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**SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE VALUE OF  
PARENTS AND THEIR ADULT CHILDREN**

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***Abstract***

The present study explores values of two generation: parents and their adult children. The sample include 468 participants: 290 parents (59% – female), aged 37-69 (M = 49.5, SD = 7.2); 178 adult children (60% – female), aged 18-37 (M = 23.3, SD = 4.3). Parents and children filled Schwartz Portrait Values Questionnaire, adapted for the Russian population. Value hierarchies of parents and children were different. For the group of parents, the most important values were Security, Universalism, and Benevolence, less important – Achievement, Power, and Stimulation, while in the group of children, priority values were Self-Direction, Hedonism, and Benevolence and less important – Tradition, Conformity, and Power. Significant differences between parents and children were found in all values except Benevolence. Parents had higher scores for Security, Conformity, Tradition, and Universalism; adult children had higher scores for Self-Direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Achievement, and Power. The study showed intergenerational transmission of values Security, Tradition, Benevolence, and Universalism in the second level, and Conservation and Self-Transcendence in the third level. Correlation between the value systems of the mothers, in comparison with the fathers, and the value systems of their children were greater, which suggests that mothers have more influence on children’s formation of the structure of values than fathers.

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## 1. Introduction

Milton Rokeach was one of the founding thinkers in modern value theory research. He divided values into two major types: instrumental and terminal. Instrumental values are certain desired modes of behavior, including Honesty, Broad-mindedness, Helpfulness, Ambition, and others. Terminal values are ultimate life goals that people want to achieve over the course of their existence. In turn, terminal values can be divided into personal and social values. Rokeach was particularly interested in the transformation of an individual's value system over the course of his or her life. His hypothesis was that basic values are established by adolescence and remain stable in adulthood, only rarely being modified. The key factor that can change an individual's structure of values is self-dissatisfaction (Rokeach, Ball-Rokeach, 1989). Another influential direction in value research is rooted in sociology and associated with American sociologist Ronald Inglehart. Inglehart focused on social development as a factor in the transformation of the values of individuals from a particular culture. According to Inglehart, any culture can be analyzed from the viewpoint of its position on two bipolar scales where the axes measure survival values vs. self-expression values and traditional values vs. secular-rational values (Inglehart, Welzel, 2010).

The most popular value theory in psychology today is the theory of the organization of values proposed by Shalom Schwartz. According to Schwartz, values are concepts or beliefs that pertain to desirable states or behaviors of individuals. Values serve as points of reference in selecting or evaluating behaviors and events, they are ordered based on their relative importance, and their influence is not limited to specific situations (Schwartz, Bilsky, 1990).

Schwartz and Bilsky postulated that values are linked directly with three universal human requirements: biological needs, social needs, and group survival needs. The researchers carried out a large-scale study that spanned about 14 years and had more than 64,000 participants from 67 countries. Schwartz and Bilsky isolated 10 basic values and showed that value systems exhibited independence from cultural influences (Schwartz, 2007). The structure of values included the following: 1) Security (pursuit of individual and group security), 2) Tradition (maintenance of religious, national, and other traditions), 3) Benevolence (a desire to support the well-being of others), 4) Universalism (responsibility for the welfare of all people and nature), 5) Self-Direction (ability to act independently and hold opinions that are independent of the opinion of the majority), 6) Stimulation (pursuit of risk, novelty, and change), 7) Achievement (focus on personal success), 8) Conformity (wanting to meet social expectations), 9) Hedonism (seeking pleasure), and 10) Power (drive for domination).

Schwartz represented the structure of values using a circular diagram. The circle of values has two bipolar dimensions. The first—Self-Transcendence vs. Self-Enhancement—characterizes an individual's attitude toward other people. The second—Openness to Change vs. Conservation—reflects the individual's attitude toward change, novelty, and uncertainty.

## 2. Problem Statement

Many studies showed intergenerational differences in values (Strauss, Howe, 1991; Moskvicheva et al., 2016). Differences in values between generations could be explained by developmental processes

across the life span. With age people become more conservative, more prone to collectivist attitudes, less open to new experiences (Smith, Schwartz, 1997; Stevens-Long, 1990).

Values are formed with the influence of one's parental family, which means that intergenerational transmission of values is an important part of the socialization process (Sabatier, Lannegrand-Willems, 2005; Roest et al., 2009; Moskvicheva et al., 2016; Tulviste, Tamm, 2014; Roest et al., 2009; Barni et al., 2011, 2012, and others). This transmission process is believed to occur in two stages. First, children must understand—or, more precisely, comprehend—their parents' values. Second, the children must decide whether to accept or reject these values. Thus, for example, in a study by Barni (Barni et al., 2011), adolescents were asked to select values that were most important to their parents. These values were then compared with the values that the adolescents had marked as important to themselves. Differences were observed in values such as Tradition and Stimulation. The children rejected Tradition and expressed a desire for novel experiences.

The process of the transmission of values is shaped by numerous factors. Researchers cite the quality of parent-child relations as one of the most important of these factors. High-conflict and negative family relations can result in the rejection of parental values, whereas positive relations facilitate value transmission. Research by Roest and colleagues (2009) demonstrated that the values of mothers and children are more similar in families with warm and close climates. Another publication by Barni et al. (2013) compared the similarity between the values of parents and their adolescent children (15 to 18 years old) with the similarity between the values of parents and their adult children (20 to 25 years old). The researchers concluded that correlation between the values of parents and their adult children was much greater than in the case of adolescent children. This is attributed to the fact that relations between parents and their children often improve as the children grow up, and that adult children are therefore more willing to accept their parents' values.

### **3. Research Questions**

We hypothesize that the generation of young Russians who have grown up during the time of social and economic reforms will show higher importance of openness to change values than generation of their parents.

The period of adolescence is paramount for value development (Rohan & Zanna, 1996), and the participants of the most studies of value structure or value transmission, are adolescents. However, negative family relations at that period can increase intergenerational differences and negatively affect parent-child values transmission. While at adult age the structure of values is already formed, and the parent-child relationships exert less influence. For this reason we investigated family values in families with adult children.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The main goal of our research was to analyze differences in the value hierarchies of the group of parents and the group of adult children, and to assess intergenerational transmission of values.

## 5. Research Methods

The sample included representatives of two generations, the older generation (the parents, 290 men and women with children over the age of 18) and the younger generation (their children, 178 people). A total of 468 individuals participated in the study. Table 01 presents the demographic breakdown of the sample.

As of the time of the study, all participants resided in Moscow or the Moscow region. The study was conducted in 2016.

Values were assessed using the Schwartz Portrait Values Questionnaire, adapted for the Russian population by Magun and Rudnev (2008). The questionnaire consists of 21 descriptions of individuals that correspond to “first level” values. “Second level” values—typological value indexes—are calculated by adding up the “first level” values. Second-level values include Security, Conformity, Tradition, Self-Direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Achievement, Power, Benevolence, and Universalism. Third-level values are aggregated second-level values and include Conservation (Security, Conformity, and Tradition), Openness to Change (Self-Direction, Stimulation, and Hedonism), Self-Enhancement (Achievement and Power), and Self-Transcendence (Benevolence and Universalism).

**Table 01.** Sex, age, and education level of study participants

Group	Mean Age	Sex	Education Level
Parents	49.5 (SD = 7.2)	59% women, 41% men	Higher education (68%) Secondary vocational education (32%)
Adult Children	23.3 (SD = 4.3)	60% women, 40% men	College students (73%) Higher education (25%) Secondary vocational education (2%)

The results were analyzed using Student’s t-criterion and Spearman’s correlation coefficient. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 19 software.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Intergenerational Differences in Second-Level Values

Table 02 presents the hierarchies of value preferences of parents and their adult children. For the group of parents, the most popular values are Security, Universalism, and Benevolence, while the group of adult children prioritizes Self-Direction, Hedonism, and Benevolence. The least preferred values for the group of parents are Achievement, Power, and Stimulation, while the group of adult children is least motivated by Tradition, Conformity, and Power.

**Table 02.** Estimated means and standard deviations (SD) of values in compared groups

Parents			Adult Children		
Value	Mean	SD	Value	Mean	SD
Security	4.68	1.14	Self-Direction	4.72	0.96
Universalism	4.68	0.95	Hedonism	4.65	1.07
Benevolence	4.66	1.01	Benevolence	4.63	1.04

Self-Direction	4.49	1.06	Achievement	4.33	1.22
Tradition	4.23	1.18	Universalism	4.33	0.99
Conformity	3.81	1.22	Stimulation	4.25	1.31
Hedonism	3.73	1.28	Security	4.15	1.25
Achievement	3.55	1.27	Power	3.83	1.24
Power	3.44	1.21	Tradition	3.26	1.13
Stimulation	3.25	1.30	Conformity	3.01	1.19

Differences between parents and children in second-level values were calculated using Student's t-criterion (See Table 03).

**Table 03.** Differences in values between two generations

Value	Mean		t	p
	Parents	Adult Children		
Security	4.68	4.15	4.7	0.00
Conformity	3.81	3.01	6.9	0.00
Tradition	4.23	3.26	8.8	0.00
Self-Direction	4.49	4.72	-2.3	0.02
Stimulation	3.25	4.25	-8.0	0.00
Hedonism	3.73	4.65	-8.1	0.00
Achievement	3.55	4.33	-6.6	0.00
Power	3.44	3.83	-3.4	0.00
Benevolence	4.66	4.53	1.4	0.16
Universalism	4.68	4.33	3.9	0.00

Table 03 shows that significant differences between parents and children were found in all second-level values except Benevolence. Overall, parents had higher scores for the following indicators: Security, Conformity, Tradition, and Universalism. Adult children, in turn, had higher indicators for Self-Direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Achievement, and Power.

Table 04 presents mean data for third-level values, which Schwartz proposes as aggregate categories compared to second-level values.

**Table 04.** Comparison of third-level value means for parents and children

Value	Mean		t	p
	Parents	Adult Children		
Conservation	25.45	20.84	8.73	0.00
Openness to Chance	22.95	27.24	-8.44	0.00
Self-Enhancement	13.97	16.33	-5.72	0.00
Self-Transcendence	23.37	22.03	3.23	0.00

Table 04 shows a significant difference between parents and children in all four third-level values. For the group of parents, Conservation and Self-Transcendence scores are higher overall, while for the group of children, Openness to Change and Self-Enhancement scores are higher.

At the most integrated level, third-level values are combined into two value dimensions (axes): Openness to Change vs. Conservation, and Self-Transcendence vs. Self-Enhancement. Statistically significant differences between parents and children were identified on these axes.

Overall, the children prioritize Openness to Change and Self-Enhancement, while the parents give preference to Conservation and Self-Transcendence (See Table 05).

Please note that a negative sign before the score for Openness to Change vs. Conservation shows that an individual prioritizes the values of tradition and conservatism, while a positive indicator shows a preference for Openness to Change over conservative values. In turn, a positive indicator for the Self-Transcendence vs. Self-Enhancement dimension means that the individual prioritizes values related to concern for others, while a negative sign shows preference for values related to self-enhancement.

**Table 05.** Differences in value dimensions between two generations

Value	Mean		t	p
	Parents	Adult Children		
Openness to Change vs. Conservation	-2.50	6.39	-11.98	0.00
Self-Transcendence vs. Self-Enhancement	9.40	5.70	6.80	0.00

## 6.2. Correlation Between the Values of Parents and Children

Values held by fathers show relatively little correlation with the values of their children (See Table 06). Only two values of fathers, Tradition and Universalism, show correlation with values of their children. Universalism in fathers correlates with Universalism, Tradition, and Benevolence in children. Tradition in fathers correlates with Security, Conformity, and Universalism in children.

**Table 06.** Correlation between the second-level values of parents and children

Values of Fathers	Values of Adult Children				
	Security	Conformity	Tradition	Benevolence	Universalism
Tradition	0.22	0.24			0.23
Universalism	0.25			0.25	0.30
Values of Mothers					
Security	0.23				
Conformity	0.30			0.35	0.37
Tradition			0.26		
Hedonism	0.24	0.22			
Benevolence				0.28	
Universalism				0.26	

*Note: Table 6 presents only significant correlations, where the level of significance is <0.05.*

The mothers' structure of values exhibits much more correlation with the values of their adult children than the fathers' structure of values. There is a positive correlation between Security for adult children and Security, Conformity, and Hedonism for their mothers. There is also a positive correlation between mothers' Conformity and the adult children's Benevolence and Universalism.

Table 07 summarizes correlation in third-level values.

Parents' prioritization of Conservation and Self-Transcendence affects the formation of these values in their children. Mothers' Conservation correlates positively with Self-Transcendence in children. No significant correlation was observed between other values.

**Table 07.** Correlation between the third-level values of parents and children

Values of Fathers	Values of Adult Children			
	Conservation	Openness to Change	Self-Enhancement	Self-Transcendence
Conservation	0.24*	-0.08	0.10	0.19
Openness to Change	-0.19	0.10	0.02	0.00
Self-Enhancement	0.00	0.19	0.04	0.07
Self-Transcendence	0.07	0.12	0.12	0.26*
Values of Mothers				
Conservation	0.25*	0.04	0.17	0.28*
Openness to Change	0.02	0.13	-0.07	0.14
Self-Enhancement	0.03	0.10	-0.01	0.17
Self-Transcendence	0.12	0.00	0.18	0.24*

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ .

## 7. Conclusion

Differences were identified between the value hierarchies of parents and children. In the group of parents, the most important values were Security, Universalism, and Benevolence, while in the group of children, priority values were Self-Direction, Hedonism, and Benevolence. Stimulation was the least important value for parents, while Conformity was least valued by children. The obtained data do not match the results of a different Russian study (Moskvicheva et al., 2016), in which adolescents named Security, Universalism, and Conformity as the most important values, and do partially correspond to results collected in Estonia (Tulviste, Tamm, 2014).

The use of Schwartz's Portrait Values Questionnaire demonstrated a significant difference between the parents' and children's structures of values. For all second-level values except Benevolence, statistically significant intergenerational differences were found. Overall, parents had higher scores in Security, Conformity, Tradition, and Universalism, while respondents in the group of children had higher scores in Self-Direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Achievement, and Power. There were significant differences between parents and children in all four third-level values: parents had higher Conservation and Self-Transcendence, while children prioritized Openness to Change and Self-Enhancement. Statistically significant differences were also uncovered in value dimension indicators calculated for parents and children. Overall, children tended toward Openness to Change and Self-Enhancement, while

parents were more disposed toward Conservation and Self-Transcendence. These results match those of numerous studies showing that with age people become more conservative, more prone to collectivist attitudes, less open to new experiences, and less inclined toward self-enhancement values (Smith, Schwartz, 1997; Stevens-Long, 1990).

However, the differences found in the current sample may also have another explanation, one linked with the large-scale changes that occurred in Russia in the 1990s. The overwhelming majority of respondents in the group of children were born after 1991, after the transformation in the system of government that triggered tectonic changes in Russian society and in the lives of Russian citizens. The children's personalities were formed during a transitional period, which could result in a very different structure of values for the children compared to that of the parents, who were born and grew up in the USSR.

The results do support the existence of intergenerational transmission for the values of Security, Tradition, Benevolence, and Universalism in the second level, and Conservation and Self-Transcendence in the third level. There is greater correlation between the value systems of the mothers and the value systems of their children, which suggests that mothers have greater influence on children's formation of the structure of values than fathers. Similar results were obtained by Moskvicheva et al. (2016). However, no transmission of values from parents to children was identified for the values of Stimulation, Achievement, Power, Openness to Change, and Self-Direction.

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