



KAIRIOS

# White Paper: Values Perspectives

By Cheryl De Ciantis, Ph.D. and Kenton Hyatt, Ph.D.

## What's Important

Values are about what's important to us: they determine how we prioritize our expenditure of attention, time, energy, and money. We give ourselves more fully to that which we value and tend to avoid that which we do not. At any time, individually and collectively, we operate with a limited number of values which express priorities that direct our energy. For an individual, this set of values and their degree of energetic "push" or "pull" is as unique to that person as their set of personality traits and cognitive preferences. Individual and collective value sets can change to a greater or lesser degree with life experiences and environmental changes, and by conscious choice. How individual values are expressed is affected by which high priority values are clustered together. For example, a value of Honesty combined with a value of Harmony will result in different behavioral choices than Honesty combined with a value of Independence.

There are literally thousands of individual human values, so figuring out how they work can be complex. We find that values are best understood in a framework of Perspectives. While for a specific individual, particular values may change based on situational influences, past a certain point of life development, much like personality factors, one's values perspective is likely to remain more stable than single value priorities. The perspectives operate like a lens that each of us uses to view our world. Together, our values and values Perspective determine how we live.

## Values Perspectives

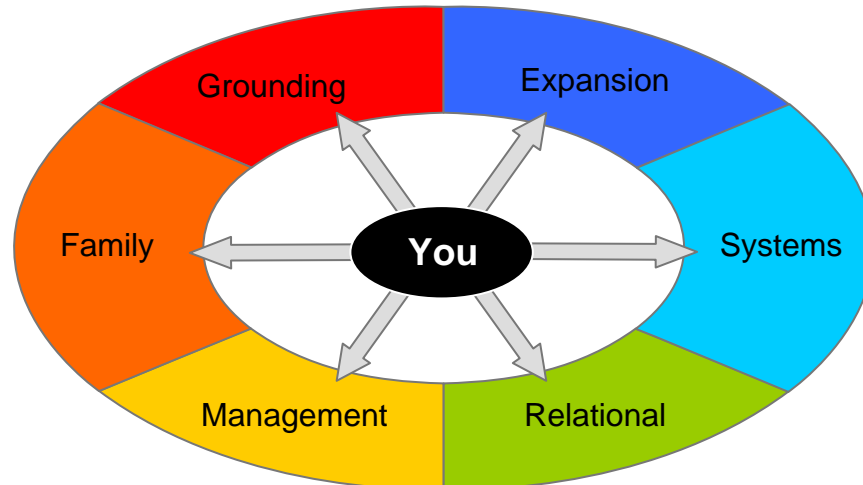
Values don't operate independently of either the contexts in which we live, or without somehow connecting to other values. While there are lots of ways values link and group together, looking at Values Perspectives is a useful way of describing the larger groups that form entire worldviews, from which each of us makes sense of the world. You might think of these groups as a lens or framework through which we both look at the world, and through which we "show up" to others. Having an understanding of one's Perspective is like having a shorthand method for discerning natural differences and similarities.

Based on human developmental models and research, we posit six differentiated value Perspectives: Grounding, Family, Management, Relational, Systems, and Expansion, described below. Each can be characterized by a cluster of representative values, but the Perspectives are not limited to these sample values, nor are individuals limited to their Perspective with regard to what values they hold.



Rather, it is important to note that how one defines and exhibits his or her values will be affected by his or her Perspective. For example, two separate people may hold the same value, like Financial Success, but will define it and implement it differently if each of them hold a different core Perspective. Not surprisingly, this sort of situation can be the source of great confusion and misunderstanding if those two people happen to be members of the same work group.

It is also important to note that Perspectives are not inherently limiting. Anyone may draw on values from other Perspectives in some day-to-day activities or as a part of their normal life development cycle. Healthy individuals and groups are able to “reach” into other Perspectives and may hold values associated with other Perspectives as priority values.



Finally, Western cultures have a strong bias for reading and sensemaking from left to right, and tend to ascribe growth, development, and other judgments such that left is usually interpreted as a starting point, and right an end point, with right literally 'valued' more highly. There is no left-right bias implicit in the Values Perspective model. The model can be seen as a continuum, characterized by a general tendency to value Stability in the Grounding, Family, and Management Perspectives, and a tendency to value Dynamism in the Relational, Systems, and Expansion Perspectives. But these characteristics in no way imply that one Perspective indicates 'higher' development than another. Each Perspective has its own characteristics, and potential limitations. This is such an important point that we will state it again more strongly: No Perspective is inherently better than another. Our work has brought us into contact with both highly functional and successful as well as dysfunctional and difficult people from each Perspective, so we strongly caution you to guard against the typical assumption and judgment that one Perspective signals a somehow better or greater stage of development.



## Grounding Perspective

The Grounding Perspective is a foundational Perspective. Meaning, it always operates as necessary support to the individual, organization, or society. Grounding values are recognizably similar to the physiological needs at the base of Maslow's needs hierarchy, and include concerns with regard to basic physical functioning. Values in this Perspective can be described as species survival values. Because of this, adults do not generally focus their conscious, daily energy on Grounding Perspective values, since the associated skills should already have been learned and mastered. Thus, Grounding values can operate 'in the background' without much attention until some stress or crisis focuses our attention on them. However, when that occurs, it is extremely important that we have the ability to access these values.

From the viewpoint of the Grounding Perspective, daily challenges are imposed upon us, so we feel ourselves to be in a primarily reactive mode. It is unlikely that we are able to assume (or to believe we can assume) much responsibility for our actions and may find ourselves in a position of having very limited control of our situation<sup>1</sup>. This Perspective has some of the characteristics of early childhood, for example feelings of powerlessness that are part of the reality of small children, and can be experienced by adults in situations of crisis or extreme or prolonged stress. Types of stress which may trigger a return to the foundation include chronic illness or serious injury, abrupt change in status such as job loss, the death of a loved one, financial loss, or the need to focus conscious attention toward foundational issues such as addiction.

Not all "crisis" events need be negative, for example the birth of a child is a time for parents to return temporarily to giving conscious energy to the Grounding Perspective. The Grounding Perspective also encompasses childlike curiosity and a sense of wonder and awe, and for adults these values may represent the roots of a renewed life perspective achieved through crisis. In times of great change, stress and crisis, the values in this viewpoint are those on which we depend as a first step in returning to a more stable, secure reality.

Values typical of the **Grounding Perspective** are:

Curiosity, Food and Shelter, Kindness, Obedience, Physical Functioning, Safety, and Wonder.

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<sup>1</sup> This concept, termed locus of control, was described by Julian B. Rotter in 1966. Rotter classified *internals*, who attribute events to their own control, and *externals*, who attribute events in their life to external circumstances.



### **Family Perspective**

The Family Perspective is characterized by one's identification with a primary group. For most of us, the first group we depend upon for direction and structure is family. As we grow, this is usually augmented or replaced by work or social groups that function for us in a similar way. When we are young, age and values development operate in parallel, in a hierarchal fashion. Consciousness expands from immediate self concerns to encompass people around us and eventually, a sense of social structures. Seen developmentally, within this framework each person learns the basic essentials of maintaining relationships with others and begins to exercise responsibility for his or her daily actions. The Family Perspective marks the importance of basic individual values like Self-Worth, which is typically conditioned early on in life by affiliation, and interaction values like Loyalty and Respect.

On attainment of maturity, value Perspectives can no longer be viewed as hierarchal. No one Perspective is more valuable than another with regard to a person's ability to access values that ensure the basic needs for a satisfying life. We assume that for perhaps most people, the Family Perspective remains the core view, and while their "reach" toward particular value priorities may likely extend into other Perspectives, those values will tend to be experienced and lived through the lens of the core Family Perspective.

From the viewpoint of the Family Perspective, it makes sense that the people in your immediate personal, work and social sphere deserve most of your energy and attention. Belonging to the group is likely to be the way you receive recognition and respect, which affirm your worth as a person. This combination of giving and receiving can often be the case for people in the caring professions. People having this core Perspective usually look to a person or persons whom they view as having moral or positional authority for structure and guidance in important life matters. You may also be a parent, or find yourself in a position of leadership at work. If so, you expect others to look up to you and expect yourself to provide stability and direction for those in your care. There are many organizations that successfully operate on a model that has strong family characteristics—for example, valuing loyalty and committing a large percentage of resources to looking after one's "own"—even though no real family ties are involved.

Values typical of the **Family Perspective** are:

Belonging, Caretaking, Discipline, Economic Security, Fairness, Honesty, Loyalty, Respect,  
Self-Worth, and Tradition



## Management Perspective

Management Perspective values are concerned with the source of control over resources and authority, which from the viewpoint of this Perspective lies in the organization or institution. Legitimate authority is distributed and typically follows a hierarchy with articulated levels of responsibility and privilege. Responsibility is given to the individual who is assessed by those in higher authority as possessing sufficient technical competence, willingness, and readiness to assume it. This Perspective is the most typical for medium sized and larger organizations to establish as a Core Perspective.

This Perspective emphasizes managerial responsibility, achievement, and control over one's span of authority. Whether or not you work in an organizational situation, we all need to manage our lives through the creation and maintenance of rules and reliable structures. In the institutions and organizations in which we work, we rely on policies and regulated procedures to achieve productive outcomes. Problems are identified and defined through reliable conduits of information and delegated to members of the organization best equipped to solve them through analysis and rational effort. Whom we communicate with and when is regulated by hierarchal structures and roles. Rewards are achieved through professional merit.

As you may have noticed by now, a well functioning organization depends on individuals functioning from each of the Values Perspectives to succeed. However, the Management Perspective is strongly emphasized in "First World" societies, and developing societies increasingly aspire to it. The Grounding, Family, and Management Perspectives all strive to establish a stable, reliable, and manageable world. The values in the Management Perspective are those that support the skills necessary to maintain operations in arenas exceeding the scope of family connections in a predictable and controlled manner.

Values typical of the **Management Perspective** are:

Achievement, Competence, Decisiveness, Managing, Problem Solving, Productivity, and  
Responsibility



## Relational Perspective

This Perspective emphasizes values directed toward forming relationships on one hand (through Empathy, Listening, Openness, Trust, and Commitment) and developing self-potential on the other (through vocation values like Courage, Questioning, Independence, Risk, and Creativity). The Relational Perspective presents several contrasts to the previous Perspectives (Grounding, Family, and Management) in several important ways. The first three Perspectives invoke values that support a stable and predictable world. By contrast, the Relational orientation deals with valuing the work of developing yourself toward your full potential. A significant characteristic of this Perspective is that the individual assumes control for his or her self, as well as responsibility for his or her decisions and actions. Values characteristic of this Perspective support self development, effective relationships and creative work. Effective use of authority in this stage is characterized by facilitative use of listening, asking questions to ensure mutual understanding, and being fully present with others.

In the previous Perspectives, responsibility for providing and controlling a stable world is always held by an external source. And from these Perspectives, it is to these sources that we look for answers. The idea of responsibility is more limited to a person's defined role, and the authority one has within that role. By contrast, the Relational Perspective requires the individual to assume an internal sense of responsibility. It is to ourselves that we are compelled to look for "answers," which can create no small amount of anxiety, and to make it worse, this Perspective includes values that promote change and dynamic activity. That is, the world isn't stable by definition.

As you might imagine, shifting from one of the first three Perspectives to the Relational Perspective can create some uncomfortable feelings or even anxiety for many people, and turmoil in organizations. Assuming additional levels of responsibility in a changing world—for self, for work, for relationships—creates dynamic tensions with which the individual must successfully cope. These values are essential for self-development and directly support values that are found in the Systems Awareness and Expansion Perspectives.

Values typical of the **Relational Perspective** are:

Being Present, Commitment, Creativity, Independence, Listening, Questioning, Trust



## Systems Perspective

The values characteristic of this Perspective concern systems and systemic thinking and awareness. Being able to keep track of an entire system or systems requires a shift from individual perspectives to interdependence with other people to create something larger than is possible exerting only individual capacities. The Systems Perspective necessarily deals with connections, and involves others in collaborative and mutually accountable ways. By definition, this Perspective represents a worldview that fully accepts Integrity and Partnership as keys to successful development and achievement. Authority is seen to reside within networks of people and groups, and depends upon diversity, individual and group empowerment and shared responsibility for vitality and effectiveness. Leadership in this Perspective tends toward Flexibility, meaning that the role of leader may be shared, or that leaders step forward and are supported by others in response to situational conditions. High-performing, successfully innovative teams operate in this Perspective, under conditions where the requisite values characteristic of the more foundational Family, Management and Relational Perspectives are supported by skills and actions: rules and roles are fully understood, agreed and internalized, execution is disciplined, team members communicate openly and confidently and vision is shared. Because this Perspective is dynamic by nature, systems, though perhaps cyclical, will not remain stable, even at levels of high performance. The tendency is for systems to re-form and re-configure, and may require renewed attention to the values found in more foundational Perspectives.

There are some immediate challenges presented to a person or group whose core is Systems Awareness, and perhaps the most obvious is the challenge of communication with people whose core or focus is the Family or the Management Perspectives, and who hold a very different world view. It is very easy to lose sight of the importance of maintaining strong, active skills associated with values found in the Family and Organizational views. Much of the time the values in this Perspective are a part of our vision values cluster, which means they are more aspirational than operational, and thus likely to lack fully or consistently operationalized behavioral skills to support them. But if this is one's core Perspective, then one must also work to possess skills that will support values in the Family, Management, and Relational Perspectives, providing the foundation for effectiveness in the Systems Perspective.

Values typical of the **Systems Perspective** are:

Collaboration, Dialogue, Flexibility, Integrity, Partnership, and Sustainability



## Expansion Perspective

The Expansion Perspective values work with the largest scope and application of values we can access. These are always aspirational values, representing energy that pulls us toward a vision of global effects and proportions. As such they are less likely to be completely supported by necessary and associated skills and competencies. While these values act as guides to our progress and development, it does not mean we cannot at least partially achieve what these values represent in terms of accomplishments. This Perspective includes the values we associate with singular historical and legendary personalities, saints and statesmen and -women whom we revere as examples, think Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Pope John XXIII. Yet, the explosion of available information and networking technologies, and with them awareness of global-scale challenges such as global climate change have brought the Expansion Perspective closer to realization than--perhaps--any previous time in human history. (It is important to consider that our cultural views of history are conditioned by Values Perspectives, and may be incomplete due to what any given Perspective tends to value, or de-value.)

This Perspective represents a true "worldview," one that is always extensive and inclusive in scope. Paradoxically, the Perspective presented here is one that nearly cycles back to the most foundational Perspective, Grounding (as the graphic on page 2 shows), in the sense that the Expansion Perspective recognizes that the scope encompassed is so great that one cannot ever be in control, nor can one assume individual responsibility for implementing these values on a global or national level. Values such as Human Rights require intimate and empathetic communication with people and groups whose concerns are contained in the Grounding Perspective. Too, the sense of wonder contained in the Grounding Perspective may only be *consciously* understood and appreciated from the Expansion Perspective. Full interdependency is a condition to realizing this Perspective; thus values in this Perspective require the mutual support of others for whom these values are also a high priority.

Values typical of the **Expansion Perspective** are:

Human Rights, Inspiring Others, Mind-Body Integration, Planetary Ecology, Simplification, and Spirituality





### Some Final Thoughts

It should be remembered that anyone can select values that span the complete scope of the Perspectives described above, regardless of core focus, or a person may limit his or her selections to operate from within certain viewpoints. Whether one's span or "reach" is broad, or more circumscribed, each profile presents advantages and strengths as well as challenges and limitations that can be addressed by making the choice to seek support structures, skill development, and learning from those who share one's values and those who do not. And generally speaking, we have found that individuals with functioning values in the center four Perspectives: Family, Management, Relational, and Systems, have a robust system of values that often is characterized by an internal integrity (as we have mentioned, the Grounding Perspective may be 'visited' periodically, but hopefully as a prelude to rebuilding a life foundation and returning to one of the central four Perspectives; and Expansion Perspective values tend to a large degree to be aspirational). This is not to say such people "have it all together." They don't have any magic free pass to happiness, and have their own challenges. Organizations do well when they employ and respect individuals whose core Perspectives represent energy reaching across all four Perspectives, because they are like a car motor that is firing on all cylinders. They have a full battery of talent from which to draw, and are best able to respond to the challenges of work as they arise.

### Values Assessment

Finally, as people from different core Perspectives associate, they often find they disagree, in fundamental ways, not just on specific value differences. So the communication challenges that groups and organizations face can be usefully framed with an assessment in regard to what Perspectives are in operation, and to what degree; as well as what Perspective is most desirable for the group as a whole. Knowing there are such differences allows us to make changes and tolerate the natural disagreements that can be productive to an organization, but only if the people involved have the skills to manage such differences. The first step is an understanding of one's own Perspective, and then the Perspective of others.

**For more information** on values, The Values Perspective™ Survey, individual values coaching and team and organizational values alignment, contact Kairios Group: Cheryl De Ciantis Ph.D. (cdeciantis@kairios.com) and Kenton Hyatt, Ph.D. (khyatt@kairios.com), or go to [www.kairios.com](http://www.kairios.com)