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**VALUES OF BULGARIAN STUDENTS IN EMERGING
ADULTHOOD: DYNAMIC APPROACH**

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Abstract

The paper traces the dynamics of basic individual values of Bulgarian students in emerging adulthood – aged 18 to 29 in the years of social and economic transition in Bulgaria. Three empirical studies were conducted in 1995 (N = 232), 2005 (N = 157) and 2015 (N = 255), using *Schwartz Value Survey – SVS* (Schwartz, 1992). Results from the comparison of the three cohorts indicate that over the period of 20-years the importance of both individual and collective values has grown. Collective values grow more intensively and in 2015 they prevailed over individual ones. These findings probably reflect the age effects and the social-historical projections on the value system of the young people in Bulgaria. The paper also discusses some issues referring to the characteristics of value models observed among emerging adults since 1989 after the fall of the communist regime in the country.

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Keywords: Basic individual values, dynamics of value orientations, emerging adulthood, Bulgarian students, post-totalitarian context.

1. Introduction

[The term “value” is widely used in the social sciences (e.g. Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Triandis, 1995). In ontogenetic aspect, a typical feature of values is their extremely early formation between the age of 13 and 19 when a person, though still far from social maturity, nonetheless explicitly manifests his/her value orientation in the act of choice of behaviour (Stoitsova, 1998). It is therefore not surprising that more recent empirical studies in Bulgaria, based on the model of Schwartz (1992), are focused primarily on youth samples where individual interests prevail over collective ones (Baytchinska, 1994; Papazova & Garvanova, 2008; Tair, 2011; Garvanova, 2013).

Among the contemporary theories in developmental psychology that of Jeffrey Arnett postulates a new age period appearing in the age of youth, between 18-29 years, called “*emerging adulthood*” (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, 2004). In its essence Arnett’s theory replicates the classical theory of Erikson (1968) concerning the psychosocial moratorium in adolescence (Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005; Arnett, 2005) as Arnett argues that the moratorium in most Western cultures lasts till the age of 30 (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, 2004). According to that author the value preferences of young people in emerging adulthood are not strictly individualistic, but a combination of individualistic and collectivist values as individualistic value preferences can be determined by collectivistic ones (Arnett, 2014).

2. Problem Statement

2.1. Theoretical model of the value system of Shalom Schwartz

The theoretical value system model most widely applied in recent times is that proposed by Schwartz (1992). This researcher defines values as *desirable common goals that serve as guiding principles with different significance for human life* (Schwartz, 1992; Bilsky & Schwartz, 1994). Values are transsituational goals, representing different motivation orientations, for example, striving for money, love, happiness, autonomy, etc. As a result of the theoretical deduction of the motivational content of values and the empirical research carried out, Schwartz has differentiated 10 distinct universal value types, including both *terminal* (desirable end-states of existence) and *instrumental values* (preferable modes of behaviour): security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, universalism, self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement and power:

Security – values oriented towards security, harmony and stability in society, in relationships and persons; *Conformity* – values aimed at limiting actions that can injure others and violate social expectations or norms; *Tradition* – values expressing respect and acceptance of the customs and ideas that culture or religion impose on the person; *Benevolence* – values directed to preserving and maintaining the well-being of the people with whom we often have personal contacts; *Universalism* – values expressing tolerance and preservation of the well-being of all people and nature; *Self-direction* – values oriented towards desire for independence of thought and action; *Stimulation* – values related to pursuit of exciting life and risk taking; *Hedonism* – values united by the desire to satisfy needs; *Achievement* – values expressing the pursuit of personal success determined by social rather than personal internal standards; *Power* – values that aspire to social status and prestige, control over people and resources. Security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universalism are collectively-oriented values while self-direction,

stimulation, hedonism, achievement and power are individually-directed ones (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz, 2005).

2.2. Values in the years of emerging adulthood

A useful way of thinking about values is in terms of individualism and collectivism. The individualistic values are centred on the rights and needs of all people. An example of individualistic values can be freedom, independence, self-sufficiency, self-esteem, individual achievements, personal satisfaction and self-presentation. The collectivist values focus on human responsibilities to others. Examples of collectivist values could be loyalty, respect, generosity, obedience and sacrifice. Individualism and collectivism are the most commonly used dimensions for description of cultural differences in values. The U.S.A. is traditionally defined as individualistic culture, while Japan, China and other Asian countries – as collectivist cultures.

What Arnett observed is that emerging adults often have individualistic values (Arnett, 2004). The more interesting and surprising is that many of them pursue personal goals related to collectivist values that focus on the welfare of others. For many emerging adults, especially from ethnic minorities, collectivism and not individualism is the main moral language. The life of the emerging adults is reflected in the two types of values. Individualism and collectivism are not necessarily in opposition to one another. They can be part of the ideal of life that emerging adults share. The emerging adults can follow individualistic goals, but their individualism is often determined by collectivist values, such as care for the success and well-being of others (Arnett, 2004).

In 2015, the absence of research in the field of the developmental paradigm of emerging adulthood, focused on value choices among 18-29-year-old Bulgarian youths, led the two authors to the idea of conducting an empirical study among students in the same age range as well as comparative analysis of data from a study by K. Baytchinska – 1995 (Baytchinska, 1997) and M. Garvanova – 2005 (Garvanova, 2013). In other words, the aim of the comparative cohort study is to outline change and stability in the significance of basic individual values under the conditions of socio-political reorganization in Bulgaria after 1989, using the Schwartz's model (1992).

3. Research Questions

|We assume that in the long-term perspective the importance of both individually- and collectively oriented values will increase as a result of the age effects and the liberal socio-economic conditions in the country.|

4. Purpose of the Study

|Analysis of dynamics in the intensity of the ten value types in emerging adults, surveyed in 1995, 2005 and 2015 in Bulgaria is the main research task.|

5. Research Methods

A survey questionnaire was used in the three cross-sectional studies to measure *Schwartz's* values: *Schwartz Value Survey (SVS; Schwartz, 1992)*. The SVS consists of 30 terminal and 28 instrumental values as the later modifications to the questionnaire contained 57 or 56 values. By a 9-point scale (from 0 – not important to 7 – extremely important and [-1] – opposed to my values) the respondent was asked to assess the importance of each value as a guiding principle in his/her life. In cross-cultural approbation of the SVS, 44 values proved semantically unambiguous for all samples, namely, they participated in the formation of 10 value types, 2 bipolar dimensions and 2 types of value interests (for details see *Schwartz, 1992; Baytchinska, 1994; Garvanova, 2013*). The empirical data were processed with the statistical program *IBM SPSS Statistics 19*.

The total number of students surveyed in age range 18-29 was 644 people. Among them 232 individuals participated in 1995 (M = 22,53; SD = 2,59) – 118 (50,9%) men, 113 (48,7%) women and 1 (0,4 %) did not indicate their gender identity. 157 people were included in 2005 (M = 21,85; SD = 2,53), of whom men – 88 (56,1%) and women – 69 (43,9%). The number of students surveyed in 2015 was 255 (M = 22,86; SD = 3,86), among them 166 (65,1%) men and 89 (34,9%) women. They all study in different Bulgarian universities.

6. Findings

The most important results from One-Way ANOVA with independent variable “socio-historical time” and dependent variables “type of values” and Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons test are summarized in Table 1 for value types.

Table 1. Significance of value types among emerging adults – 1995, 2005 and 2015 (Descriptive Statistics, ANOVA & Post Hoc-test)

Value Type	Year/Group		Descriptives					ANOVA & LSD	
			N	M	SD	Min	Max	F, df = 2,641 (p)	LSD, p < 0,05
Security	1995	I gr.	232	4,82	0,89	2,00	6,80	61,70 (0,000)	III with I & II gr.
	2005	II gr.	157	4,69	0,92	1,40	6,40		
	2015	III gr.	255	5,56	0,87	1,20	7,00		
Conformity	1995	I gr.	232	4,38	1,10	0,25	6,50	117,32 (0,000)	III with I & II gr.
	2005	II gr.	157	4,34	0,86	1,50	6,25		
	2015	III gr.	255	5,57	0,92	1,75	7,00		
Tradition	1995	I gr.	232	3,13	1,24	-0,80	6,60	67,80 (0,000)	III with I & II gr.; I with II gr.
	2005	II gr.	157	2,71	1,28	-1,00	6,00		
	2015	III gr.	255	4,08	1,23	0,20	7,00		
Benevolence	1995	I gr.	232	4,50	1,07	-1,00	6,60	47,12 (0,000)	III with I & II gr.
	2005	II gr.	157	4,64	0,87	0,80	6,40		
	2015	III gr.	255	5,31	0,94	0,60	7,00		
Universalism	1995	I gr.	232	4,43	0,91	1,57	6,71	52,31 (0,000)	III with I & II gr.; I with II gr.
	2005	II gr.	157	3,97	0,92	1,00	5,86		
	2015	III gr.	255	4,93	0,99	1,14	6,86		

Self-direction	1995	I gr.	232	5,06	0,82	2,40	6,60	27,34 (0,000)	III with I & II gr.
	2005	II gr.	157	5,03	0,94	2,20	6,80		
	2015	III gr.	255	5,56	0,85	2,40	7,00		
Stimulation	1995	I gr.	232	4,02	1,35	-0,67	7,00	14,41 (0,000)	III with I & II gr.
	2005	II gr.	157	4,09	1,48	0,00	6,67		
	2015	III gr.	255	4,66	1,42	0,33	7,00		
Hedonism	1995	I gr.	232	4,34	1,58	-1,00	7,00	27,93 (0,000)	III with I & II gr.; I with II gr.
	2005	II gr.	157	4,64	1,52	-0,50	7,00		
	2015	III gr.	255	5,31	1,29	-0,50	7,00		
Achievement	1995	I gr.	232	4,74	1,02	1,00	6,75	19,66 (0,000)	III with I & II gr.
	2005	II gr.	157	4,66	1,04	1,25	7,00		
	2015	III gr.	255	5,22	0,97	0,50	7,00		
Power	1995	I gr.	232	3,84	1,26	-0,50	7,00	7,70 (0,000)	II with I & III gr.
	2005	II gr.	157	3,40	1,45	0,25	6,50		
	2015	III gr.	255	3,87	1,15	0,25	7,00		

Table 1 clearly shows that today's young people appreciate both individually- and collectively oriented values to a greater extent as compared to the older student cohorts ($p < 0,05$), which fits into the concept of the value priorities of emerging adults (Arnett, 2004). This finding can be considered as the first symptom of overcoming the crisis of values in post-totalitarian Bulgarian society that had registered social anomie and devaluation of both types of motivational goals in the early years of the democratic changes (Garvanova, 2013).

However, there is an interesting trend: collective value types and especially the values of conformity grow more intensively than individual ones. This result again corresponds with the determination of individualism by collectivist values postulated by Arnett, such as devotion and loyalty to the common interests of emerging adults (Arnett, 2004).

One could also say that *deficiency needs* such as security, conformity, tradition and power expressing the desire to preserve the status quo, material prosperity and social influence are basic. They show a stronger tendency to dominate over *growth needs* represented by benevolence, universalism, self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, and achievement and are a prerequisite for development of *self-actualization personality* (Maslow, 2001).

7. Conclusion

[The presented study was designed to track changes in the importance of basic individual values by the SVS among Bulgarian students aged 18-29, surveyed in three different phases of the historic transition to democracy in the country after the fall of communism in 1989 – 1995, 2005 and 2015. This youth formation is of particular interest as a target group because it reveals the complex initiation of young people into the adult world and the psychological mechanisms of their adaptation in the macro-social framework.

The mathematical and statistical analysis carried out shows that in the long-term perspective both the individually- and the collectively oriented value types have grown in the expected direction. In other words, in comparison with their predecessors the new student generations appreciate both individual

and collective values to a greater extent, which can be considered as a step towards overcoming the crisis of values in society, consistent with the global trends of value change and fitting into the life strategies of emerging adults. Also, the “diagnosis” of the study is that collective values grow more intensively and in 2015 they began to take precedence over the individual ones, thanks mostly to conformity. This finding probably is a compensatory response to the lack of commonly shared social values in the difficult and uncertain conditions of life in Bulgaria.

Despite the aggravated anticipation of the democratic principles still new to the Bulgarian society it can be said in summary that emerging adults, especially 18-29 year-old students are the great hope of the Bulgarian people to achieve national unity and prosperity by building political, economic and cultural elites of professionals with new moral and personal characteristics.

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