

## THE VALUES OF THE ROMANIAN AND ESTONIAN STUDENTS AND THE EDUCATIONAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE CONSTRUCT OF THEIR VALUES – PARENTS’ AND TEACHERS’ VALUES

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The identification of the values portrait of the students from Estonia and Romania and the analysis of the educational factors that influence the forming of the pupils’ values, their parents and teachers personal values hierarchy and what they consider as being important for their children’ values education.

**Methodology** – Participants of this study are represented by pupils from Romanian and Estonian gymnasiums and high schools (12 – 19 years old), their teachers and parents. The main method used is the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ; Schwartz et al, 2001, 2003), that was designed to measure ten theory-based value orientations: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security.

**Findings** – Individual values outcomes were analyzed using statistical methods. The main results are the means values profiles separately for students, parents and teachers samples from Estonia and Romania. The significant statistical differences of this study’s findings were identified using the paired samples t test.

**Research limitations/implications** – The participants’ samples are not national representative. It would be desirable to use specific statistical methods for the identification of more correlations and implications of other variable registered in the collected data such as age, gender, adult marital status and education.

**Practical implications** – It is suggested that the results of this research would be useful for the development of new formal and informal educational strategies, addressed to all educational actors. Applicative results of the study will be disseminated to the school psychologists and teachers from Romania, Estonia and other countries.

**Originality/Value** – The comparison study have a substantial number of participants from two different countries aged between 12 and 67 years and with different social statuses: students, parents and teachers. Values research can provide predictive and power of knowledge when we analyze actions, attitudes, opinions and human behavior that can reflect major social changes in societies and across nations.

**Keywords:** students, parents, teachers own values, socialization values, Schwartz Portrait Values Questionnaire.

**Research type:** research paper.

## Introduction

We are the witnesses of large changes in today’s European society with consequences in profound layers of political, social and cultural life. It can be said that now we are more capable of reflecting on our own changes, towards a social cultural metamorphosis which subdues us. Europe has become an important compound of collective mental, a factor of social motivation. Following enlargement of European Union, Estonia and Romania are increasingly being characterized by a variety of economic, social and cultural differences.

Values are relatively stable, internal standards used to evaluate behaviors and events (Rokeach, 1973). Modern sociology, psychology and anthropology (Voicu and Voicu, 2008) have not developed a consensus concerning the manner of manifesting values. The first common point is particularly in refuse of considering values as indissoluble ways to establish what is beautiful or what the absolute truth is. The second common point consists of placing values of individual level, but with an important determinant factor of society. Last but not least, all three sciences define the values as a determinant factor of choices from day to day life, as a useful tool for individuals in coordinating their priorities and their own lives. Values determine the manner of structuring society, the way of building and organizing social relationships and in the same time, values represent anchors that allow individuals to become oriented in the surrounding world.

Values are “deeply rooted, abstract motivation” (Schwartz, 2012), can provide predictive and knowledge power when we analyze actions, attitudes, opinions and can reflect major social changes in societies and across nations. Values are really anchors which allow to individuals to orient in surrounding world. They are inside of individual but are an important social determinant expressed through and in the same time derived from customs, norms, believes and ideologies. Comparisons of the value can reveal the impacts of major social changes.

Values determine the manner of structuring society, the way of building and organizing families, social relationships, relationships inside of organizations and their functioning. The rules are nothing less than a practical transposition of dominant values at the respective society or community level. When external entities try to impose new rules, effective functioning and respect for them is dependent on the manner in which these match and overlap with existing ones. The change of values is a long and continuous process. The social-economics situation of Romania and Estonia is placed in a broader European context not so far away by the other former communist countries. The values analysis of two formal communist countries may reveal many similarities because of the same political background but also differences due to the different cultural, historical and geographical engraving.

### 1. The Schwartz Value Survey

There are three sets of theories generated by Hofstede, Schwartz and Inglehart about values that are extremely influent in contemporary bibliography, and which generated the most popular scales of measuring values. All these three types of scales make an option for researching values on general level, not in particularly one. All three suppose cross cultural analysis of values and are looking for new common dimension of values which can allow the comparison of different cultures being less important the historical moment of comparison.

Comparative study of values is stimulated in present by the possibility of realizing very fast quantitative comparisons among societies. IT soft development permit today to be realized large scale databases, encompassed answers offered by huge patterns, representative for large groups came from different countries, to a huge number of questions which permit direct measuring of opinions and attitudes. The polls of values allow in the last 25 years the accumulations of an important set of date, which permit assessment of changes from contemporary society. Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) is currently the most widely used by social and cross-cultural psychologists for studying individual differences in values. This scale asks respondents to rate the importance of 56 specific values as “guiding principles in your life”. These specific values measure ten theory-based value orientations: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security (table 1). Studies in over 65 countries support the distinctiveness of these value orientations.

**Table 1. Schwartz’s 10 value types and the 45 associated individual level values items.**

Value Type Definition	Value Item for Each Value Type
<b>Power:</b> Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.	Social power, authority, wealth, Successful, capable, ambitious, influential
<b>Achievement:</b> Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.	Pleasure, enjoying life, self-indulgent
<b>Hedonism:</b> Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.	Daring, a varied life, an exciting life
<b>Stimulation:</b> Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.	Creativity, curious, freedom, independent, choosing own goals
<b>Self-direction:</b> Independent thought and action, choosing, creating, exploring.	Protecting the environment, a world of beauty, unity with nature
<b>Universalism:</b> Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature. (Subtypes: Nature and Social concern)	Equality, a world at peace, social justice, broadminded, wisdom

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<b>Benevolence:</b> Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact.	Helpful, honest, forgiving, loyal, responsible
<b>Tradition:</b> Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide.	Humble, devout, accepting my portion in life, respect for tradition, moderate
<b>Conformity:</b> Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.	Politeness, obedient, honoring parents and elders, self-discipline
<b>Security:</b> Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.	National security, social order, clean, family security, reciprocation of favors

## 2. The Current Study Methodology

The aim of this study is to settle down the results of analysis of the values of Estonian and Romanian students from Estonia and Romania and the identification of the educational factors which influence the construct of the pupils' values: their parents' and teachers' values.

### 2.1. Participants

The target group of this study is represented by pupils from Romanian and Estonian gymnasiums and high schools (12 – 19 years old) their teachers and parents, from four different schools in two large cities. The samples of the study consists altogether of 709 participants from Estonia and 818 participants from Romania. Estonian sample consists of 507 students (mean age = 15,31), 112 parents (mean age = 40,64), and 90 teachers (mean age = 41,76), and Romanian sample consists of 593 students (mean age = 15,46), 118 parents (mean age = 41,39), and 107 teachers (mean age = 39,85). The questionnaires were completed by the students at school during the class hour. Part of the teachers and parents completed the questionnaires on paper at school and part of them answered the questionnaire online. Participation in the study was anonymous, strictly on voluntary basis.

### 2.2. Instruments

Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ; Schwartz et al., 2001, 2003) was designed to measure the same ten basic value orientations measured by Schwartz Value Survey: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security. It presents respondents with a more concrete and less cognitively complex task than the earlier value survey. This makes it suitable for use with all segments of the population including those with little or no formal education.

PVQ includes 21 short verbal portraits of different people. Each portrait describes a person’s goals, aspirations, or wishes that point implicitly to the importance of a single value type. Respondents’ personal values are inferred from their self reported similarity to people who are described in terms of particular values. For example: “Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to him. He likes to do things in his own original way.” describes a person for whom self- direction values are important. To measure personal values, participants indicated “How much like you is this person?” for each portrait. There are six possible answers: very much like me, like me, somewhat like me, a little like me, not like me, and not like me at all, transformed into a 6 points numerical scale. Thus, respondents’ personal values are inferred from their self-reported similarity to people who are described in terms of particular values.

The second questionnaire is a modification of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (Knafo & Schwartz, 2003), tailored differently for students, parents and teachers. To measure perceived parental values for them, adolescents indicated “How would your parents want you to respond to each item?”. To measure socialization values, parents indicated “How would you want your son/daughter to respond to each item?” and teachers indicated “How would you want your pupils to respond to each item?”. The original version in English language of the questionnaire was translated into Estonian and Romanian using back-translation procedures.

### 3. Results and Discussions

Schwartz questionnaires outcomes showed that Estonian and Romanian students, parents and teachers have almost the same own values portrait (fig. 2). Romanian and Estonian adult generation (parents and teachers) are describing themselves as being orientated towards self-direction and self-transcendence through universalism and benevolence, seeking tolerance and social justice. They do not report that it is important for them to have power and social status, to be hedonist, to enjoy themselves and to have stimulation through new things.

Romanian and Estonian teenagers are describing themselves as being independent, preferring freedom and seeking pleasure above all different things. Respecting tradition, conformity and having power is not important for students. Achievement is not so much significant for Estonian then for Romanian students. At the same time they consider that their parents’ expectations related to them are centered on the same area: self direction and independence in association with benevolence, feeling of seeking to help others.

Both, Estonian and Romanian students perceived parental values as less oriented through power, stimulation and tradition (fig. 3). In parallel, Romanian and Estonian socialization values are focused on self-direction and independence associated with self-transcendence (benevolence, universalism) for Estonian parents, and with self-enhancement (power and achievement) for Romanian parents. A comparative analysis of values of Estonian, Swedish, and Russian-Estonian mothers (Tulviste, Mizera, De Geer, 2012) revealed that the most valued characteristics in children in the present were those

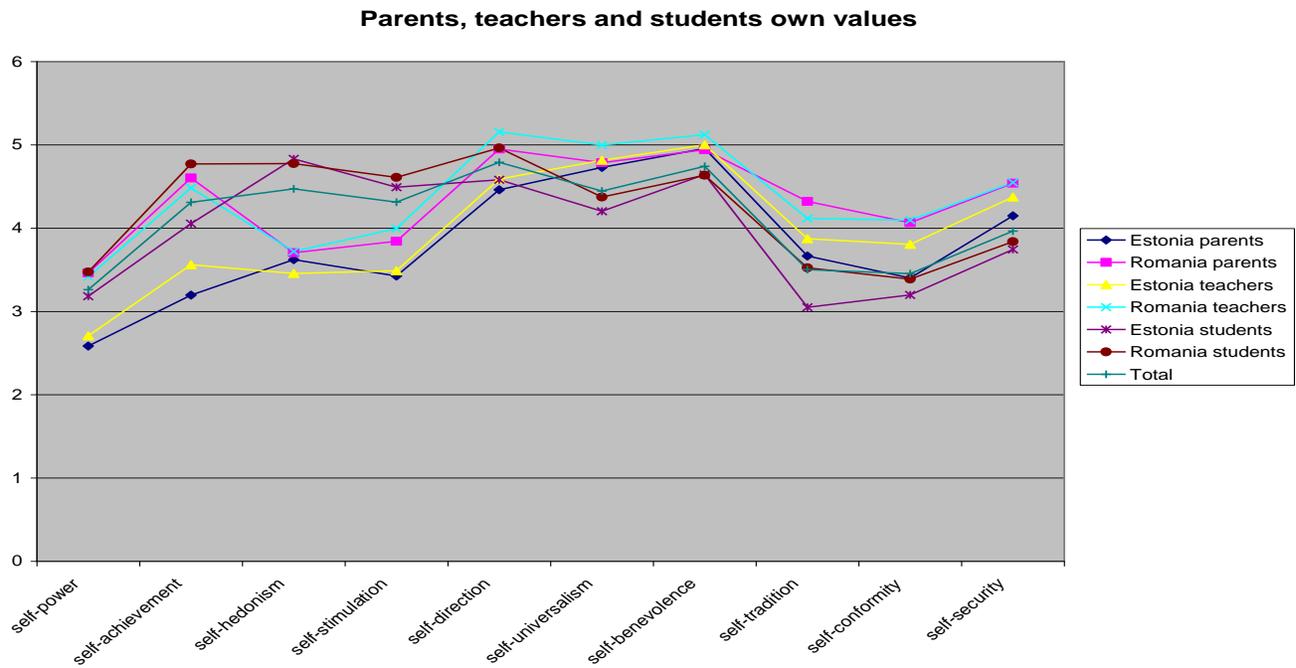


Fig 2. Estonian and Romanian parents, students and teachers own values means

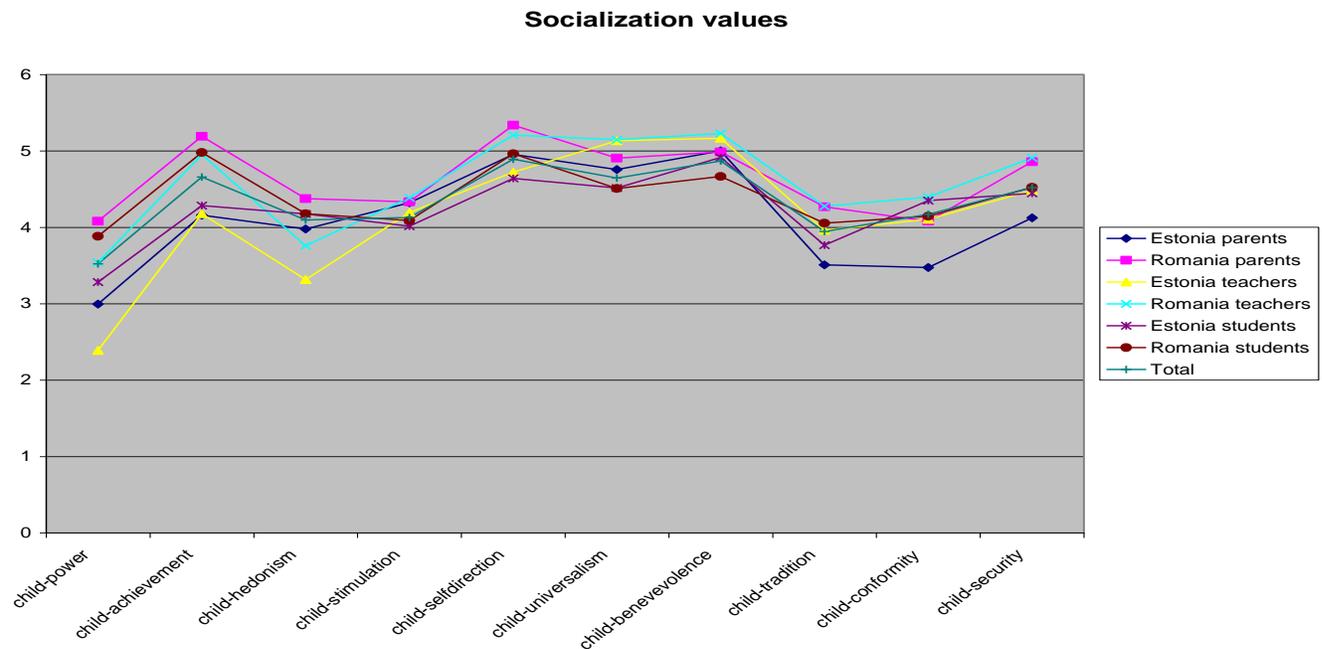


Fig 3. Estonian and Romanian parents, students and teachers socialization values means

related to benevolence. Benevolence seems to be valued universally valorizing the preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact through honesty, loyalty, responsibility. The same research findings concluded that both samples of mothers from Estonia (Estonians and Russian Estonians) put significantly more emphasis on conformity than the Swedish mothers. In the currently study Estonian parents socialization values are not focussed on conformity.

Teacher’s socialization main values are the same in Estonia and Romania, with focus on self-transcendence and benevolence (providing general welfare), universalism and self-direction. Tradition, hedonism and power are not important values for school educational environment in both countries.

The significant statistical differences of this study findings were identified using the paired samples *t* test. A confidence interval for the average difference is 95%. Paired samples *t*-tests consist of three different groups of units, students, parents and teachers that have been tested twice with the same questions orientated towards two different perspectives. The same questionnaire (Portrait Values Questionnaire) was used during the first measurement for description of the personal values (see table 2, self values) of students, parents and teachers. The second measurement outcomes describe the socialization values for children (see table 2, child values) or what parents and teachers would like for the students values portrait.

The paired sample *t* test (table 2) was a good technique for investigation face to face of the self, the personal portrait representation (self values) with the idealistic portrait of the children drawn by educators (child values). Furthermore, it can be used as analytical comparison between parental socialization values desire for their own child and children perceived parental values for them. Throughout, the perception of children from both countries about their own parents’ values for them had higher level than their self portrait. They believe that their parents wish for them a more secure life, in respect with tradition and conformity, with more power, achievement and universalism and with less hedonism and stimulation. Particularly, Romanian and Estonian children consider that their parents greatest desire is their child will learn how to respect rules, to be obedient.

Surprisingly, all the educators’ values scores are higher for what they would like to draw for children than how they are describing themselves. More than half of possible differences are statistically significant with sig. (2tailed) < .05 at the Paired Sample *T* Test results (table 2). Moreover, the values hierarchy for the desired values for children described by parents from both countries is almost the same. They wish for their own children much more achievement, power, stimulation, self direction and hedonism. Romanian parents added at this list two more values: universalism and security. There were no significant differences between self values of parents and desired own child values portrait in the register of benevolence, tradition and conformity.

Teachers from both countries want for their students a higher level of development than they have succeeded to accomplish for themselves through more achievement, stimulation, universalism and conformity. In addition, Estonian teachers wish for their students more benevolence and power, while Romanian teachers would like more security and tradition.

**Tabel 2. The Paired Sample T Test results. Significant differences between Schwartz values for the self of parents, teachers and students and socialization values for children.**

1. Paired of values of Estonian parents	Paired differences mean	t	Sig. (2tailed) *	Relation between paired values means
self-power and child-power	-.4107	-4.708	.000	<
self-achievement and child-achievement	-.9643	-9.310	.000	<
self-hedonism and child-hedonism	-.3571	-3.882	.000	<
self-stimulation and child-stimulation	-.8973	-8.928	.000	<
self-direction and child-self-direction	-.4955	-5.849	.000	<
<b>2. Paired of values of Romanian parents</b>				
self-power and child-power	-.6336	-6.941	.000	<
self-achievement and child-achievement	-.5991	-6.686	.000	<
self-hedonism and child-hedonism	-.6897	-6.422	.000	<
self-stimulation and child-stimulation	-.5043	-5.705	.000	<
self-direction and child-self-direction	-.3966	-5.297	.000	<
self-universalism and child-universalism	-.1275	-2.086	.039	<
self-security and child-security	-.3147	-2.995	.003	<
<b>3. Paired of values of Estonian teachers</b>				
self-power and child-power	.3167	3.714	.000	<
self-achievement and child-achievement	-.6167	-6.248	.000	<
self-stimulation and child-stimulation	-.7056	-6.872	.000	<
self-universalism and child-universalism	-.3185	-3.864	.000	<
self-benevolence and child-benevolence	-.1667	-2.079	.041	<
self-conformity and child-conformity	-.3000	-3.189	.002	<
<b>4. Paired of values of Romanian teachers</b>				
self-achievement and child-achievement	-.4810	-5.329	.000	<
self-stimulation and child-stimulation	-.3925	-4.827	.000	<
self-universalism and child-universalism	-.1478	-2.614	.010	<
self-tradition and child-tradition	-.1589	-2.110	.037	<
self-conformity and child-conformity	-.3143	-3.740	.000	<
self-security and child-security	-.3810	-5.107	.000	<
<b>5. Paired of values of Estonian Students</b>				
self-power and child-power	-.1179	-2.153	.032	<
self-achievement and child-achievement	-.2405	-4.355	.000	<
self-hedonism and child-hedonism	.6649	12.179	.000	>
self-stimulation and child-stimulation	.4720	8.606	.000	>
self-universalism and child-universalism	-.2888	-6.267	.000	<
self-benevolence and child-benevolence	-.2638	-5.834	.000	<
self-tradition and child-tradition	-.7238	-13.914	.000	<
self-conformity and child-conformity	-1.1486	-19.355	.000	<
self-security and child-security	-.7008	-13.054	.000	<

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<b>6. Paired of values of Romanian Students</b>				
self-power - child-power	-.4167	-8.550	.000	<
self-achievement - child-achievement	-.2059	-5.111	.000	<
self-hedonism - child-hedonism	.5981	12.756	.000	>
self-stimulation - child-stimulation	.5270	9.830	.000	>
self-universalism - child-universalism	-.1349	-3.589	.000	<
self-tradition - child-tradition	-.5437	-10.422	.000	<
self-conformity - child-conformity	-.7574	-13.853	.000	<
self-security - child-security	-.6858	-13.441	.000	<

Note: \* **Sig. (2tailed)** < .05, A low significance value for the t test (less than 0.05) indicates that there is a significant difference between the two variables. The confidence interval for the mean difference does not contain zero and this also indicates that the difference is significant

Similarities between the social actors from both countries are evident when we examine the list of the most important values for them. In Romania or Estonia, for adults or for teens, there are three outstanding values: benevolence, universalism and self direction. In accordance with the specificity of their age, teenagers add much color to these values as given by their particular needs for hedonism and stimulation.

In 2001, Schwartz and Bardi conducted an empirical research that examines the values' hierarchy of the representative and near representative samples from 13 nations, school teachers from 56 nations and college students from 54 nations. It was found a surprisingly “pan cultural norms” consensus regarding the hierarchical order of values: benevolence, self-direction, and universalism values are consistently most important, power, tradition, and stimulation values least important, and security, conformity, achievement and hedonism in between. In this respect, the present study's value hierarchy did not differ from their finding, are almost the same. Findings of the current study concluded that parents and teachers from Estonia and Romania share the same higher interest for benevolence, self-direction and universalism, considering power and stimulation less important in their life. In the values' hierarchy list benevolence is consistently the first value and power is the last. The main difference is the higher respect of Romanians and Estonians adults participants for tradition (mean rank 5 and 6) in comparison with pan cultural norms (mean rank 8 and 9). We can not say about the students from Romania and Estonia, their option is different by the world college students, they are placing firstly the hedonism nearly self-direction and benevolence. The presence of benevolence on top hierarchy could be explain by the fact that this study students age is between 10 and 19 and the world research sample includes college students that are above this age period, they are more adults. Seeking more hedonism is a predominant need and feature of the adolescents. The consideration for tradition and power are not so much substantial for the teens from Romania and Estonia.

In a recent research performed on senior high school Estonian students (17 to 20 years,  $M = 18.2$ ), Tulviste and Mizera (2012) observed a relative stability of the youth values hierarchy. This study was focused on a selected list of five Schwartz's value types and the order of the importance emphasized by the students was: self-direction,

achievement, conformity, power, and tradition. The hierarchy of these five value types was the same as in the present study. Estonian adolescents' value scale identified in 2000 is similar with the findings of the second similar research in 2009, self-direction was consistently more important, tradition and power were least important. On the whole, tradition and power values are located at the bottom of the pan-cultural hierarchy, with very high consensus regarding their relatively low importance.

## Conclusions

To conclude, this study has revealed that the framework of the values profile of Estonian and Romanian students, parents and teachers have almost the same upward and downward trend given by nearly like or parallel lines of scores. There is a striking level of agreement regarding the relative importance of different types of values. Almost the same values are connected between people from different parts of the world. There are more similarities than differences and essential criteria are related to former communist affiliation and specific culture roots. Estonia and Romania are placed in the group of traditional countries of Europe, together with most of the ex-communist states. Traditionalism and modernity are not normative labels, as there are no clear guidelines according to which one can say a country is traditionalist or modern. To gain a full understanding of human value complexity, we have to take in consideration both differences and similarities.

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