolerance and acceptance of others, and concern for all people and for the world (universalism). These motivations are compatible with a calling orientation that reflects the goal of contributing to society and making the world a better place. In contrast, self-transcendence values are incompatible with a career orientation because the latter focuses primarily on self-interest. Finally, job orientation does not emphasize the attainment of self-transcendence goals of care for others. However, as Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) propose, a job orientation provides people with opportunities to find meaning in their lives outside the work setting. We therefore hypothesized that emphasizing
benevolence and universalism values will correlate positively with calling orientation and negatively with career orientation. We expect no relation between benevolence and universalism values and job orientation.

**Method**

Two samples were included in this study:

- **Sample 1:** 88 Israeli university students (45 female, mean age 22.4, SD = 1.73).
- **Sample 2:** 56 American university students in a Masters of Business Administration program who were also employed in full-time jobs (24 female, mean age 28.89, SD = 3.44).

Students completed the survey in groups of 30–40. They were approached at the end of class time and were offered the opportunity to participate in the study for course credit. In both samples participation was voluntary and the surveys were anonymous. The survey began with the value measure, followed by the work orientation scale and demographic items. Survey completion took about 20 minutes.

Values were examined with the instrument described in Study 1.

Work orientation was measured with a 10-item scale (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) designed to assess the strength of each work orientation. Respondents indicated how much each item described how they felt about the work they usually did using a five-point scale ranging from not at all (1) to very much (5). Sample items included: I expect to be in a higher level job in five years (career); my work makes the world a better place (calling); my main reason for working is financial (job).

**Results and discussion**

Exploratory factor analysis of the work orientation measure with an oblique rotation (Promax) forcing three factors accounted for 54 percent of the total variance in the American sample and 55 percent in the Israeli sample. Table 4 presents the factor loadings from the three-factor solution, for each sample. In both samples, the three ‘work as a career’ items were primarily loaded on one factor. The three ‘work as a job’ items were mainly loaded on a second factor. Finally the five ‘work as calling’ items were primarily loaded on a third factor in the Israeli sample. Four of these five items primarily loaded on this factor in the American sample as well.

The correlations between personal value priorities and the three factor
scores are presented in Table 5. We hypothesized that emphasizing self-enhancement values would correlate positively with career and negatively with job orientation. Findings were highly consistent across the two cultural groups, and all hypothesized correlations were in the expected direction. We therefore collapsed the two samples. As expected, achievement values correlated positively with career orientation ($r = .28; p < .05$) and negatively with job orientation ($r = -.25, p < .05$). Emphasizing power values correlated positively with career orientation, as expected ($r = .19; p < .05$) but the correlation with job orientation was near zero ($-.01, \text{NS}$). Consistent with our expectations, correlations of power values with calling orientation were essentially zero.

We hypothesized that emphasizing self-transcendence values would correlate negatively with career orientation and positively with calling orientation. As expected, universalism values correlated negatively with career orientation ($r = -.30; p < .05$) but the correlation between universalism values and calling orientation was near zero ($r = -.01$). Conversely, as expected, benevolence values correlated positively with calling orientation,
Table 5  Correlations of values and work orientations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>USA sample</th>
<th>Israel sample</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>.44*</td>
<td>.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.31*</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism</td>
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<td>-.54*</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
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<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>-.25*</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>-.33*</td>
</tr>
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<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universalism</td>
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<td>.10</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>-.13</td>
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<td>-.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.29*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = significant at 95% level of confidence.

\( r = .22; p < .05 \) while the correlation between benevolence values and career orientation was weak and non-significant. Finally, consistent with our expectations, the correlations of universalism and benevolence values with job orientation were near zero \( (r = .07, r = -.13) \).

The findings of Study 5 support most of our hypotheses regarding the relations of values to work orientation. Career orientation was positively correlated with emphasizing power and achievement values and negatively with emphasizing universalism values. Job orientation correlated negatively with achievement values. Finally, calling orientation correlated positively with attributing great importance to benevolence values. Findings were highly consistent across the two cultural groups studied.

Do occupations differ by which work orientation tends to be dominant in them? Our findings in Study 2 suggest that economics students select themselves into their field based on their values. Similarly, it is possible that they self-select according to their work orientation as well. In other words, individuals who emphasize power and achievement values may recognize the field of economics as compatible with a career orientation towards work. While differences in work orientation across occupations have not yet been studied systematically, a recent study (Wrzesniewski et al., 2005) provides
initial support for the notion that there may be occupational patterns in individuals' work orientation. Nurses were found to be more likely to have a calling orientation than a career or job orientation.

Most important to the current research is the finding that attributing great importance to achievement and power values and low importance to universalism values is related to having a career work orientation. In other words, economists are more likely than others to have a career work orientation, and might overestimate the role of this orientation in other individuals, thus influencing their assumptions about what motivates others at work.

In sum, Studies 4 and 5 both exemplify the impact the value profile of economists may have on their work-related attitudes. Below we discuss some of the theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

**Social and organizational implications**

What are the implications of endorsing this distinctive value profile? Values influence people in their perceptions and interpretations of situations, and hence direct people in their decisions, choices and behaviors. In the case of economists, who often play important roles in private and public organizations, such decisions and choices are likely to have a strong impact. Obviously, decisions of economists in various key positions are a product of professional judgment. However, even when decisions are based on an explicit analysis of costs and benefits, the valences of these costs and benefits are influenced by personal value priorities. We demonstrate this point with our findings in Studies 4 and 5.

Study 4 focused on the association between identification and perceived status. Findings indicate that group identification is strongly related to perceived group status among students of economics but is almost unrelated to perceived status among employees of an environmental organization. Organizations often look for ways to enhance the identification of their members. Thinking that organizational status has a crucial role in creating and maintaining organizational identification might lead economists to overemphasize organizational status at the expense of other factors such as organizational cohesiveness, meaningful mission, or opportunities for personal growth.

Such an emphasis might, in the long run, affect the composition of the organization. People choose organizations that fit their personal goals and values (Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al., 1995). Organizations that emphasize status will be particularly attractive to people who attribute great
importance to self-enhancement values. This might have undesirable consequences for institutions in which emphasis on self-transcendence values is especially important, such as educational institutions or organizations providing medical care.

In Study 5 we found that emphasizing self-enhancement values correlates with a career work orientation. A career orientation may also shape organizational environments. As managers, bankers, or financial advisers, economists' decisions and actions may create differential pay-off systems and design promotion policies that are best suited for those who hold a career orientation. This would have consequences for the satisfaction and effectiveness of other employees. For example, people who view their work as a career would thrive in such institutions but those who view work as a calling might be frustrated.

A career orientation may also affect economists in their roles as public policy-makers. Consider administrators negotiating with teachers' representatives. A career orientation might lead the administrator to focus on career-related and self-interested demands (e.g. salary raises, promotion opportunities) rather than communal-related demands (e.g. a demand for smaller classes, resources devoted to students with special needs).

In this article we focused on the issues related to work. However, we suggest that the value conflict of self-enhancement versus self-transcendence is relevant to many other policy decisions that involve economists. A case in point is the recent spectrum policy debate. Note that the spectrum debate necessitates high technical specialization, which limits the participation of the general public. Our aim here is to demonstrate that values can play an important role in decisions that are usually delegated to specialists.

The growing demand for mobile phones has triggered a worldwide debate regarding the policies used to allocate radio frequencies to different service-providers. The debate ranges around two major policies: a property-based approach versus a commons-based approach. Should licenses be allocated to the highest bidder (a property-based approach) or should licenses be allocated to anybody who meets some minimal eligibility criteria (a commons-based approach)? We could explain the difference between these policies in terms of knowledge and expertise. The preference for a policy depends on answers to technological questions such as: do radio waves collide and what are the emerging wireless technologies? We suggest, however, that positions on this debate are also affected by personal values because the two policies differ dramatically in their implications for the access to a resource. Whereas a property-based approach grants extensive rights only to the few parties possessing the highest resources, a commons-based approach grants widespread access. Thus, emphasis on self-enhancement values is consistent with
favoring a property-based approach, while emphasis on universalism values is consistent with favoring a commons-based approach.

Conclusions

We began our investigation by comparing values of students of economics to those of students from other fields of social science. Students of economics attribute more importance to power, achievement and hedonism values and less importance to universalism values than students from other fields. These differences were already apparent at the very first stage of professional training, they persisted throughout their years at the university, and characterized economists-to-be just before they graduated. The focus on economics students rather than economists in key positions is a limitation of this study. Based on the general stability of values (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995) and the stability we found in economics students' values over their college years, we expect that in later stages of their careers, economists will continue to emphasize self-enhancement values relative to others in different professions. However, future studies are needed to examine this question directly.

Taken together, the findings of the present research underscore the importance of achieving better understanding of the value priorities of economists, and of the implications of endorsing such values. Ultimately, policies are determined not only by one's expert knowledge but also by one's perceptions, evaluations, and values. Our findings call for a general exploration of the value profiles characterizing individuals who choose different professional paths. This line of research will lead to a better understanding of the perceptions, implicit assumptions, and world views underlying the decisions made by individuals in these professions when holding influential roles and positions.

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Notes

1. Third year economics students differed from their first year counterparts in the importance of benevolence values. This difference may reflect the effect of training but may also indicate that students high in benevolence chose not to complete their studies in economics.

2. Two participants were dropped from analyses due to incomplete responses.

3. The same results would be obtained by employing column 2 rather than column 1.

4. This example comes from 'Spectrum policy: Property or commons?' by Bill McCarthy, 1 April 2003, available at the Mobile Radio Technology website: [http://wtec-mrt.com/air] [radio spectrum policy property].

References


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