

Life Values in Greek and Swedish adolescents: A multiple cultural study

LEKKOU S*., PHD, LSW. ÅSTRÖM T**., PH.D., HÄGGLÖF B***., PROF., PH.D., M.D., & NYGREN L.****, PROF., PH.D.

Abstract

This interview study examined values generated from attitudes about life issues in Greek and Swedish adolescents. The study's purpose was to see how adolescents evaluate and orientate themselves towards life. The study's population was the following: two samples of 583 Swedish and 238 Greek school-aged adolescents aged 13 through 18 years old were selected to participate in a larger study. These were students at a Junior High and a High School in the town of Lycksele, close to the University town of Umeå, Sweden. The Greek sample was selected from three High schools and three Lyceums in Patras, Greece. From these ethnic samples, a smaller sample was recruited to represent the socio-demographic strata in the study areas from adolescents who reported either high or low on Achenbach's Youth Self Report -47 Greeks and 47 Swedes-were selected for semi-structured interviews. An interview guide with semi-structured questions was created to gather information about values contained in life attitudes. The questions addressed a broad spectrum of everyday life issues in order to understand the values that steer youths' lives –the central themes of an adolescent life and the basic codes of behaviour related to self and culture.

Results and discussion:

With respect to values, that provide the structure for organising attitudes about life issues, Greek youths reported more fears related to social dangers, loss and illness. Hence the study indicates that they evaluate social security and health. In addition, they turned more

often to their family for support during difficult times, valuing the family as a support system. Further, Greek youths believed in God as opposed to their Swedish counterparts. The Swedes reported more fear about their future and tended to trust public authorities more, during times of difficulty, valuing future security and state support. Greek adolescents revealed social concerns and fears about the future and social dangers, hence valuing social and future security; moreover, they used their own coping skills and family support to face these issues valuing self and family for support. They also valued education and health.

Both samples emphasised the importance of social and career position, valuing their social contribution and approval. Swedes, however, more often expressed a desire to have a family within five years, giving priority in creating their own family.

Keywords: Adolescents, Life values, Social support, Health, Education, Future, Cross cultural.

Introduction

In modern society, youths are released from many cultural expectations, although not true for all aspects of life (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Because attitudes vary between countries, there is a need to understand these within a complex of interrelated factors such as social and cultural ones. In this article, we focus on attitudes concerning fundamental everyday life issues, mainly according to the values involved, as perceived by Greek and Swedish adolescents. We focus on values generated by their fears, concerns, their religious faith and some other issues, and the way they cope with these.

Several international studies have investigated the way adolescents view problems, worries, concerns (Anttila et al., 2000; Gallagher & Millar 1998, Lee et al., 2010, Flagan, Tucker 1999, Klingman 1998), coping issues (Gibson et al., 1992; Scott, 2004; Triplett, 2002, Padilla-Walker 2008, Knafo et al., 2008) future issues

*PhD Social Work, Social Worker-Psychologist
Family therapist, Associate Prof. TEI of Athens

**Emeritus Prof. Department of Social Welfare, Umeå
University Sweden

***Prof. Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Umeå
University, SE 901 87 Sweden

****Prof. Department of Social Welfare, Umeå University
Sweden

(Bois-Reymond et al., 1994; Palovaara, 1998, Klingman 1998, Malmberg, Norrgård 1999, Stiles et al., 1993), faith (Pajević et al., 2007), education (Pick De Weis, Perez 1991, Prokhorov et al., 1993, Mohamed et al., 2011) and health (Johnson et al., 1999, Meltaus, Pietilä 1998, Mahat et al., 2011). These studies demonstrate a substantial variation between countries in attitudes and values (Feather 1993, 1994).

The present study investigates adolescents' values in Greece and Sweden. Studies referring to adolescent values are limited. This study deals with values that as a higher-order concepts thought to provide a structure for organizing attitudes with an affecting loading. Values are defined as desirable, over the time goals and contribute to giving meaning and direction in the life of a person or other social entity (Sidney 1974, Schwartz, 1994). Values should be conceived more as abstract constructions that contain fundamental beliefs for desirable behavior and behavior motives (Feather 1995). Unlike wants and needs, values have the following properties: they have been prized, cherished, chosen freely between alternatives and acted upon (Feather 1993, 1994, Sidney 1974). Values provide standards for evaluating actions, they are organized into hierarchies for any given person, and their relative importance may alter over lifespan. Value systems vary across individuals, groups and cultures. There are six broad classes of value orientation of relative importance within the person (Hogg and Vaughan, 1998:139): theoretical - an interest in problem-solving, and the basis of how things work; economic - an interest in economic matters, finance and money affairs generally; aesthetic - an interest in the arts, theater, music, etc.; social - a general concern for one's fellows; a social welfare orientation; political - an interest in political structures and power arrangements; and religious - a general concern with theology, the afterlife and morals. It is considered that in every person different classes of values coexist and in different combinations.

According to Tomkins' affects theory of value, human subjects value any object of human affect. Whatever one is excited by, enjoys, fears, hates, is ashamed of, is contemptuous of, or is distressed by, is an object of value, either positive or negative. Value hierarchies result from value conflicts wherein the same object is both loved and hated, both exciting and shaming, both distressing and enjoyable. The conceptual base of value theory is holistic, longitudinally ori-

ented and paid attention to cultural and biological influences as well as the dynamics of early socialization (Kosofsky and Frank, 1995:68,252).

Youths express fears as social fears, fears related to illness, death of parents, occupation, and education (Arrindell et al., 2003; Palovaara 1998) and health. Fear seems to be a fundamental human and social experience present in our everyday lives and throughout the history of mankind. Fears may differ from one cultural context to another in number, content, pattern, and intensity (Ollendick, et al., 1996). Existential fear, the struggle against external threats and internal anxieties and angst (Hankiss, 2001), constitute the main factors in the formation and course of human civilization (Freud, 1961). This struggle for security and freedom, for a meaningful life and human dignity is present in symbolic systems and structures of the human kind, even in seemingly trivial everyday activities and sides of human existence. We decided to refer to adolescent fears because, in a deeper level, they involve struggle for security and protection against the threats they experience, that have to do with important issues concerning their lives.

Coping recourses, in general coping research, include personal and social resources (Scott, 2004). Personal coping resources link to self-perception, skills and/or values (Gibson et al., 1992; Scott, 2004; Triplett, 2002). Family members, personal friends, caring neighbors, and caring schools and state have been evaluated as social support coping resources.

About future issues adolescents evaluate their career position, family, education, marriage, cohabitation, parenting, work (Bois-Reymond et al., 1994; Palovaara, 1998), or staying/leaving the family. Studies that investigate adolescents' personal future goals showed an awareness of the accumulation of social problems crises and negative events (e.g. unemployment) refer to higher probability of problem occurrence and possibility to face them (Malmberg, Norrgård, 1999). Adolescents' views about future work in USA linked work and success, achievement and wealth. Dutch students seemed to be interested in quality of life, sports and humor (Stiles et al., 1993).

We have added the issue of religion to this paper, for adolescents, mainly for exploratory reasons. Youths' religious attitudes, including ideas and beliefs, play a major role in how individuals responded to life issues (Faris & Smith, 2002; Sulloway, 1997), and are an

important aspect of culture. Religious moral beliefs are found to help growth, development and socialization of the personality, leading to improvement in mental health (Pajević et al., 2007).

Studies in relation to adolescents' education involve values that have to do with sex education stressing clarification of values, assertiveness, decision making, communication skills, to pursue higher education, to strengthen family ties, to plan for the future, and to be cognizant to the likely effect of their present behavior (Pick De Weiss, Perez, 1991). Other studies refer to educational programs about care among adolescent glaucoma patients (Mohamed et al., 2011) knowledge and self-efficacy about HIV/AIDS (Mahat et al., 2011), and substance use (Iwamoto et al., 2011).

In the present study we have referred to fairy tales as a way to elicit a child's inner thoughts and feelings, expose conflicts and frustrations, reduce anxiety and gain mastery over developmental tasks. Lubetsky's study (1989) refers to the meaning, usefulness, and importance of fairy tales that are understood as representing fundamental developmental conflicts, accounting for their enduring power over time (Jacobs 2011).

Cultures differ and their expectations of youths and the behaviours they consider adaptive differ, so different behaviours are adaptive in different contexts, contexts that influence people's thoughts, feelings, and actions (Cooper & Denner, 1998; Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998; Hofstede, 2001; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2000 unpubl.). Greece can be looked upon, according to cultural research, as a more masculine and collectivist culture than Sweden, and Sweden is seen as a more feminine and more individualistic culture than Greece (Hofstede, 2001). Triandis (1994) argued that cultures could be described on a continuum from individualistic to collectivistic. Important antecedents of this continuum are the ecology of the environment where people live, the resulting economic patterns or subsistence system they develop in order to survive, and the history of the culture (Berry et al., 1992; Georgas, 1988; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2000 unpubl; Triandis, 1994). The differences in culture are also reflected in different roles of the welfare state that in their turn can make an impact on how attitudes are formulated. Sweden has developed a strong state intervention in socialization and care, and Greece, as one of several "Catholic models", puts much stronger emphasis on the family and its responsibilities, factors that influence life values that

experience youths in the two countries.

This study illuminates life values of Greek and Swedish adolescents that are involved in their fears, concerns, and the way they cope with these, their faith, education and some other issues.

Method

This study used interviews from a sub-sample of a larger comparative study of mental health and family relations in adolescents from Greece and Sweden. To develop a more elaborate picture of adolescents apart from the information received from standardized instruments, we conducted personal interviews with a subgroup from each country sample in order to identify what adolescents are concerned about and how they cope with present and future issues. We used a semi-structured interview for this purpose.

The original study comprised of two national samples: 238 Greek students, 14, 16, and 18 years old, representatively selected from schools in Patras, Greece, and surveyed in late 1997; and 583 Swedish students of all ages between 14 and 18 in Lycksele, Sweden, investigated in 1998. Patras is one of the largest cities in Greece with approximately 150,000 inhabitants, and it has a University, a Technological Educational Institution, and 3 Hospitals. It is located next to the sea in southern Greece. Lycksele is a small town in the inland of northern Sweden with 13,000 inhabitants in the same region as the university town of Umeå with no difference in mental health problems among adolescents according to recent cross-country normal population mental health surveys (Broberg, et al., 2001).

Two schools from Lycksele (upper level of compulsory school and upper secondary school) were selected because they are representative for the whole adolescent population for all socio-economic groups in the area. A similar selection was made in Patras from six schools (three high schools and three lyceums) selected to be representative of low medium and higher socioeconomic levels.

Participants

We selected 48 adolescents from each national sample based on the total problem score on the Achenbach (1991) Youth Self Report (YSR): 16 students of each

age group, 8 from each sex; 4 with Low and 4 with High problem scores (24 lowest and 24 highest, selected according to scores); 24 girls and 24 boys. We selected these groups to achieve a richer variation of attitudes. We selected 48 Swedes and 48 Greeks, but one individual from each country did not participate in the interview. All Greek adolescents were Greek citizens born and brought up in Greece and all Swedish participants were born in Sweden.

The interview guide for adolescents

The first three authors created an interview guide with eighteen semi-structured questions to gather information on life attitudes with respect to everyday issues. Out of all data we decided to illustrate issues from ten of these questions, while the rest (eight) are left for future analysis. The ten questions can be grouped under five more abstract themes as, fears, concerns, coping, future and 'other issues' where values are obviously involved in their desired behavior and their life goals.

The following themes were addressed:

1. What are adolescents of your age afraid of?
2. What are you most afraid of?
3. Describing other concerns about:
4. How do you think these problems can be faced?
5. To whom would you turn to in a difficulty?
6. How would you like your life to be in five years?
7. Do you believe in God? (What makes you say so)
8. What is most important for you now?
9. Suggestions for better education:
10. Name of your favourite tale:

Procedure

The Greek interviews were held in a separate room or in a corner of the common teacher's sitting room. Swedish interviews were performed in a separate room at the schools. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. A content analysis took place to identify core concepts in order to describe the interview data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

The choice to use open-ended questions generated a wide range of responses. The first ten Greek interviews were coded to facilitate the analysis. Responses could easily be categorised to three tentative overarching categories: self, family, and social. These were

discussed and agreed between the first three authors. The three categories provided a structure for the coding of the remaining Greek interviews all done by the first author. With the help of two psychology students, the second and third author coded the Swedish material using the same procedure. In a later step, codes were quantified and analysed by the statistical packet SPSS. We provide an overview over these selected patterns revealed for the present study.

The adolescents' study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Umeå University, Sweden, §53/99, dnr 99-014, and by the Pedagogic Institute of Greek Ministry of Education (Pr. no. 2/343/21.01.98).

Results

After analysing and comparing Greek and Swedish interview data, we identified patterns and grouped them under five themes or sections: fears and concerns, coping, future and 'other issues'. This 'other issue' section contains data on attitudes about faith, the 'most important for you' 'suggestions for better education' and 'your favourite tale'.

The reader may observe that the questionnaire was designed to both capture attitudinal items that reflect values related to the respondents' personal life (questions 2-10), and to their views and values on youth in general (questions 1).

Due to variation in the research procedure, all tables in the Greek sample data show the distribution of the number of cases. The Swedish participants, however, responded to more than one alternative, so Swedish data show the distribution of the number of responses. We have chosen to present tables first in each section to show distribution over categories and then to make known the values involved to these issues. It is noted that Swedish data corresponding to questions 3,9 and 10 are missing. In the present study we will present comparative data with statistical significances; about the Greek data some significant differences on gender and mental health will be referred.

Fears-concerns: values

Table 1 What are adolescents of your age afraid of...

Table 2 What are you afraid of...(boys and girls significant differences)

Table 3 Describing other concerns about: (YSR high/lows significant differences)

Table 1 refers to the adolescents' fears reported in the interviews. Swedes feared things in the future ('something can happen to you'). Greeks feared a variety of social dangers (failing in school/in career, being afraid of teachers and strangers, not being able to enter companies, being attacked in the streets or by school mates, being seduced by drugs, being involved with war, not having good friends) and contracting AIDS and drugs. Things in the future also worried a substantial part of Greek group of adolescents.

Referring to values both ethnic samples evaluate social support and social security, more Greeks than Swedes that consider more important security about things in the future, and their physical condition and health. General speaking both are looking for security in their everyday life.

Table 2 refers to youths' personal fears. We see that more Swedes were afraid of the future than Greeks. The respondents identified this fear of the future as related to their position in society, society's development, youth problems, and the unknown. Greeks appeared to be afraid of what could be mostly labelled as more 'social' dangers such as 'strangers attacks', accidents, trapped in 'bad companies', not to be given chances to succeed, not to pass a class, losses of parents or beloved ones, aging, death, and illnesses such as cancer. Swedes pointed more to death and loss of a close person. Swedes appeared to be, much more than Greeks, not afraid of anything. Quite a few of the Greeks were afraid of drugs and AIDS (can be seen as fears connected to social dangers), while Swedes did not mention these at all.

As far as personal fears are concerned is obvious that both Greeks and Swedes evaluate social and family support, health and security for their present and future, more Swedes and Greek boys that evaluate also their protection from transmitted diseases.

Table 3 refers to youths' 'other concerns' where only Greeks responded with priority to 'self' then to 'education' and 'future' issues and last to 'family and social' ones. Those with many problems care about 'self' and 'future' and those with less, about 'school setting' and 'social' issues.

They evaluate their 'identity' then 'educational and 'future' issues followed by 'family and social'.

Significant differences were shown according to participants' mental health. Those with more problems evaluate their self and future and those with less problems evaluate more broad issues as 'school and social' ones.

Coping: values

Table 4 How do you think that these problems can...
Table 5 To whom would you turn in a difficulty...about here... (YSR high/lows significant differences)

Table 4 refers to attitudes on facing problems or coping resources. The table reveals a similarity between the samples, since about half of the respondents referred to their own coping strategies. Coping strategies is a category that encapsulates codes from interviews such as 'through logic', 'being gentle in his behaviour', 'discussing-accepting parental role', 'being on his own', 'choosing-making-testing friends', 'using inner power', and 'co-operating with parents'. The Swedish youth noted 'not to give up' or 'take care of yourself'. The second option for Greeks was family support, reported as 'parent-siblings' support, 'compromise' between spouses; however, none of the Swedes mentioned family-support. Swedes' second option was state and school-support, indicating a strong trust in those institutions. They seemed 'to look for help outside'. The Greeks exemplified state this category with 'state responsibility' for mental health service for youths, 'giving information' on youth issues, and 'arrange legislation' to leave work earlier so that young people can have jobs.

It is obvious both samples evaluate first their personal responsibility on facing problems, followed by the Greeks that value family support while Swedes state support.

Table 5 refers to coping resources as to whom and where they turn to (or ask for support) when they face a difficulty. Both groups emphasised the importance of family, 'parents', and 'brothers and sisters'. We can also see that the pattern from Table 4 is repeated here. Consistently, the Swedes turned more to social environment 'friends' or 'somebody else' than Greeks.

Quite varying responses from the Greek respondents were coded into the 'self' category, such as 'keep [difficulties] inside', 'search in journals', 'ask and learn' and 'going to Church'—to pray and ask for support.

There were no answers of this kind in the Swedish material.

Both samples value family as the main resource to face difficulties; Greeks trust more family while Swedes the state. Greeks with less problems value family as support agent, while those with more problems social environment, outside family.

Future: values

Table 6 How would you like your life to be in five years

Table 6 refers to how adolescents would like their life to be in five years. The table reveals a similarity between the samples since almost half of them referred to having a social and career position, reported as further studies, have a job/a career, and having friends. Another impression was that the Swedes mentioned having their own families, 'find a partner', and 'to get children'. None of Greeks mentioned this. Greeks second choice was 'same as today', an alternative that none of the Swedes gave. A third important category for both samples was personal care and growth (facing problems, being healthy, living on their own, or having a pet). The Swedes seemed to be a little more concerned about 'self' than Greeks ('to be healthy/good health').

Both ethnic samples value social, career position and personal growth more Swedes than Greeks, who value on good family relations, while a significant number of Swedes value on making their own family.

Other issues: values

'Other issues' refer to 'faith', 'most important for you' 'suggestions for better education' and 'name your favourite tale'. The questions here (7-8) were added to explore topics that according to literature can be expected to mirror fundamental aspects of culture and values. The religious pattern was obvious: All but one Greek declared that they believed in God (Table 7) while only about one out of four of the Swedes did so, and a few less of the Swedes reported 'not sure'. The Greek adolescents believe in God because they 'learned' it, 'it is in the Bible', 'own feeling'. The Swedes' reported that belief in God 'does nothing', 'not scientific', 'you cannot be sure,' 'no' because 'religion is not in the family', or 'yes' because 'we have got in the family'.

Greeks value faith with statistically significant difference than Swedes.

On what is the 'most important for you now', (Table 8 where no Swedish data are referred) we got responses that showed similar patterns in the two groups, as they gave priority to their future: 'academic accomplishments', 'career' and 'creating family'. The next priority was their family, friends, girl/boy friend, and 'self'. Greeks pointed more to 'character development, behavior, and health'. Swedes noted they wanted 'to feel well, to be able to feel well'.

Participants of two ethnic samples value first their way/strata? to the future and their education where good communication in the family follows more for Greek girls than boys, and self more for Greek boys. Hobbies cowardly appear as important to life for both genders of the Greek sample.

Education: values

Table 9 Suggestions for better education. (Only for the Greek sample)

Greek sample's participants refer to 'teachers', communication problems with them and their teaching; they follow by reporting about the 'educational system', the demand to learn like parrots the books' text, the way books are written, facilities used in education that need to be synchronized. The third place is given to 'buildings' and the educational environment in general. They value on good communication with teachers, more those with more problems, while those with less problems value on changes about the educational system and the educational environment in general; some of them by referring to problems with their teachers, value on substantial communication with them that seems missing.

Fairy tales: values

Table 10 Name your favorite tale when you were a child? (With gender and mental health differences)

Greek sample as a whole talk about the 'Little red riding hood', as those with less problems, and half of the girls. The 'Three little pigs' are more preferred by the boys, while participants with more problems and 1/4 of the girls preferred 'Cinderella. Alice in wonderland is

more preferred by boys.

The reason of their choice in the base of what they did like more in the tale, guided us to what they value in the 'fairy tales of their childhood'; in priority they pointed out: catharsis, beneficial support, character, mystery-adventures, the good luck, the story, the nice dresses.

Discussion

In this paper we studied values that provide the structure of Swedish and Greek adolescents' attitudes about fears, coping resources, future and 'other issues'. Even if we are hesitant to more precisely define and label 'Greek' versus 'Swedish' culture, it is hard to avoid the impression that the understanding of the value patterns we have revealed of the adolescents' concerns and the importance of state and family support for them with respect to coping with life, needs a cultural awareness approach.

We found both similar and different patterns in the two groups that we interviewed. Our data showed that values that are involved in adolescents' attitudes on fears, coping and future issues agreed with studies conducted in several other countries (Anttila et al. 2000 in Finland; Gallagher & Millar, 1998 in Northern Ireland; Arrindell et al. 2003, in 11 nations: Australia, East Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Spain, Sweden, Greece, etc; Lee et al., 2010 in Taiwan; Palovaara 1998 in Finland, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom; Scott, 2004, with African American adolescents; Triplett, 2002, in the United States; Flanagan, Tucker 1999, Stiles et al., 1993, in USA, Klingman 1998, Knafo et al., 2008, in Israel; Malmberg, Norrgård 1999 in Finland; EGRIS, 2001, in Europe).

We found substantial variations in the fears, coping and future issues the two samples demonstrated. These variations link to cultural differences shown in other cross-cultural studies (EGRIS, 2001; Ollendick et al., 1996; Stiles et al., 1993, Klingman 1998) and manifest the theoretical issues of cultural consequences to people's thoughts, feelings values and actions (Cooper & Denner, 1998, Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998; Hofstede, 2001).

Basically, young people do not differ much in different countries. What makes them different from each other can be linked to society with its structures and to culture with its basic values (Palovaara, 1998). For

example, life can be more family-oriented as in Greece where adolescents value security that family provides or the culture may encourage individualism as in Sweden, that adolescents value security that the states provide. As some network theorists argue, how social institutions are structured shapes the resources the individual can access, affects their values, their behavioural and emotional responses (Berkman et al., 2000). Berkman et al. (2000) note that we cannot identify the conditions that influence the development and structure of social networks but there is a reciprocal influence on how adolescents behave and respond to life issues in each culture.

Adolescents value differently the role of the family

Family seems to play different roles in the two cultures. What accounts for this difference? Results show that, in personal terms, for both groups of adolescents, family seems to be the most important support system, a finding that is also reflected in studies of many other parts of the world (Larson & Wilson 2002). However, Greeks value relatively more family support than Swedes, especially generally speaking as was asked for in Table 4. In Swedish material it appears that, in general, state support, and not the family, is seen as more of a complement to the individual's own coping. This is somewhat puzzling since for them personally, their families are the fundamental resource for coping (Table 5). The majority of Greek adolescents responded by valuing a weaker state support, while in general terms, family is seen as the most important complement to the individual's own coping (Table 4). From our data it might be suggested that support of one of these levels—family and state—does not necessarily replace the need of support from the other. A possible explanation of the differences between Greek and Swedish responses could be the fundamental differences in how societal institutions (such as the state, the family, etc) have developed and transformed historically. The attitude patterns identified and the values raised from these could be seen as efforts from the part of adolescents to continuously re-adjust as a reaction to this transformation (Tsaousis, 1984). Even if economic crisis and repeated changes of the welfare system of Sweden in the 1990's has lead to relative fluidity in the social environment, it seems as the Swedes still trust and value public institutions for their social security, at

least in comparison with the Greeks, where family seems to be more 'traditional' and perhaps more stable than the Swedish family, that challenges their positive evaluation.

Fear as struggle for present and future security

Social fears emphasized by Greek adolescents appear to be linked to problems in feeling safe. The Greeks more than Swedes seemed to identify social dangers in terms of the present, 'subjective' or psychological issues, (school, career, trouble with 'bad companies', attacks on the streets, seduced by drugs, losses, illness etc.). The Swedes presented a slightly more 'objectified' view on fears, and were worried more about "society" and the general development of societal problems where the insecurity they experience generates the need to evaluate security. Perhaps we here have an indication of Swedes having perceived the deconstruction of the welfare state which was intensively debated at the time of data collection. The question is how to understand Greeks' more subjectively oriented fears according to which they evaluate their every day issues; however, to this question we do not have any plausible response neither from the data nor from our contextual knowledge.

Evaluating future family, family support and career

Somewhat surprisingly about one out of five Swedes evaluates to starting own families as a short time (in five years) prospect, while none of the Greek participants identified this. The average age of first marriage is strikingly high in Sweden compared to most other European countries (Eurostat 2004). We cannot find a plausible explanation for this Swedish pattern, quite the opposite could have been expected since planning a family is an example of a fundamental developmental task (Erikson, 1968), and to plan a future family can be expected as a 'traditional' way of describing future life (Kasurinen, 1999). The fact that no Greeks valued for having own families is less surprising since in Greece this is very difficult if one is not economically independent. In Greece, as well as in Sweden, the average age for women when the first child is born is close to 30 (Eurostat yearbook, 2004). Another interesting difference between youths' values is that quite a few young Greeks perceived their future

life in 5 years 'same as today' or/and to 'desire to have improved family relations' while no Swedes gave responses that could be coded into those categories (Table 6). Both aspects could relate to the differences in the possibilities for young people to live independently after finishing upper secondary level/lyceum. Many Swedes go directly to university studies and can receive relatively generous study loans, or they choose to work. In both cases it means that they have a bigger possibility to move away from the family to their own flats or student apartments. Greeks had no access to such funding for their studies at the time the research took place, being financially dependent on their parents.

The differences in evaluating family orientation and security coming from family dependency were not reflected in the adolescent's emphasizing on a future career evaluation. More than half of the responses in both groups were coded into this category, and this result was also reinforced by the responses on what was most important for them 'now'. Their evaluation gave priority to their future academic accomplishments, their career and – at least in the long run – creating a family which seems to indicate a similar pattern about becoming an active citizen in a more global sense, independent of cultural or national influence. Another important issue Swedes evaluate higher than Greeks is caring about self, 'being healthy' obvious by their physical exercises and their care about nutrition habits.

Adolescents evaluate their faith

Our data on faith issues agree with other studies (Faris & Smith, 2002 in the United States; Simmons, 1998 in Saudi Arabia, England and the United States; Sulloway 1997 in Europe; Pajević et al., 2007). Greeks are mainly orthodox Christians. Religion is connected to Greek history and social life through centuries, and apparently has influenced Greek youths' attitudes and behaviours. As they say, 'our faith is alive'. Although Sweden is Protestant, it is highly secularised. This difference is reflected in the European Value Studies (EVS) where, at the turn of the century, less than 40% of Swedes considered themselves as religious, as compared to more than 80% of Greeks.

Greek adolescents evaluate education

Values expressed by Greek adolescents in relation to education surprisingly resemble to adolescents in other countries (Pick De Weis, Perez 1991 in Mexico, a Planning for life education program; Prokhorov et al., 1993, lifestyle values of Health Youth Program in Rhode Island, Kingston, USA; Mohamed et al., 2011, educational program on health issues, in Cairo) showing the need for adolescents not only to be heard but to extend educational issues on everyday life, such as communication skills in family and peers, decision making, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and values about adolescent sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases.

Greek adolescents evaluate their childhood favourite tales

Values generated by adolescents' favorite tales constituted a special and interesting source we meet in psychiatric studies (Lubetsky, 1989, Jacobs 2011), and need further analysis. Fairy tales was the only variable that showed participants' gender and mental health differences, proving theory saying that value systems vary between individuals and groups (Hogg and Vaughan, 1998). Similar gender and mental health differences in values were generated from fears, concerns, coping, "most important for you now", future and education issues of the present study.

A concluding remark

Our results about life issues and values that generate show young people moving into the 'adult-world' following their unique ways. Despite surface similarities, cultural distinctiveness persists in the ways values are transmitted in every society, shaping the social identities of Swedish and Greek adolescents. Multiple levels

of context (ecology of human development, integrated levels of organization including the biological, individual-psychological, social-interpersonal, institutional, cultural, and historical) are influential during adolescence. No single influence acts either alone or as the 'prime mover' of change (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). All these factors provide a holistic approach on understanding how adolescents in two different cultures respond to their challenges. Clearly more research needs to be done in this area.

The present empirical cross-cultural study highlights samples of Swedish and Greek adolescents as it relates to reported values generated by their attitudes about fears, concerns or difficulties in personal family, and social life issues. Values regarding faith, social position and security are more common for Greek adolescents while values regarding security, social position and creating own family are more common to Swedes. It is suggested that adolescents should be given the chance to experience and practice 'value clarification' a process that enables everyone to decide, evaluate, do and define what has meaning for him (Sidney1974). Nevertheless because value hierarchies and their relative importance may alter over lifespan (Hogg and Vaughan, 1998), there is a need for similar studies to be repeated over time.

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TABLES

Fears: values

Table 1 What are the children of your age afraid of?

	Greek sample N=47 cases, %	Swedish sample N=53 responses from 47 cases, %
social dangers	33	19
things in the future	28	45
physical injury/disease	0	13
drugs and Aids	24	0
	99	100
afraid about the family	4	0
natural phenomenon	4	0
“nothing” or “other”	2	15
losses and death	4	8

[Chi-square test (Pearson), p=0.002 for the table].

Table 2 What are you afraid of?

	Greek sample N= 47cases,%	Swedish sample N=49 responses from47cases.%	Boys N=23,%	Girls N=24 %
Social dangers, loss of relatives, illness	47	18	35	54
Fears about future	23	47	30	17
Drugs and AIDS	15	0	26	4
Disasters, earthquakes	2	0		4
Bad family relations				4
Nothing	13	100	9	17
	100	100	100	100

[Chi-square test (Pearson), p=0.000 for the table]

(Chi-square test Pearson,
p=0.045 for the table)

Table 3 Describing other concerns about:

	YSR<34..n=24 %	YSR>60 n=23 %	
Self	0	41	26
Family	10	18	15
School setting	50	6	22
Future	10	29	22
Social	30	6	15
	100	100	100

(YSR high/lows significant differences) Whole sample's attitudes

[Chi-square test (Pearson), p=0.009 for the table]

Coping: values

Table 4 How do you think that that these problems can be faced?

	Greek sample N= 47 cases. %	Swedish sample N=64 responses from 47 cases. %
Own coping strategies	49	56
Family support	29	0
State and school support	18	27
Information	4	0
Else	0	17
	100	100

(Chi-square test, p=0.000 for the table)

Table 5 To whom would you turn in a difficulty?

	Greek sample n=46 συμ. %	Swedish sample N=54 αποκρ. από 47 συμμετέχ. %	YSR high/low differences	
			YSR<34n=23 %	YSR>60 n=23
To family	67	52	83	52
To social environment	24	41	9	39
To self	9	0	9	9
Else	0	7	-	-
	100	100	100	100

[Chi-square test (Pearson), $p=0.017$ for the table]

Chi-square test
Pearson, $p=0.048$
for the table.

Future: values

Table 6 How would you like your life to be in five years?

	Greek sample N=47 cases. %	Swedish sample N=115 responses from 47 cases. %
Having a social and career position	58	53
Same as today	18	0
Improved family relations	9	0
Personal care or growth	13	18
Having own families	0	22
Don't know or else	2	7
	100	100

(Chi-square test, $p = 0.000$ for the table)

Other issues: values

Table 7 Do you believe in God?

	Greek %	Swedish %
Yes	98	23
no	2	56
not sure	0	21
	N=47 100%	100% N=48

(Chi-square test Pearson, $p=0.000$)

Table 8 What is most important for you now?
Whole sample's attitudes

	N=47 %
The future and the school	51
Relations to the family	23
Caring about myself	17
My hobbies - spare time	9
	100

Gender differences

Boys n=23 %	Girls n=24 %
61	42
4	42
26	8
9	8
100	100

(Chi-square test Pearson, $p=0.018$ for the table)

Table 9 Suggestions for better education:

(YSR high/low significant differences)

	N=47 %
The teachers	43
The educational system	39
The school setting	4
Nothing-no idea	14
	100

YSR<34 n=24 %	YSR>60 n=23 %
20	69
47	31
7	
26	
100	100

(Chi-square test Pearson, $p=0.033$ for the table)

Table 10 Name of your favourite tale:

(YSR high/lows significant differences)

boys/girls dif/ces

sample's attitudes

	YSR<34 .n=24 %	YSR>60 n=23 %	Boys N=23%	Girls N=24%	N=47 cases %
Little red riding hood	50	17	17	50	34
Three little pigs	13	13	22	4	13
Cinderella		26	0	25	13
Alice in wonderland	4	9	13	0	6
Else	21	35	35	21	28
Don't know	12	0	13	0	6
	100	100	100	100	100

(Chi-square test Pearson, p=0.015 for the table)

Chi-square test Pearson,
p=0.001 for the table)