Welcome to the Spring issue of the Conceptual Foundations Network’s Newsletter. Thank you, again, Danae, our CF Newsletter Editor, for putting together a truly exceptional issue for our members. Your hard work and dedication to the CF Network are much appreciated!

CF is humming along, with another excellent slate of presentations selected by Stephen Schroth, our network’s Chair-Elect and program chair for the convention. We will have diverse presenters to stimulate our thinking and remind us of our roots at the convention in Charlotte.

The mission of our network, as described on the NAGC website, is to “focus on theory; concepts of giftedness; philosophical foundations; trends, issues, and future directions for the field; historical perspectives; and perspectives from outside the field in order to provide the longitudinal, conceptual, and structural frame from which the field can build appropriate curriculum, identify students, and do research.” This newsletter is a fine example of how our members maintain this focus. The content of this issue rivals some of the finest journals in our field. With its treasure trove of articles on how to find students with gifts and talents, what and how we should be teaching them, and the broader societal implications, the authors help us consider the frame upon which to build our field. The CF Legacy Archive Project is an effort to preserve the voices of those who have laid the foundation, pursued new directions, and altered our conceptions, in an archive of video recordings of interviews. Look for our special session at the upcoming convention to meet contributors who were interviewed this year. The archive can only grow with the support of NAGC members. Please share the names of your mentors, idols, and influencers who have made a significant contribution beyond the local level. An invitation to nominate or volunteer to interview appears on page 50 of this newsletter.

It is easy to forget the importance of a strong conceptual foundation as we conduct our day-to-day work, but our actions should be guided by coherent philosophy and theory that fit with our values. The way we conduct our business – the business of educating America’s children – says a lot about our values. The good works that emanate from the deep concern and caring for children that motivates so many teachers can be undermined by practices that put, for example, financial concerns ahead of individual needs. Gifted education, like all education, is built on the beliefs of those who shape it. As our professional organization, NAGC should be a reflection of its members’ values. It is incumbent on us to maintain an awareness of the positions its leadership takes and the image it presents to the outside world. Our conversations in CF are meaningless if the actions taken by the organization are not based on the rich research we engage in and the informed debates we have with each other. Current events remind us of the importance of our active engagement in matters we care about. I encourage all of you to examine your most important values and how your experience in gifted education challenges or affirms them.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to serve as the CF Chair for the past two years. It is uplifting to know that so many members of NAGC are concerned about the conceptual foundations of the field. Continue contemplating!
Values Conflicts in Gifted Education

It will come as no surprise to anyone reading this that not everyone holds the same values. Rokeach (1968-1969) described values in this way: “to say that a person ‘has a value’ is to say that he has an enduring belief that a particular mode of conduct or that a particular end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence” (p. 550). We see these beliefs all around us and, in fact, are faced daily with evidence that individuals have very different preferences for modes of conduct or end-states of existence. The simple act of turning on the news reminds us of that there are individuals around the world and in our neighborhoods who hold values different from ours. Education in particular is seen as a threat to some value orientations. The assassination attempt on Nobel Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, an adolescent Pakastani girl who vocally advocated for girls to be educated, was stimulated by Taliban anti-education, misogynistic values. A story being circulated in Pakistan suggested the attack was a Western conspiracy, designed to pressure Pakistanis to accept morally corrupt, Western-style education. (BBC Newshour, 10/10/14; Masood & Walsh, 2013). Boko Haram, the Nigerian Islamic extremist group whose name is translated as “Western education is forbidden” (Newman, 2013), has shocked the world with its acts of terror as it attempts to establish sharia law across the country. The recent election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the US has delighted some and appalled many others. His appointment of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education brings to the fore just how serious the implications of differing value orientations are for our system of education. Gifted education, too, is a hotbed of differing values, as we shall see.

In his “Catch a Wave” model, Ambrose (2016) proposes a key role for education in making the leap over the crest of the “21st Century Globalization Wave,” where we need to be in order to achieve “societal success, conceived of here as the ability of a society to remain viable over the long term while lifting the vast majority of its citizens toward ethically guided self-fulfillment” (p. 16). Conflicting values are an example of what Ambrose terms macro-problems, problems that have an enormous impact on a society’s ability to function effectively and be able to take advantage of the macro-opportunities that lie beyond the crest of the wave. Our nation’s political system has been paralyzed by differing values in Congress, which have made consensus impossible in recent years (Sherfinski, 2014, December). Evidence abounds that a major problem for education in the 21st century is this conflict of values. In order to overcome this macro-problem, we must have a better understanding of the psychology of value orientations that affect us all.
Research on Human Values

Human values are beliefs people have that influence their decision making, attitudes, and behaviors (Schwartz, 1992). From his decades of research on human values, Schwartz and his colleagues (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987; Schwartz et al., 2012) have developed a circumplex model that identifies 19 values, each on a motivational continuum, with neighboring values that are related and opposing values that are in potential conflict. All of these continua are subsumed within three broad motivational dimensions. Figure 1 presents Schwartz et al.’s (2012) comprehensive, deliberately organized circumplex model – a values wheel, if you will. At the top and bottom are values related to growth and self-expansion opposed to values of self-protection and anxiety-avoidance. Within these, those on the left of the wheel are values with a social focus, which contrast with values of a personal focus. The inner layer describes values that are self-transcendent (e.g., universalism, benevolence) on the opposite side of values that are self-enhancing (e.g., achievement, dominance). Alongside these values are those reflecting an openness to change (e.g., self-direction, stimulation) opposite to conservative values (e.g., conformity, tradition, security). Individuals’ values are not necessarily dichotomous and most likely exist somewhere along the continuum.

Figure 1. Refined circumplex model of human values. Source: Schwartz, Cieciuch, et al. (2012), p. 669.
The presence of these values and their ordering in the circumplex model have been empirically supported (Schwartz et al., 2012). These values can be measured and much research has been conducted with the Schwartz Values Survey (SVS; Schwartz, 1992) and the newer Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ; Schwartz et al., 2001). Schwartz (2007) was able to predict acceptance of immigrants from values of universalism. Sundberg (2014) found an association between attitudes toward war and violence and the conservation values of tradition and conformity. In the academic arena, Bardi and Schwartz (2003) found an association between taking on commitments and achievement values. Achievement values in groups of college students working together on a project became more similar over time and this convergence predicted identification with the group (Meeusen, Delvaux & Phalet, 2014).

Elements of Schwartz’s values wheel can be seen in other theories of morality, such as Lakoff’s (1996) Strict Father-Nurturant Parent model of conservative and liberal morality. According to Lakoff, conservative lawmakers prioritize the values of 1) moral strength, 2) moral self-interest, and 3) moral nurturance, in that order. Liberals base their morality on the opposite priorities: 1) moral nurturance, 2) moral self-interest, and 3) moral strength. We can see Schwartz’s value orientations of self-protection, anxiety-avoidance, conservation and self-enhancement in the Strict Father priority of values. Liberal priorities align with the opposite orientations. In their research on moral dimensions, Haidt and colleagues (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Graham, Nosek, Haidt, Iyer, Koleva, & Ditto, 2011; Haidt, 2012) found that the highest priority for liberals is to care for the oppressed (benevolence, universalism) and for conservatives it is to preserve institutions that sustain morality (security, tradition, and conformity).

These liberal and conservative value orientations are evident in the current political divide.

One side supports issues such as military funding, traditionalism, and dominance, while the other supports such issues as universal health care, a public safety net, and gun control. These opposing value orientations have implications for education, as well.

**The Influence of Values on Education**

It is difficult to find a consensus on the purpose of education in the US, public or private. Is education necessary to train pliable workers with basic skills to meet employers’ needs? Or is its real purpose for learners’ self-fulfillment? Perhaps all education exists to support the maintenance of the social hierarchy, with a system of rewards designed to keep dominant groups in power. Each of these purposes reflects a value orientation in Schwartz et al.’s (2012) model. Training students to meet employers’ needs is in the self-protection, conservation segment of the wheel. Learners’ self-fulfillment is in the growth and self-direction portion. Support of the social hierarchy represents values of self-protection and self-enhancement.

Is public education a cultural institution with the responsibility of transmitting normative values? Whether we assume the transmission of norms is a purpose of schools or not, it happens. Students learn the values of the teachers, administrators, parents, and society as they attend school and receive opportunities to explore their own interests or direction in compulsory lessons. The content of the lessons and the instructional environment are mechanisms for delivering normative values.

How do conflicting values influence gifted education? In a study of supporters of gifted education, Cross, Cross, and Finch (2010) found two groups: one that preferred community-oriented practices, such as heterogeneous classrooms and cooperative learning and another that much preferred individualistic practices, such as self-contained gifted classrooms and no cooperative learning. The advocacy approach of the supporters of gifted education in these two groups would likely be quite different. Preference for a community-based gifted education reflects a Social Focus in Schwartz et al.’s (2012) model, while the individualistic preference suggests a Personal Focus.
Building an educational program on either of these value dimensions will necessarily result in practices that support one or the other value orientation. A program built on *Growth* and *Anxiety-Free* values may look very different from one built on *Self-Protection* and *Anxiety-Avoidance* (see Table 1).

Table 1
*Value orientations reflected in educational practice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gifted Education built on <em>Growth Anxiety-Free</em></th>
<th>Gifted Education built on <em>Self-Protection Anxiety-Avoidance</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Transcendence</strong></td>
<td>Service learning programs, cooperative learning, group activities</td>
<td><strong>Self-Enhancement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benevolence</strong></td>
<td>Service learning programs, cooperative learning, group activities</td>
<td><strong>Achievement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Competition, grading, rewards, attention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Exclusive classrooms, class rank, academic hierarchy, rewards (field trips, opportunities), private schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusive classrooms, Outdoor education, Service learning, public education</td>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Universalism</strong></td>
<td>Inclusive classrooms, Outdoor education, Service learning, public education</td>
<td><strong>Dominance, Resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance, Nature, Concern</td>
<td>Service learning, cooperative learning, group activities</td>
<td>Exclusive classrooms, class rank, academic hierarchy, rewards (field trips, opportunities), private schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-selected projects, independent work, personal improvement</td>
<td><strong>Security Personal, Societal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Openness to Change</strong></td>
<td>Assured success, parental control, discipline, segregated classrooms and schools, public education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Novel activities, creativity</td>
<td><strong>Tradition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Direction</strong></td>
<td>Novel activities, creativity</td>
<td>Age grading, heterogeneous classroom, regular curriculum, IQ identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought, Action</td>
<td><strong>Conformity</strong> Rules, Interpersonal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anti-acceleration, test-taking, rubrics, uniforms, discipline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A conflict of values can be seen in our own professional organization. The current leadership of NAGC has formed a partnership with the Fordham Institute, an extreme right-wing organization that strongly supported the appointment of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education and lobbies for “school choice,” an option that drains resources from public education, making it impossible to provide high quality services to all school-age citizens. This partnership suggests NAGC’s endorsement of Self-Protection values over Self-Transcendent values. In fact, the response of NAGC leadership to an open letter to the Board challenging the relationship (available on the CF Memberfuse web page) cites Self-Enhancement reasons for maintaining the relationship, claiming an increase in Resources due to the effectiveness of the collaboration in “multiplying the readership of individual blog posts by multiples of two, three, and sometimes as large as six.” The expansion of Power (i.e., more readers of NAGC blogs) takes priority for the current NAGC leadership over values of Universalism and Benevolence (i.e., support for our system of public education).

What are the right values?

Values are attitudes, deeply ingrained and responsible for many of our decisions and actions. The values we subscribe to are what we each believe are the right ones. Cross and Cross (2016) ask, “How can two individuals, much less entire societies, collaborate from such disparate perspectives as those who believe in strength over nurturance or security and conformity over self-direction or universalism and benevolence over achievement and power?” (p. 133). They go on to say, “We all have values, our preferred ‘end-states of existence’ (Rokeach, 1968-1969, p. 550). Those values that aid in our survival and group welfare (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987) are worth transmitting. When other individuals or cultures do this differently, it is important to understand the foundations of their choices” (p. 134). What we should ask ourselves in deciding the right values is, “Who benefits and who suffers?” In other words, whose survival is aided by the actions wrought by our values?

To claim support for all gifted students, but to act only in support of those from the dominant group or in one’s personal self-interest would seem to indicate the wrong values, but parsing out one’s own values is a difficult task in making such a judgment. Perhaps we should look to the U.S. Constitution, which was established “in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity” (U.S. Const., pmbl.). A “perfect union” suggests a social focus, including values of benevolence and universalism (tranquility and general welfare), but also of security, conformity, and tradition, as evidenced by a desire for justice and defense. How can the “blessings of liberty” be secured without a personal focus, as well? According to this argument, the right values must be balanced. Education with a tilt towards a personal focus may be enjoyable and effective in enhancing students’ achievement and power. Without concern for benevolence and universalism, however, as in the example of spreading excellence to all citizens through our public education system, we end up with winners and losers and a loss of “domestic tranquility.” Our field of gifted education can be unified in its advocacy by considering the values underpinning our practices.
References


U.S. Const. prmbll.