

TO SEE A FREE MAN AND DIE? SPECIFICS OF SHARED ADHERENCE TO VALUES IN UKRAINIAN SOCIETY

Anna Tashchenko

Candidate of Sociological Sciences (Ph.D. in Sociology), Assistant Professor,
Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine
e-mail: anna.tashchenko@knu.ua, orcid.org/0000-0002-6038-7337

Diana Zabrodina

Undergraduate, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine
e-mail: zabrodinadiana012@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0001-9929-777X

Summary

The aim of this paper is to reveal the general line of sociological research questions in authors' theoretical, methodical, and analytical developments during the 2019-2020 period. That line was related to values, moral, and social approval, as well as typification search, since authors methodically looked for clusters of opinions. The paper focuses on socially relevant cultural phenomena and processes that seem purely routine, but affect the deep foundations of socialisation in Ukrainian society. The formation and choice of values in Ukrainian society does not appear to be a comprehensive process, as it seems at first glance – they are complex, and not easy to predict. The paper identifies the dominant stereotypes about values, obligations, and information consumption in Ukrainian society, and answers three main questions: whom did Ukrainians approve by the choice of values; which moral dilemmas' decisions were Ukrainians willing to approve themselves; and whom did Ukrainians need approval from by assessing the veracity of information.

Keywords: values, moral foundations, moral evaluation, moral licensing, media literacy, individualism, collectivism.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.23856/5137>

1. Introduction

The issue of values concerns a lot of research in various scientific fields. Values are dictated by the canons of culture, some of them become more stable and so-called 'traditional' ones, and some of them, on the contrary, become changeable, being not transmitted from generation to generation. Every society is unique, and it is the hierarchy of values that emphasises this uniqueness. Ukraine participates in international social research with proven methodologies by foreign authors (World Values Survey, European Social Survey, etc.), has its own sociological organisations that monitor the values and priorities of Ukrainians (Institute of Sociology NAS of Ukraine, Rating Group Ukraine, etc.), and acquires its own researchers who offer unique methodologies for Ukrainian society only – e.g., A. Ruchka, who have developed the original 'value syndromes' concept (*Ruchka, 2014*). Summarising the results obtained by R. Inglehart and Sh. Schwartz methods, R. Savchynskyi and M. Nasiedkina told us that Ukrainian society was characterised by 'an endangered security'. Due to the instability of rules of conduct, it had both difficulties in meeting basic needs and uncertainty about the future. In addition, it had a

positive trend towards the values of self-affirmation as opposed to the values of going beyond one's selfish interest (*Savchynskyyi & Nasiedkina, 2016*). During the extraordinary events (such as Euromaidan in 2014), Ukrainians could undergo a value metamorphosis through a significant increase in the importance of patriotism, democracy, creative individualism, cultural competence, equal opportunities for all, moral conditions of society, national and cultural revival (*Kyrychenko, 2014*). It may seem that we already know a lot about Ukrainian society. At the same time, Ukrainians hardly see the complexity of their social types, when it comes to choosing: freedom or security, individualism or collectivism?

That was the reason for us to solidarise with Ch. Chataigné, who overviewed the H. Ch. Triandis's individualism and collectivism theory starting with the fact that Triandis considered the relevant opposition to be the most important one proposed by G. Hofstede, and concluding with her own belief in the inseparability of Hofstede & Triandis insights in relation to other theories of values (*Chataigné, 2014*). In one of his media comments, President of the Sociological Association of Ukraine, V. Bakirov said: '[W]e are trying to reform Ukrainian society. We understand that it's very imperfect, that the system emerged after 1991 (the so-called 'post-Soviet Ukraine') has many flaws. That's why we're talking about the need to reform this system. Why have three Maidans already taken place (in 1990–1991, 2004–2005 and 2013–2014)? Because people aren't happy with the way we live. But the system is surprisingly strong. It was formed quickly after the fall of Soviet power and the collapse of the Soviet Union, and is very difficult to reform. All calls to do something with it have no serious consequences' (*Bakirov, 2015*). There was also a discussion between V. Bakirov and Y. Holovakha about the irrationality and unpredictability of Ukrainian society in the light of reforms. V. Bakirov believed that the problem was insufficient education (in a sense of educating critical thinking and tolerance); Y. Holovakha insisted that the problem was the lack of focus on collectivist values (*Bakirov, 2015*). Accordingly, we are in need – and will continue to be in need in the nearest future, due to war – of reflection on the cultural and social depth behind declarations of Ukrainians' value self-regulation, moral obligations, and information consumption.

2. Value self-regulation in Ukraine

Thanks to the opportunities to develop the components of non-permanent questions' blocks in the Research & Branding Group's nationwide Ukrainian omnibuses in 2019 and 2020, we started with an interpretation of moral foundation theory by J. Haidt et al. and classification of values by H. Klages (*Tashchenko, 2019*), according to which the choice of values could be divided into:

- 1) value conservatism ('time-tested connections, trust, traditions' in A. Tashchenko's adaptation version);
- 2) value revolution ('freedom of actions, self-development and self-realisation' in A. Tashchenko's adaptation version);
- 3) value loss ('maintaining the minimal conditions for conflict-free coexistence with other people' in A. Tashchenko's adaptation version);
- 4) value synthesis ('the search for compromise of interests and cooperation' in A. Tashchenko's adaptation version).

We found an outstanding sympathy for the 'conservatives', and a less outstanding, but noticeable antipathy for the 'revolutionaries' (see Tables 1-4).

Table 1

Differences in the positive attitude towards people with different values

MORAL FOUNDATIONS MORAL EVALUATION	<i>'Care/ Harm'</i>	<i>'Honesty/ Misleading' (simplified 'Fairness/ Cheating')</i>	<i>'Authority/ Subversion'</i>	<i>'Liberty/ Oppression'</i>
Those who evaluated the morality of the 'conservatives' positively, %	64,1	61,8	58,9	52,4
Those who evaluated the morality of the 'revolutionaries' positively, %	29,5	35,3	32,2	38,1
Those who evaluated the morality of the 'losers' positively, %	37,6	36,5	35,7	34,8
Those who evaluated the morality of the 'synthesising ones' positively, %	37,1	37	34,5	32,3

Table 2

Clusters of the respondents' personal value choices

CLUSTERS	<i>Social practices' / relations' sphere</i>	<i>'Time-tested connections, trust, traditions' choice, %</i>	<i>'Freedom of actions, self-development and self-realisation' choice, %</i>	<i>'Maintaining the minimal conditions for conflict-free coexistence with other people' choice, %</i>	<i>'The search for compromise of interests and cooperation' choice, %</i>
Freedom lovers (686/1920)	Private	21,6	32,1	22	24,3
	Professional	26,7	35,9	23,5	14
	Leisure	33,2	40,2	13,1	13,4
	Society	37,3	29,3	18,5	14,9
Synthesis avoiders (762/1920)	Private	90,8	8,5	0,5	0,1
	Professional	16,7	54,2	20,9	8,3
	Leisure	0,9	34,3	44,4	20,5
	Society	7,5	27,2	36,4	29
Moderate differentiators (266/1920)	Private	89,8	8,6	1,1	0,4
	Professional	0	16,9	48,5	34,6
	Leisure	37,6	62	0	0,4
	Society	2,3	9,4	32,7	55,6
Radical differentiators (206/1920)	Private	0	82,5	16	1,5
	Professional	97,6	2,4	0	0
	Leisure	8,3	21,8	57,3	12,6
	Society	2,4	13,6	29,1	54,9

Table 3

Clusters of moral evaluation of different value choices

CLUSTERS	Moral foundations				
	Moral evaluation	'Care/Harm'	'Honesty/Misleading' (simplified 'Fairness/Cheating')	'Authority/Subversion'	'Liberty/Oppression'
Optimists (483/770)	Evaluated the 'conservatives' positively, %	74,3	72,9	70	61,7
	Evaluated the 'revolutionaries' positively, %	54,7	64	62,3	66
	Evaluated the 'losers' positively, %	58,2	62,1	60,9	60,9
	Evaluated the 'synthesising ones' positively, %	63,6	67,3	61,1	61,9
Pro-conservatives (189/770)	Evaluated the 'conservatives' positively, %	95,2	95,2	93,7	84,7
	Evaluated the 'revolutionaries' positively, %	16,4	17,5	16,9	24,3
	Evaluated the 'losers' positively, %	19	12,7	15,3	18,5
	Evaluated the 'synthesising ones' positively, %	31,2	27,5	28	28
Anti-revolutionaries (98/770)	Evaluated the 'conservatives' positively, %	88,8	92,9	89,8	87,8
	Evaluated the 'revolutionaries' positively, %	9,2	14,3	5,1	2
	Evaluated the 'losers' positively, %	69,4	71,4	72,4	74,5
	Evaluated the 'synthesising ones' positively, %	67,3	64,3	72,4	68,4

Table 4

Interrelation of moral evaluations with one's own value choice

CLUSTERS	Freedom lovers	Synthesis avoiders	Moderate differentiators	Radical differentiators
Optimists, %	50	31,8	12,6	5,6
Pro-conservatives, %	27,1	57,4	12,2	3,2
Anti-revolutionaries, %	31,9	42,6	14,9	10,6

The freedom lovers were the most interesting cluster. Regarding social characteristics, there were more urban populations among them than in other clusters; also, there were more representatives of that cluster in the West and South of Ukraine (however, the company, that collected the empirical data, had an original approach to regional division, so we should be careful with the conclusions on it). Among the more specific differences, we noticed, for example, the difference between men and women in the regional centers: there were slightly more men among the freedom lovers.

3. Moral licensing and idealising of socio-role opportunities

If we decide that we have already reached a certain level of ‘goodness’ essential for us, we can afford to do something ‘bad’ (Lasarov & Hoffmann, 2018). In a sociological perspective, this means, in particular, that by feeling like responsible executors of duties in one social role, we can give ourselves an internal license for less responsibility in another social role. Both in general (Tashchenko, 2021) and even with a deeper analysis of the data, opinions of Ukrainians did not tend to accept the possibility of big moral sacrifices – neither for the family, nor for colleagues, nor for the country (see Table 5, ‘1’ meant to be absolute disagreement with statements like ‘If I do my best for [X], I can afford not to fulfill some obligations regarding [Y]’, while ‘9’ meant to be absolute agreement with them).

As can be seen, the most popular combination of moral licenses among Ukrainians appeared to be the declared super-super-responsibility. Among other things, this might be due to the fact that morality issues more often than other issues collide with desired ideals of behavior. So, most likely, this is about the unwillingness to admit such self-indulgence cases. That circumstance, in turn, still testifies to the power of conscience as an internal regulator of Ukrainians.

4. The search for truth on social media

As M. Bhaskar would say, if we want to protect information consumers from post-truth and relativism, it is only important to distinguish ‘good curation’ from the ‘bad’ one (Bhaskar, 2017). But the media literacy is also culturally rooted literacy, and Ukrainians confirmed the rule that cultural studies usually lead to the finding of certain ‘individualisms’ and ‘collectivisms’. When we looked at the declared behavior of Ukrainians on social media revisiting the initial analysis of it (Tashchenko, 2020), we

Table 5

Clusters of the respondents’ moral obligations

CLUS-TERS	Stats	Family obliges more than colleagues	Family obliges more than country	Colleagues obliges more than family	Colleagues obliges more than country	Country obliges more than family	Country obliges more than colleagues
Pro-family (260/1393)	Center	7,96	6,68	1,87	4,21	2,12	5,17
	Stand. dev.	1,13	2,17	1,08	2,29	1,43	2,03
Easy-going (160/1393)	Center	7,74	6,84	6,46	6,21	5,66	6,13
	Stand. dev.	1,21	1,77	1,85	1,84	2,33	2,21
Anti-country (145/1393)	Center	3,03	5,58	1,46	5,79	1,55	2,81
	Stand. dev.	1,95	1,97	0,91	1,91	1,14	1,79
Heavy-duty (546/1393)	Center	1,92	1,73	1,45	1,55	1,48	1,74
	Stand. dev.	1,37	1	0,86	0,79	0,86	1,11
Cautious (282/1393)	Center	4,17	4,16	4,78	4,71	4,97	4,94
	Stand. dev.	1,6	1,63	1,68	1,6	1,51	1,61

Table 6

Percentage of respondents in clusters (columns) who declared using the listed criteria (rows) for distinguishing truth from falsehood on social media

CLUSTERS	Ind.-1 (145/825)	Ind.-2 (151/825)	Mixed (188/825)	Coll.-1 (100/825)	Coll.-2 (142/825)	Coll.-3 (99/825)
Filtering criteria, according to which the search for truth can pass independently (i.e., the information itself and the consumers are enough for the evaluation process)						
One's own intuitive idea of what is possible and what is not	21,4	66,2	34	19	47,9	28,3
Available supporting photos and videos	86,9	3,3	18,1	2	4,2	4
Compliance with one's own professional knowledge of the topic	11	6	13,8	14	41,5	18,2
Absence of extremes in points of view and emotions	22,8	4,6	16	4	9,9	4
Date and time of publication	24,8	15,9	3,7	3	7,7	5,1
Typos and grammatical errors	11	19,2	4,8	3	1,4	4
Absence of humor <i>(differences were insignificant)</i>	2,8	4	3,2	1	2,1	2
Filtering criteria, according to which the search for truth requires other agents (i.e., different direct or indirect forms of consultation and support are needed)						
Availability of similar information in other sources	11,7	1,3	78,7	20	2,1	25,3
Credibility of the information source	20,7	11,3	9	94	22,5	0
Availability of links to serious sources	4,1	6	6,9	33	1,4	100
Degree of credibility of the information source for most people	2,8	9,3	34	9	21,8	17,2
Opinion of relatives and friends	2,1	0	6,4	3	64,8	10,1
Expert opinion on the topic	4,8	7,9	6,9	29	9,2	10,1
Comments on the information and confirmation or refutation of one's own doubts	0	25,2	6,9	8	12,7	1

could assert about a small win of collectivism (see Table 6; we decided to keep using non-specific cluster names with random ordering of different patterns of information consumption). It is important to mention that we didn't find the significant differences in the trust of socio-political news on social media between representatives of different clusters, i.e., different versions of individualism and collectivism plus one mixed pattern. Thus, it is not the media that decides and imposes, it is the consumers who create alternative realities within the media, introducing themselves or their reference groups there. The question is how socially dangerous the certain variants of Ukrainian individualism and collectivism are in social networks, but this is a whole other story.

Indirectly, we confirmed one of conclusions by R. Savchynskyi and M. Nasiedkina: 'Agency as a mechanism, that determines a person's social behavior, implies an 'automated' tendency to act in a certain way, while subjectivity is related to a person's willingness and ability to build action autonomously. <...> In fact, the subjectivity mechanism can be the basis for innovative actions and interactions, and the agency mechanism is more conducive to conservative actions and interactions, which are already inherent in society or group. <...> In our opinion, most of the actions of a significant part of society are still related to the agency mechanism. That is, usually the relative majority of society reproduces the current state of affairs rather than is changing it' (Savchynskyi & Nasiedkina, 2016). But, although the above-quoted authors believed that the same person was able to demonstrate both subjectivity and agency, they were convinced that 'one practice = one mechanism'. In our opinion, nothing prevents both mechanisms from being combined in one practice, or, at least, nothing prevents information consumers from believing that they are the ones and only who are able to reasonably balance between individualism and collectivism. The most serious conflicts are unlikely to occur when answering media-centered questions 'what to believe' (Rusbridger, 2020) or 'who owns the media' (83% of Ukrainians aware of existence of jeansa and misinformation in the media - polls, 2021). The most conflictogenic things begin where imaginary meets reality. Harvard Business Review's latest infographic in the 'Business and society' section is a great illustration – the combination of moral and social opposites is very desirable, but much less observable (*Six paradoxical expectations of leaders*, n.d.).

5. Conclusions

It turned out that the most popular value choices of Ukrainians were the synthesis avoidance and the love of freedom. But it became clear that Ukrainians often morally devalued freedom as a life priority of people-in-general, due to suspicions of the immorality of those who had chosen it. We guess, the biggest problem was that people who have chosen freedom as a main value of life should suffer in Ukrainian society the most: they were the ones who most often evaluated the morality of different people positively, while they themselves were most often suspected of immorality 'by default', despite the fact that Ukrainians are recognised to be the freedom-loving nation. In parallel, we observed the dominance of unwillingness to self-diminish responsibility in family, work, and civic social roles combined with each other. The desire to trust, and the habits of collectivism are also not lost for Ukrainians in new informational conditions. They were noticed to have been seeking for independence / dependency balance in the search for truth on social media. We believe the modern Ukrainian conservatism has strong and well-founded roots, because Ukrainians have a diverse history, and the dynamics of this diversity have had a strong impact on social interactions, while relevant cultural and historical events become the key to the formation of trends in values and self-regulation.

Speaking of prospects, we need to keep the emphasis on original approaches to the study of values and morality. In part, photos and videos are said by E. V. Bataeva and A. S. Chumakova-Sierova to be representing conscious values of social actors, which they tend to visualise due to their importance, and unconscious values, which are involuntarily projected onto the visualised online behaviour; both kinds of value preferences can anticipate value changes in real life and latently influence the formation of new value patterns (Bataeva & Chumakova-Sierova, 2021). The poetic works can become an excellent tool for revealing the moral capital of society as well. The connection of literature / poetry / certain poetic genres with morality, value hierarchies, deviant behavior, individualism and collectivism, trust, tolerance, etc., is strongly postulated, despite the significant debatability of the issue and studying it through too specific lenses and cases. The self-production of poetry is now available to almost anyone who wants to fill their free time with this (Shelukhin, 2013), and research by confronting readers with unknown / little-known texts and authors – when the readers are left alone with their own opinions and some poem itself, outside the previous public discussion influence – may contribute to a more truthful manifestation of moral ideals and values, that would be considered by readers as worthy of preservation for future generations through literature.

References

1. Bakirov, V. (2015, October 2). *Yak rozumity, chomu reformy v Ukraini ne vdaiutsia?* [How to understand why reforms in Ukraine fail?]. *Procherk*. <https://procherk.info/direct/391-bakirov/36628-bakirov-jak-rozumiti-chomu-reformi-v-ukrayini-ne-vdajutsja> [in Ukrainian]
2. Bataeva, E. V., & Chumakova-Sierova, A. S. (2021). *Vizualizovani tsinnosti u sotsialnykh praktykakh korystuvachiv ukrainskoi sotsialnoi merezhi "Instahram"* [Visualized values in the social practices of Ukrainian Instagram users]. *Ukrainian Society*, 79(4), 26–45. <https://doi.org/10.15407/socium2021.04.026> [in Ukrainian]
3. Bhaskar, M. (2017). *Curation: the power of selection in a world of excess*. Little, Brown Book Group Limited.
4. Chataigné, C. (2014). *Psychologie des valeurs* [Psychology of values]. Preface de Serge Guimond. Louvain-la-Neuve: Editions De Boeck. [in French]
5. Kyrychenko, I. (2014, September 26). *Triumf "voiniv svitla": Pidvyshchennia hradusa intelektu i pochuttiv* [Triumph of "warriors of light": Increasing the degree of intelligence and feelings]. *Mirror Weekly*. <https://zn.ua/ukr/SOCIUM/triumf-voyiniv-svitla-pidvischennya-gradusa-intelektu-i-pochuttiv-.html> [in Ukrainian]
6. Lasarov, W., & Hoffmann, S. (2018). *Social Moral Licensing*. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 165(1), 45–66. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-4083-z>
7. Ruchka, A. (2014). *Tsinnisna metamorfoza v mentalnosti hromadian Ukrainy pid chas nadzvychnykh podii 2014 roku* [Value metamorphosis in the mentality of Ukraine citizens during the extraordinary events of 2014]. In *Ukrainian Society: Monitoring Social Changes (T. 1, p. 117–124)*. Institute Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. [in Ukrainian]
8. Rusbridger, A. (2020). *News and how to use it: what to believe in a fake news world*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books.
9. Savchynskiy, R., & Nasiedkina, M. (2016, October 3). *Suspilstvo, yake zdatne sebe zminyty* [A society that can change itself]. *The Ukrainians*. <https://theukrainians.org/spilnodiya-partwo/> [in Ukrainian]

10. Shelukhin, V. (2013, December 13). *Bilshе ne poezіia [Not poetry anymore]*. LitAksent. <http://litakcent.com/2013/12/13/bilshе-ne-poezija/> [in Ukrainian]
11. *Six paradoxical expectations of leaders. (no date)*. Harvard Business Review. Data & Visuals. https://hbr.org/resources/images/article_assets/2021/12/R2201C_LEINWAND_SIXPARADOXICAL_360.png
12. Tashchenko, A. (2019, March 22). *Kulturnyj kod morali 'po-ukrainski' [Cultural code of morality 'in Ukrainian style']*. Research & Branding Group. <https://rb.com.ua/blog/kulturnyj-kod-morali-po-ukrainski/> [in Russian]
13. Tashchenko, A. (2020, March 25). *Feiky v sotsialnykh merezhakh [Fakes on social media]*. Research & Branding Group. <https://rb.com.ua/uk/blog-uk/omnibus-uk/fejki-v-socialnih-merezhah/> [in Ukrainian]
14. Tashchenko, A. (2021, January 19). *(Ne)rivnist zobov'язan: yaki v ukrainsiv moralni litsenzii [(In)equality of Obligations: The Moral Licenses of Ukrainians]*. Research & Branding Group. <http://rb.com.ua/uk/blog-uk/omnibus-uk/ne-rivnist-zobov-jazan-jaki-v-ukrainsiv-moralni-litsenzii/> [in Ukrainian]
15. *83% of Ukrainians aware of existence of jeansa and misinformation in the media - polls. (2021, November 17)*. Institute of Mass Information. <https://imi.org.ua/en/news/83-of-ukrainians-aware-of-existence-of-jeansa-and-misinformation-in-the-media-polls-i42405>