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GENERATION Z VALUE PREFERENCES AND THEIR SOCIOCULTURAL DETERMINANTS

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Abstract

The article grounds the authors' structural-behavioral model of public values, based on the values system of a person and social communities as about a hierarchical, dynamic, heterogeneous system, and suggesting determining three value types: adaptable (commitment to order, health, material wealth), socialized (family, career, public acceptance) and individualizing (personal fulfilment, freedom, tolerance). The research based on the selection of 1251 representatives of generation "Z", by methods based on this model allowed determining common values for a modern generation: de-emphasis of interpersonal relation values and emphasizing individual values, increasing anomie. The factors determining the quality peculiarities of the value structure for the generation "Z" have been specified: gender, ethnic, confessional, regional and professional belonging. Herewith, despite the importance of these socio-demographic and socio-cultural factors for differentiation the modern youth by values, their importance is less noticeable comparing with further generations that can evidence a certain levelling of social and cultural peculiarities between different youth groups due to globalization. It has been determined that belonging to a confession and regional socio cultural environment of generation "Z" is the main factor of forming some type of values. These regularities determine possibility to forecast transformation of public values and corresponding changes in social behaviour. They allow determining possible trends in socio-psychological and psychological pedagogical influence aimed at the establishing of pro-social hierarchy of values.

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1. Introduction

Social and psychological changes in the postmodern society are accompanied by a significant transformation in the system of values. As Inglehart notes, today the changes in public values influence significantly economic, political and social spheres (as cited in Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Correspondingly, social and cultural changes conditioning transformation in value system are more value determined that makes their interconnection two-sided. This value dynamics is evident not only at the level of a society on the whole but at the level of an individual, influencing first of all, a person formed today in the conditions of the changing social environment. All the mentioned determines the topicality of studying the structure of popular values and their determinants necessary to establish possible ways of psychological and pedagogical influence aimed at establishment of prosocial values hierarchy. It requires relevant psychological structure of public values.

Common theoretical and methodological grounds of our model are scientific ideas about value systems of a person and social communities as a hierarchical, dynamic and heterogenic system. Level models of value systems based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs are the most important for our work from the methodological point of view. He considered their psychological origin as a basic criterion of values differentiation. His model includes two interdependent groups of values in the form of a two-level hierarchical system: low-level D-values (diminished, or formed due to dissatisfaction in some needs), and high-level B-values (existential, connected with meta-needs and self-fulfillment needs). Here fulfillment of lower needs is a necessary condition for formation and actualization of higher needs (Maslow, 1968).

Inglehart basing on Maslow's concept determines "material" (physiological) and "post-materialistic" values. They have different origin, stated as "insufficiency hypothesis" and "socialization hypothesis". At the same time, post-materialist values in Inglehart's classification are divided into two groups – social and self-actualization values, determined by the commitment to "belonging" or self-development (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

Klages' (1994) conception as a possible alternative to R. Inglehart model determines values of social duty and acknowledgement (discipline, order and obedience) and self-actualization values (creativity, self-estimation and freedom). Commitment to one of these value systems is determined as "normocentric" or "autocentric" or commitment to social norms or own convictions. Motivation theory by Alderfer (2013) which dates back to A. Maslow's works commits the values with the predominance of existential needs, belonging and growth. This approach describing a vertical hierarchy of vital, social and individual values unites the classifications by R. Inglehart and H. Klages.

Basing on these approaches we have developed own structural-dynamic model of value systems for a person and community, based on the existence of three main types of value systems with different origin (Yanitskiy, 2012). The theoretical grounds of this model can be formulated as follows:

1. At different levels of an individual development commitment to norms and values of the social surrounding successively determined by the striving to avoid punishment and receive stimulation, commitment to the significant others, inner autonomous value system. These stages, called preconventional, conventional, and postconventional, successively alternate during the life-time. Every stage can be the last one and the level of personal development achieved becomes an individual type.

2. The process of personal dynamics dominating at a given stage is the most significant in formation of personal values system. These processes are: adaptation, elimination of anxiety and keeping balance in the system a person-environment via modification of a value system; socialization, reflecting inner acceptance (or non-acceptance) of values meaningful for others; individualization aimed at developing own autonomous value system.

3. These processes successively form a “protective”, “borrowed” and autonomous levels or layers of personal values system. Fixing on some stage of personal development determines a corresponding level in the individual value system, which in its turn, forms an analogous personality type: “adapting”, “socializing” or “individual”.

4. The popular value system can be represented as a combination of personal types, adaptation value centered (driving to physical and economy safety) socialization (commitment to the social norms and values) or individualization (commitment to self-development and self-actualization). The relation of these value types in a certain society is determined by social-demographic factors, influencing the predominance of adaptation processes, socialization or individualization in the personal development.

Applying the model on different selections gave results indicating significant differences of the contemporary Russian society from the Western one. These differences focus on values associated with suppression of the demand in economic and physical security. It stresses the significance of social-economic and demographic conditions in forming popular value structure in the Russian society, and first of all, the new generation.

2. Problem Statement

The youth value system is usually of a special interest for researchers, as a new generation does not only perceive values of the older generation but also forms a value system of the future society. Thus, the youth is a subject of the historical development, the source of new experience, the most important resource of the society which has an innovative function. According to Howe and Strauss (2007), every new generation has their own scale of values and shows their attitude to the family life, career, and mobility and so on. Herewith, according to R. Inglehart, these differences are conditioned by the peculiarities of socio-economic position of the birth cohorts during the development of their value systems.

The youngest generation is called “Generation Z” which according to Howe and Strauss (2007), includes all young people born after 1995. The peculiarities of Generation “Z” socialization are naturally associated with their value preferences. According to the most number of authors formation of Generation “Z” value systems in postmodern society and in globalization determines its post-materialistic trend. A certain conflict of value systems arises between this generation and the one of the forerunners manifested by the disposition of the most part of generation “Z” from the traditional value system (Danilov et al., 2017). At the same time as many researchers think most young people have no value system or it is disintegrated, they lose the meaning of life which complicates the socialization and further personal fulfillment. At the same time many authors admit that inhomogeneity of generation “Z” in value system is connected with the informative polyphony or overflow resulting in the value “split” among the contemporary youth.

3. Research Questions

It is evident that the value system of a new generation cannot be homogenous as it is formed under the influence of common, global factors, corresponding to the contemporary stage of development of the civilization but also depends on the peculiarities of the local socio-cultural. However, the influence of these factors on the value system of Generation “Z” is still under studies. All said above determined the research problems: 1. To verify empirically the structural-dynamic model of the personal value system and that one of the social community; 2. To characterize the popular value system of generation “Z”; 3. To study the influence of social-demographic and ethno-cultural factors of its formation.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to characterize the popular value system of the generation “Z” and estimating the influence of social-demographic and ethno-cultural determinants of its development.

5. Research Methods

To study the popular value system of the youth we used the methodology allowing manifesting commitment to values of adaptation (survival and safety) and socialisation (social approval or individualisation, independence and self-development) (Yanitskiy, 2012). This methodology is based on selecting by respondents the most important values from the list given, including indicators of commitment to these groups of values. Respondents belonging to some social and cultural environment were estimated by the questionnaire survey including the close-ended questions about sex, age, nationality, confession, place of residence and education.

1251 respondent took part in the survey, at the age from 16 to 30 years, including 839 girls and 412 young men. The whole selection was divided into the following age groups: early youth (16–17 years) – 126 people; youth (18–19 years) – 616 people; late youth (20–23 years) – 474 people; adulthood (24 and older) – 34 people. The group included 892 Russians, 139 Buryats, 125 Ukrainians, 95 other nationalities (in general minor people and immigrants from the nearshore). According to the confession the group included Orthodox followers – 510 people; followers of other religions (mostly other Christian confessions, Muslims and Buddhists) – 261 people; people considering themselves followers but do not referring to any confession – 244; atheists – 233. According to the place of residence the respondents referred to one of the following regions: Siberia (Kemerovo, Chita, Ulan-Ude) – 515 people; Far East (Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski) – 462; Central Russia (mostly Moscow and Moscow region) – 157; the Ukraine (Rovno, Khmelnutski, Ternopol and others) – 117. By the education the respondents were divided into humanitarian (659 students), natural science and engineering groups (573 students). Respondents’ belonging to some social and cultural environment was estimated by questionnaire survey with close-end questions about sex, age, nationality, confession, place of residence and education.

6. Findings

According to the choice the respondents were divided into one of the value types: “adaptable” (commitment to order, health, and wealth) – 26 %; “socialising” (family, career, social approve) – 33 %; “individualizing” (self-actualization, freedom, tolerance) – 9 %. The rest 32 % were referred to the intermediate type. To compare, when studying the value system of the youth of generation “Y” in 2006–2007, 27 % respondents were committed to the values of adaptation, 49 % to socialization, 3 % to individualization and 20 % referred to the intermediate type (Yanitskiy, 2012). These results prove the tendency of value system transformation characteristic for the post-modern society, and in certain decrease of interpersonal relations value and increase of personal autonomy, with the simultaneous increase people undecided in value systems, that is increase of popular anomie.

At the same time the structure of popular value system of generation “Z” depends on their belonging to a certain gender, age, ethnical group, confession, regional and professional community, determining environmental peculiarities of their socialization (table 01). Thus, young men demonstrate commitment to the adaptation and individualization values, girls to the socialization values as well as a big part of girls is undecided in the value system. These peculiarities fit the scopes of existing gender-auto – and getero-stereotypes and do not contradict the data of other similar studies.

Table 01. Distribution of value types according to socio-cultural belonging of the youth %

The factors under study	Value type			
	A	S	I	Inter
Gender				
1. Young men (<i>n</i> =409)	28	32	11	29
2. Girls (<i>n</i> =837)	25	34	8	33
Age				
1. Early youth (<i>n</i> =125)	18	31	10	41
2. Youth (<i>n</i> =615)	25	33	10	33
3. Late youth (<i>n</i> =471)	28	34	8	30
4. Adulthood (<i>n</i> =34)	32	35	9	24
NAtionality				
1. Russian (<i>n</i> =887)	25	33	10	32
2. Buryats (<i>n</i> =139)	25	33	6	35
3. Ukrainians (<i>n</i> =125)	24	31	9	36
4. Other (<i>n</i> =95)	29	38	8	24
Confession*				
1. Orthodox (<i>n</i> =509)	27	38	6	29
2. Followers of other confessions (<i>n</i> =263)	27	30	7	36
3. Out-confession believers (<i>n</i> =244)	24	26	17	33
4. Atheists (<i>n</i> =228)	25	33	9	33
Region of residence**				
1. Far East (<i>n</i> =460)	27	34	8	31

2. Siberia (n=503)	26	35	9	30
3. Central Russia (n=155)	21	26	11	41
4. Ukrain (n=117)	24	32	11	33
Profile of education				
1. Scientific and engineering (n=561)	25	33	9	33
2. Humanitarian (n=659)	26	33	9	31

Notes: A is adaptable, S is socializing, I is individualistic, Inter is intermediate value types

* Difference in group distribution: 1 and 3 ($\alpha < 0.005$); ** Difference in group distribution: 1 and 3 ($\alpha < 0.05$); 2 and 3 ($\alpha < 0.05$)

The results show certain age dynamic of value preferences during studies at university. In the course of growing up and formation of personal and professional system of values the per cent of undecided in value system decreases, as well as young people committed to individualization, and committed to adaptation and socialization increases. Despite all the respondents belong to one generation “Z”, we can say that a postmodern transformation of the value system is clearly seen in their youngest representatives. It corresponds to R. Inglehart’s model, where age is one of the most important determinants of value systems peculiarities in different communities, and proves the universal tendency that younger age groups are more oriented at post-material values than the older ones (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

Ethnic belonging did not have any significant influence on peculiarities of the value system. Commitment to individualization values characteristic for the post-modern society expectably more attributable to Russians and Ukrainians who make the ethnic major on their territory. National minorities more rarely have unformed value systems, and more committed to the values of the social surrounding, it can be explained by greater importance of traditional institutes of socialization and mechanisms of intra-group consolidation.

Differences in distributions of described value types among youth groups with different confessions have statistically important character. Thus, Orthodox young people, who are representatives of a traditional and major religious group in Russia and Ukraine, have the least number of intermediate value types as well as people committed to individualization values. On the other hand, they are more than others committed to the socialization values – family and interpersonal relations. Thus, commitment to this confession is a factor of understanding and inner acceptance of traditional values. The same situation is characteristic of the youth of other traditional religions. Opposite to these groups are “out-confession believers” – young people considering themselves believers, but not belonging to any certain confession. They have least commitment to the adaptation and socialization values and greater one to the post-modern values of individualization.

A great importance for differentiation of values in the group under study has a region of residence, that is, belonging to some regional or local socio-cultural environment. The peculiarities here are determined by the differences of socialization between the “center” and the “periphery”. In popular consciousness of the youth in Central Russia, in particular, the citizens of Moscow, the described global trends in value transformations, peculiar for post-modern society are more evident. The value system of

the youth in the Far East and Siberia has less dynamics of common civilization processes, and greater preserves the customary value system.

Education profile is the least differentiating factor in the studied context – the youth studying both in science and engineering and in humanitarian profiles has nearly the same value systems.

Thus, the quality peculiarity of value system for generation “Z” in greater degree is determined by gender, ethnic, confession and regional belonging of the youth. At the same time, it should be noted that despite the importance of these social-demographic and socio-cultural factors for value differentiation of the modern youth their importance is less evident in comparison with the preceding generations – the surveys conducted earlier show statistically greater differences between the described groups (Yanitskiy, 2012; Yanitskiy et al., 2019). This evidences a certain levelling of social and cultural peculiarities between different youth groups due to globalization.

7. Conclusion

The suggested structural-dynamic model, differentiating adaptive, socializing and individualization value systems, proved its applicability for characteristics of popular consciousness value structure of the youth. Analysis of the popular consciousness structure for generation “Z” with this model evidences the value shift which proves the decrease of interpersonal relation values and increase of individualistic values, as well as increase in anomie. Despite certain convention, this model allows determining main social-demographic and social-economic determinants of value preferences and estimating their influence. As the results of the study show, the greater factors of value system formation for generation “Z” are their belonging to some confession and regional socio-cultural environment. The described characteristics of popular value structure of generation “Z” and its social-cultural determinants gives opportunity to forecast social behaviour of the youth and further development of technologies of corresponding social-psychological and psychologo-pedagogical influence.

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