

# Analysis of Gender Differences in the Structure of Values of Students in the Republic of Sakha: The Case of Yakutsk State University

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## *Introduction*

The social and economic differences currently taking place in Russia serve as an excellent opportunity to study dynamics with respect to values. Values are generalized people's views of goals and standards of their existence, which reflect the historical experience and culture of a specified nation and humankind as a whole. They are the guiding line that exists in every person's consciousness, and individuals and social groups correlate their behaviour with them. Based on results from the study of values, we have identified general social determinants of behaviour, as well as ethnic, professional, and gender specifics in the structure of values. The analysis of values among students is particularly interesting for three reasons: 1) youth represents the segment of society that is most active and sensitive to change; 2) the national regional education program, known as *Erkeeyi*, has been implemented and such subjects as *Uolan* and *Kyys-Kuo* have been introduced in the education system during their term of study; and 3) the process of gender socialization is coming to its end and relationships between genders play an important role

since they influence the structure of values.

The goal of the study was to learn about the structure of values of both male and female students of Yakutsk State University. The targets of the study are terminal and instrumental values. The subjects of the study in 1998 were 57 students of the university's Faculties of Biology and Geography, as well as the School of Medicine, including 27 male and 30 female students (M. Bugaieva). In the second phase of the project (auxiliary, adjusting), 60 students took part, including 26 male and 34 female students (L. Efremova).

The hypothesis of the study is that:

1. the value of "a wealthy life" in the students' value structure will rank highly;
2. terminal values such as "love" and "having good friends" will have a high rank in the students' value structure, reflecting specifics of their age; and
3. there will be gender differences in the students' value structures.

The methods of study are based on M. Rokich's technique of studying value orientations and conversation. The Rokich scale of values consists of two lists, each of which is comprised of 18 values. One of them has terminal values, and the other contains instrumental values. Terminal values are those that make a person believe that some ultimate goal of the individual's existence, from both personal and social points of view, is worth striving for. Terminal values can be subdivided into intra-personal and inter-personal. Instrumental values are those that convince a person that some manners (honesty, rationality) are preferable in all situations.

The following work is one part of long-term research, the goal of which is to analyse the process of socialization under the current conditions in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), in north-eastern Russia. The study presented in

this article is a point of inquiry. The data were collected and processed by M. Bugaieva and L. Efremova, second-year students in the psychology department of Yakutsk State University, while researching for course papers under the scientific direction of N. M. Melnikova.

### *Results and Discussion*

The difference in the tally of the same values by female and male students reach statistically significant levels for 10 of 18 terminal values (Table 1). The three main values are common for males and females. Health is the value that ranks highest and friendship is in second place. Further analysis revealed that the need for friendship is stronger among girls (L. Efremova). The value of “a wealthy life” took third rank, a reflection of the general economic situation in the country.

Table 1. Comparison in the ranking of dominating terminal life values (average) between male and female students

Female		N= 30	Male		N=27
Rank	Value	Mean	Value	Mean	
1	Health	3.9	Health	4.66	
2	To have good friends*	5.27	To have good friends*	6.52	
3	Wealthy life	6.4	Wealthy life	7.07	
4	Happy family*	6.7	Love	7.29	
5	Love	7.06	Interesting job	7.44	

Female		N=30	Male		N=27
Rank	Value	Mean	Value	Mean	
6	Confidence*	7.43	Freedom*	8.11	
7	Interesting job	7.63	Development*	8.85	
8	Effective life	9	Active life*	9.074	
9	Experience	9.4	Happy family*	9.074	
10	Wisdom*	9.73	Confidence*	9.22	
11	Freedom*	10	Effective life	9.26	
12	Development*	10.27	Experience	10.52	
13	Active life*	10.97	Wisdom*	10.67	
14	Public recognition*	12.57	Entertainment*	11.11	
15	Other people's happiness	13.6	Public recognition*	11.18	
16	Creative work	13.63	Creative work	13.04	
17	Entertainment*	13.63	Nature's beauty	13.81	
18	Nature's beauty	13.73	Other people's happiness	14.29	

\* - statistically significant difference between two average measures,  $p=0.05$

Among females, family is valued more than love (5), whereas males ranked love in 4th place and family in 9th ( $T=4.65$  with  $T^*=2.01$ ,  $p=0.05$ ).

These differences can be explained by the fact that, in our society, girls' upbringing orients them for their future families. They tend to associate love with family. Such a difference with respect to views on relationships between genders often results in misunderstandings and problems between young lovers, the creation of "forced families," and childbearing by single mothers.

Young men are more freedom-loving (6th place), value personal development (7th), and are oriented for active life (8th) in comparison with the young women (who ranked these in 11th, 12th, and 13th positions). For the value of "active life," the differences are statistically significant with  $p=0.01$  ( $T=3.44$ ,  $T=4.05$ ,  $T=19$ ). This cluster of values conforms well to traditional gender stereotypes and gender roles, where a man proves himself in the social sphere and a woman is oriented towards her family. Girls place greater value on confidence (6th place for women and 10th for men,  $T=4.48$ ) and wisdom (10th place for females and 13th place for males,  $T=2.7$ ). This difference can probably be explained by the fact that female students are oriented both for family or career, even though gender stereotypes are still pressing. To have a successful career, women have to work twice as hard, and while accomplishing something in their studies and social life, they have to "conceal" their business qualities in order to remain attractive enough to men and to attract a husband.

Table 2. Comparison in the ranking of instrumental values (average) between male and female students

Female		N= 30	Male	N= 27
Rank	Value	Mean	Value	Mean
1	Good breeding*	5.83*	Responsibility	5.96

Female		N= 30	Male	N= 27
Rank	Value	Mean	Value	Mean
2	Responsibility	6.23	Independence*	7.08*
3	Honesty	6.9	Cheerfulness	7.26
4	Education*	7.5	Self-control	7.5
5	Self-control	7.73	Honesty	7.92
6	Cheerfulness	7.8	Good breeding*	9.15
7	Broad horizons	8.9	Diligence*	9.19
8	Tidiness	9.1	Tidiness	9.27
9	Independence*	9.10*	Strong will	9.35
10	Sensitivity*	9.43*	Education*	9.96
11	Efficiency in doing something	9.6	Tolerance	10.19
12	Rationality	9.7	Efficiency in doing something	10.23
13	Strong will	9.97	Rationality	10.23
14	Diligence*	10.33*	Broad horizons*	10.38*
15	Tolerance	10.8	Courage*	10.42*
16	Courage*	11.30*	Sensitivity	12.50*
17	High aspirations	14.1	High aspirations	13.04

Female		N=30	Male	N=27
Rank	Value	Mean	Value	Mean
18	Intransigence*	15.60*	Intransigence*	13.35*

\* - statistically significant difference between two average measures,  $p=0.05$

The difference in the tally of the same values by female and male students reach statistically significant levels for 8 out of 18 terminal values (see Table 2). In both lists responsibility is placed high, but for male students it is one rank higher, holding first place. Female students ranked good breeding as first place, whereas male students value it much less, in 6th place ( $T=4.98$  with  $T^*=2.009$ ,  $p=0.05$ ). The first six values are nearly the same for both groups except for education, which is considered by girls (4th rank,  $T=6.60$ ) to be more important than independence. Female students put independence in the 9th place ( $T=4.69$ ). Female independence and determination are not very well accepted within society, whereas males are brought up to be exactly like that. In the process of gender socialization, girls are more oriented for interpersonal relations than are boys. These peculiarities are reflected in the results of the ranking. Female students place a higher rank on those values that are related to the basics of personal communication and mutual trust good breeding, honesty, broad horizons ( $T=14.67$ ), and sensitivity. At the same time, male students appreciate those values that emphasize features associated with one's will and self-reliance: independence, self-control, discipline ( $T=6.21$ ), strong will, and courage ( $T=2.2$ ). Also, according to data collected by L. Efremova, female students rank "other people's happiness" higher than male students. With males, sensitivity is only ranked 16th, whereas it is 10th for females. Male students put strong will in the 9th place, while

female students put it in the 13th. Diligence is more valued by men than women and ranked 7th and 14th respectively. The last places in the hierarchy, for both groups, are occupied by such values as high aspirations and intransigence. The very wording “high aspirations” bears a negative character in our country, mainly because we have had traditions of collectivism since long ago; thus, this value ranked in 17th place. Intransigence, a quality associated with conflict and fanaticism, is at the bottom of the list.

### *Conclusions*

The hypothesis of the study was confirmed. The results show that in our current stage of social and economic development in the region, the values that prevail among students are health, wealthy life, friendship, family, and love, whereas other people’s happiness and nature’s beauty, which can be categorized as altruistic, are at the end of the list. The research showed that new dominating values are being formed in our society in conformity to the social and economic situation within the country. The process is contradictory due to the fact that many values are imposed on us and do not agree with the historically-determined orientation of collectivism within our society. Even though the students’ values are more individualistic than collective, the low rank of the value “high aspirations” demonstrates that collectivism remains of quite high significance.

Gender roles and aims have a considerable influence on the structure of values. One factor that greatly influences the value orientation is the ongoing changes in Russia on the whole. In the transition period, which is accompanied by “depreciation” of values and loss of former identity, the role of ethnic and gender identity is increasing, making them the base upon which a sense of stability and security rests for both individuals and society.

The pressure that traditional gender aims bear on the structure of instrumental values becomes particularly evident. Business qualities are ranked higher by male students than are qualities that characterize relationships with people (such as sensitivity and tolerance). So, too, are those qualities that emphasize independence. With girls the situation is reversed. For the most part, the existence of traditional gender stereotypes, aims, and roles are in accordance with the value structures for male and female students obtained in the study, except for the value of education. Education is more greatly appreciated by females than males. In our view, this could result in potential intra-personal and family conflicts, since the life of a contemporary woman who combines family with the career does not conform to the traditional vision of woman's place in society. Women are forced to carry a double burden and hide their business ambitions and successes. Students need to be trained to build relationships between men and women in the course of studying "family psychology," "psychology of communication," and other training on effective communication. The problem of gender socialization requires further research with respect to new tendencies related to ethnic and regional particularities.

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