

PSYRGGU 2020

Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

VALUES STABILITY AND CHANGES FOR ADOLESCENTS FROM DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

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Abstract

Self-determination in the value system is the key developmental task in adolescence. The aim of our research was to study the cohort differences and stability in the value sphere in adolescence. Methods: Sh. Schwartz's questionnaires - Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) and Portrait Values Questionnaire-Revised (PVQ-R), were used. The data consists of 3 cohort samples of adolescents: the first sample was gathered in 1997-1998, the second one – in 2003-2005; the third - in 2018. The gender composition included 52% of boys and 48% of girls. The complete data include 727 adolescents aged from 14 to 18; Results: benevolence, achievements, self-direction, and security values are consistently most important; power, tradition values are least important; and security, conformity, universalism and hedonism are in between. Values order for three samples was revealed by cohort comparative analysis. Conclusions: Significant differences in the hierarchy of values of the age cohorts of adolescents by cuts 1997–1998, 2003–2005 and 2018 were revealed. The importance of values of achievement, self-direction and security decreases and the importance of values of benevolence and hedonism increases. Gender differences indicate a tendency of increasing the value of hedonism among men and values of benevolence and security among girls.

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Keywords: Adolescence, cohort differences, development, value, values hierarchy.



1. Introduction

Self-determination is the main goal of personality development in adolescence. Value priorities and value hierarchy is one of the crucial forms of self-determination. Adolescence as the transition period between childhood and adulthood propose many life situations with complicated choices that help to recognize personal value priorities. Social situation of development proposed by Vygotsky (1984) defines specific social and historical conditions where values develop. Theoretical background of our study was the cultural-historical activity-based approach (Leontyev, 1981; Vygotsky, 1983). The starting point was thesis that both variability and stability of the personal values hierarchy and their semantic content are determined by historical development of society, aggregate social practice and achievements of human progress. Our research was aimed to study the adolescent's personal values in post-industrial, information society in era of globalization and the expansion of intercultural relations and cooperation. The age-psychological approach, which determines the patterns of development of the value sphere of the individual, constituted the theoretical basis of our research. When planning the study, we proceeded, firstly, from the statement that the development of the value-semantic sphere is carried out as the transmission of values from generation to generation. Secondly, the development of the value sphere occurs as a movement from knowledge to conviction, as an ability to be guided in its behavior and activities by the cultural norm that determines the essence of value, and, finally, to conscious acceptance the value system as the basis for constructing one's life path. Thirdly, in ontogenesis there is a regular development of values and meanings, and, fourthly, the task of constructing the value sphere becomes the developmental task in adolescence and youth. The fundamental characteristic of the modern stage of the history of society is uncertainty and multiplicity, which in turn is determined by its transitivity (Martsinkovskaya & Dubovskaya, 2018). Constructing one's own value system — as the key developmental task in adolescence in the absence of unity of opinions of various social groups, is an extremely complex process. Adolescents are actively looking for guidance at this stage of their lives to assess what is happening to them and around them. The modern social situation is unfavorable for such searches, since on the one hand, the breaking of the Soviet normative value structure led to a contradiction in the minds of the older generation, and on the other hand, the active generation does not yet have a holistic value picture of the world. The infinity of the individual variants of the life path is connected with the historical context and the socio-cultural situation of development. Social transitivity and a high degree of multiplicity and uncertainty of the social context associated with the acceleration of changes in society and the plurality of simultaneously existing variants of types of societies (available due to globalization and the possibilities of modern communication) determine the high risks of socialization of the individual in adolescence. The task of constructing your own value system that a teenager is facing is changing: if earlier it was about mastering the “right” normative-value structure and rejecting the “wrong”, then now you need to navigate in a variety of ideas and form your own, which determines your personal outlook on life (Molchanov, 2007). The actual task is to monitor the content of the values of the adolescent population and to study the conditions for the development of the personal value structure and the possibilities of its purposeful formation.

2. Problem Statement

Theoretical analysis of psychological approaches to the study of values and social attitudes, depending on an understanding of their nature, genesis and function in the regulation of human activity, allowed us to identify three main trends. 1. Values - as a product of the development of society and culture, crystallizing the cumulative experience of social practice and determining the vector of development of society at the stage of its historical development. (Weber, 2002; Parsons, 1971). Human behavior is determined by the "set" of values that dominate society in accordance with the historical epoch and the socio-cultural situation. The content of values is determined by the specifics of social organization. Value orientations as the highest level of the dispositional system are determined by the system of values of the social community with which the person identifies himself. 2. Values - as motivating attitudes, determined by the nature of satisfaction of basic human needs (Maslow, 1964). Human bio-psychological needs are recognized as a source of values. The focus is on the usefulness of things, objects, nature for man. Value is considered as a need, interest, choice and attitude. In neo-Freudian theories (Fromm, 1968) the concept of "value" is close to the concept of "need", and the nature of values does not exclude the influence of society. However, value is appeared as the result of personal development rather than the product of society. Value is understood as a supraindividual reality, and as a primary affective-semantic education, an individual psychological structure (Leontyev, 2019); as a motivating personality structure (Leontyev, 2019). 3. Values are considered as a semantic structures, source and embodiment of personality-significant meanings (Frankl, 1990; Leontyev, 1981; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987; Vygotsky, 1983). Values are generated in the active interaction of the individual and society, constructing personal meaning and embodying it in human activity, as the personal attitude towards the world, society, nature. Thus, values are the most important internal regulator of the activity and behavior of an individual, determined by the motives, needs, dispositions and meanings of activity, the genesis of which is associated with the internalization of social attitudes, ideals and norms in a socio-cultural historically changing social situation of personality development.

The theory of universal content and structure of values of Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) considers values as representations of goals, criteria for the selection and evaluation of human actions and events (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). The theory of universal values opens up the possibility of considering values in the unity of their socio-normative nature, motivational-need and semantic orientation in accordance with the directions of the study of values outlined above. Values should be considered both as motivational attitudes that realize basic human needs, as the human socio-cultural heritage and products of socio-historical development, and as semantic structures, which generally expands the range of their interpretation and creates a basis for highlighting the universal value matrix, determining the genesis and the formation of the value sphere of the personality. The problem is to study which values are universal and do not change with socio-cultural conditions and which values of adolescents change due to changes in the socio-cultural development situation nowadays.

3. Research Questions

The following questions were raised in the study.

3.1 What values of adolescents are universal and do not change due to changes in socio-cultural and historical conditions of development?

3.2 What values are sensitive to socio-cultural and historical changes, which is a priority for the modern cohort of adolescents, compared with the values of adolescents during the period of “perestroika” and economic stabilization of society?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of our research was to study the cohort differences in the value sphere of adolescents. We compared adolescent cohorts of 1997–98 (“perestroika”), 2003–2005 (economic stabilization), and 2018 (modern society).

Research objectives included:

1. Identification of the peculiarities of the value priorities of the cohort of Russian adolescents during the perestroika period.
2. Identification of the value preferences of Russian adolescents during the period of economic stabilization.
3. Identification of the characteristics of the value sphere of modern Russian adolescents.
4. The definition of universal values that are the same in adolescents of the three cohorts.
5. Identification of cohort differences in teenagers' preferences for values.
6. Studying the gender characteristics of value preferences by adolescents.

5. Research Methods

Data were collected for three samples - cohort groups: 201 subjects aged 15 to 17 years (47% of young people and 53% of girls), according to data obtained in 1997-98; 133 subjects aged between 14 and 17 years old (51% of young people and 48% of girls), according to data obtained in 2003–2005, 393 of those under study aged between 14 and 18 years old (46% of young people and 54% of girls), according to data obtained in 2018. The complete data include 727 adolescents aged from 14 to 18. Sh. Schwartz's questionnaires - Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) and Portrait Values Questionnaire-Revised (PVQ-R), were used to study the values of adolescents. The PVQ was used in studies of 1997 and 2003, and a revised version of the questionnaire (PVQ-R) in 2018.

6. Findings

6.1 Values of modern Russian adolescents

The results of the value hierarchies of the cohort of contemporary Russian adolescents are presented in Table 1.

Table 01. Value order (data from 2018), combined into a construct of 12 values

Value	Rank	Mean	St.deviation
Benevolence	1	5,10	0,68
Hedonism	2	4,89	0,78
Face	3-4	4,79	0,89
Self-Direction	3-4	4,74	0,73
Achievement	5-6	4,65	0,83
Stimulation	5-6	4,58	0,80
Security	7	4,46	0,79
Universalism	8	4,22	0,76
Traditions	9-11	3,99	1,15
Humility	9-11	3,94	0,91
Conformity	9-11	3,85	0,90
Power	12	3,56	1,12

As can be seen from the above data for contemporary Russian adolescents, the most significant is the value of benevolence, which is statistically significantly preferred by everyone else (Wilcoxon test, $p \leq 0.05$). The value of hedonism was consistently more significant compared with all the values that are lower in the hierarchy. Then, in the hierarchy of values, face and self-direction turn out to be more significant than achievements and other values. This is followed by a pair - achievements and stimulation. Next in rank is security. Further, universalism and a group of values - traditions, humility, conformity. The power is the least important value for adolescents.

6.2. Comparative analysis of values hierarchy for cohort samples

The following differences of the hierarchy of values of the two cohorts - the late 90-s and 2003-2005 were revealed (Table 02).

Table 02. Significant differences in the values hierarchy of cohorts (the late 90-s and early 2000-s).

Rank	Cohort 1997-1998	Cohort 2003-2005	Significant differences between cohorts (U criterion, ($p=0.05$))
1	Achievement	Achievement	Achievement * **
2	Self-Direction	Benevolence	Benevolence * **
3	Benevolence	Security	Security **
4	Security	Self-Direction	
5	Stimulation	Hedonism	Hedonism *
6	Hedonism	Stimulation	
7	Universalism	Conformity	Conformity * **
8	Conformity	Universalism	Universalism * **
9	Power	Traditions	Traditions * **
10	Traditions	Power	

Notes: *significant differences between the means of the importance of values for a sample of men (the 2003-2005 cohort gives higher scores);
 **significant differences between the means of the importance of values for the sample of women (2003-2005 cohort gives higher scores).

Significant differences in the hierarchy of values of the age cohort of adolescents in the cuts of 1999 and 2003-2005 were discovered. The transformation of values is manifested in the increasing importance of values of achievement, benevolence, security, hedonism, conformity and traditions among the generation of the early 2000s. At the same time, there is a tendency to reduce the significance of the universalism. The essential similarity of the hierarchy of values is that values of achievement, benevolence and security, as well as self-regulation, occupy places at the top of the hierarchy, but power and tradition values have a relatively low significance. Gender differences within cohorts, indicating a tendency to increase the value of hedonism for boys and the value of safety for girls, are revealed. The results of the study of value preferences for three cohorts are presented in Table 03.

Table 03. Differences in the values hierarchy for age cohorts of the late 90s, 2003-2005 and 2018.

Rank	Cohort 1997-1998	Cohort 2003-2005	Cohort 2018
1	Achievement	Achievement	Benevolence
2	Self-Direction	Benevolence	Hedonism
3	Benevolence	Security	Face
4	Security	Self-Direction	Self-Direction
5	Stimulation	Hedonism	Achievement
6	Hedonism	Stimulation	Stimulation
7	Universalism	Conformity	Security
8	Conformity	Universalism	Universalism
9	Power	Traditions	Traditions
10	Traditions	Power	Humility
11			Conformity
12			Power

The cohort of 2018 is characterized by increase in the significance of the benevolence with a sharp increase of hedonism and a significant decrease in the value of one's own achievements and security. The importance of face value is growing. There is a significant decrease in the importance of security compared to both previous cohorts. The group of unimportant values still consists of the values of universalism, traditions, humility, conformity and power. Power values are located at the bottom of the hierarchy, with very high consensus for all cohort samples regarding their relatively low importance. Comparative statistical analysis aimed to reveal significant differences for the cohorts of 1998, 2005 and 2018 was not performed, because the different versions of the Schwartz questionnaires were used. The analysis shows that the values of conservation (humility, conformity, tradition, security) are no longer relevant for young people except value face. At the same time, the values of self-assertion, such as hedonism and face play a more significant role. Face in the semantic space is located between the values of preservation and self-affirmation and is associated with the fear of personal humiliation, awareness of the lack of social competencies, i.e. rather, the desire for psychological stability, rather than physical, rather, the desire for psychological stability, rather than physical, which is reflected in the value of security. Orientation towards caring for a close social environment (favor) and striving for non-costly pleasure (hedonism) combined with a decrease in the importance of safety, due to the absence of real dangers other than reputation risks; combined with a decrease in the significance of achievements as a result of one's own efforts, constitute a new value

hierarchy. A cohort analysis revealed gender differences that indicate a tendency of increasing the value of hedonism among young men and values of benevolence and security among girls.

7. Conclusion

The results of a cohort study of the adolescents allowed us to establish both the differences and the similarity of the hierarchy of value preferences. The transformation of values is as follows. The importance of values of achievement, self-direction and security decreases and the importance of values of benevolence and hedonism increases. The latter gives rise to a contradiction between the social and ego-centric orientation of the individual. The new value hierarchy may be due to the powerful influence of informational socialization, immersion of adolescents in the digital world and the perception of the environment through the prism of the opportunities and dangers that the “digital reality” provides. The similarities and differences in the hierarchy of values in different cohorts are associated with the peculiarities of the socio-cultural situation of historical time, in particular, with specific social situation of development at the macro level for each of the cohort samples of adolescents. A group of teenagers in the cohort of the late 90-s developed in an unstable and dangerous world (a continuing military campaign in Chechnya, widely reported in the press; an increase in terrorist attacks and violence; a low socio-economic income level of the population). This is why security is important to teens. Adolescents 2004-2005 grew up in more stable conditions (cessation of armed operations and peace in Chechnya, lack of terrorist attacks, improvement in the general socio-economic income level of the population), which determined the growth of benevolence while maintaining high value security. 2018 cohort respondents found themselves in a situation of reduced stability (increased financial instability, deterioration of the level of socio-economic well-being of the population, militarization of the public consciousness through the media, etc.) with the increasing importance of consumption. This determined a significant increase in the value of hedonism as a compensatory-defensive life strategy while reducing the significance of the value of achievement. The peculiarities of the hierarchy of values are determined by the age-psychological specificity of the sample, as well as by changing the communication, interaction and cooperation in the virtual space, the transition from generation Y to generation Z, for which the Internet, gadgets, digital reality and means of distant communication are habitat, livelihoods and developmental context. Age-related psychological characteristics - focus on the growth of autonomy and the exploration of the world, determine a rather high significance of self-direction and stimulation values for all cohorts. The similarity of the values order is expressed in the priority of values of benevolence, achievements and self-direction, and in the relatively low significance of the values of power and traditions. The differences and similarity of the order in values hierarchy could be explained by its adaptive functions in meeting the requirements of successful societal functioning. The results of the research are in good agreement with the results of the studies of S. Schwartz. The constancy of the significance of the values of traditions, public security, humility regardless of the characteristics of the socio-cultural situation indicate the universal nature of these values. Comparative analysis of the system of values of different cohort samples of adolescents allows us to consider the values of self-direction, benevolence, achievements, security and universalism as universal, retaining high importance regardless of historical time, gender and personal characteristics, which provides a balanced system of value priorities and creates favourable conditions for personal development.

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