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Parents Differentiate Between Their Personal Values and Their Socialization Values: The Role of Adolescents' Values

Maya Benish-Weisman
University of Haifa

Sigal Levy and Ariel Knafo
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

This study focuses on the differentiation process, involving the emergence of a distinction between parents' own personal values and their socialization values (the values they want their children to adopt), and on the contribution of children's values to their parents' socialization values. Measures of personal and socialization values were administrated to 603 Israeli adolescents and their parents. As we hypothesized, parents differentiate between their personal values and their socialization values. Moreover, adolescents' values had a specific contribution to their parents' socialization values. These findings provide new support to the notion that the socialization process should be considered as the result of the interaction between parents and their adolescent children rather than as a unidirectional process affected by parents alone.

How are children's values generated through the socialization process? In early socialization models, children were considered "blank slates," passively accepting their parents' norms and values. The so-called fax models assumed that parents transmitted a copy of their own personal values to their children (Strauss, 1992). In contrast, more recent theories describe value development as the result of a parent–child reciprocal process (Grusec & Davidov, 2010; Roest, Dubas, & Gerris, 2010), viewing the child as an active agent that can manipulate and change parents' values (Knafo & Galansky, 2008; Kuczynski, Marshall, & Schell, 1997; Sameroff, 2009).

In considering values as part of the socialization process, parents rely on their own *personal* values, and their *socialization* values, namely the values that they want their children to adopt (Knafo & Galansky, 2008; Tam, Lee, Kim, Li, & Chao, 2012). These two sets of values (personal and socialization) are typically positively correlated, and yet the correlations are moderate, probably because parents view them as two different sets of values (Tam & Lee, 2010; Whitbeck & Gecas, 1988). The current investigation focuses on this *differentiation* process, involving the emergence of a distinction between parents' own personal values and their socialization values. Specifically, we want to examine whether parents wish for their adolescent children things that are different from what they wish for themselves and whether the children's values relate this differentiation process.

CONCEPTUALIZING VALUES

Relying on Schwartz's (1992) theory and extensive research, we view values as abstract ideas that guide behavior as well as the evaluation of people and events and vary in terms of importance across individuals. Schwartz (1992) described the value system as composed of 10 values that represent most of the values known in modern society, forming a structure that has been repeatedly found in over 65 countries (e.g., Schwartz & Rubel, 2005). Each value represents a broad motivational goal: *Self-direction* (independence of thought and action), *stimulation* (excitement, challenge, and novelty), *hedonism* (pleasure or sensuous gratification), *achievement* (personal success according to social standards), *power* (social status, dominance over people and resources), *conformity* (restraint of actions that may harm others or violate social expectations), *tradition* (respect and commitment to cultural or religious customs and ideas), *benevolence* (preserving and enhancing the welfare of people to whom one is close), *universalism* (understanding, tolerance, and concern for the welfare of all people and nature), and *security* (safety and stability of society, relationships, and self) (Schwartz, 1992).

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Requests for reprints should be sent to Maya Benish-Weisman, Department of Counseling and Human Development, University of Haifa, Mt. Carmel, Haifa 31905, Israel. E-mail: maya.bw@edu.haifa.ac.il

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Values form a quasi-circumplex structure, representing the compatibilities and conflicts among them (Schwartz, 1992). For the current purposes, a major distinction can be made between two sets of values: *Self-oriented* values (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, power, and achievement) on the one hand and *other-oriented* values (universalism, benevolence, conformity, tradition, and security) on the other hand. According to Schwartz (2012), self-oriented values are more important for adolescents than for adults, whereas other-oriented values are less important for adolescents as compared to adults.

THE DIFFERENTIATION PROCESS

Recent studies reveal that despite the stability of values (Schwartz, 1992), their importance might change by context (e.g., Daniel et al., 2012). For example, as a result of differences between domestic values and societal values (a common situation for immigrant parents), parents may realize that certain values they hold dear are not always applicable in their new country (Knafo & Schwartz, 2001; Tam & Lee, 2010).

Parents may differentiate their own values from the ones they wish for their children because these values concern quite different life roles. Schwartz (2012) notes that, relative to their parents, adolescents have less responsibility for caring for the welfare of others and are less committed to the established ways of doing things. They are expected to explore and establish their independent identity rather than to be committed to traditional customs. Parents may rely on these societal expectations when they think about the values they would like their children to have. That is, parents may wish their adolescent children would hold more self-oriented values and less other-oriented values than they themselves hold.

Furthermore, the adolescent's own values may be a source for the distinction that parents make between their personal values and those they would like their children to have (Knafo & Galansky, 2008; Zentner & Renaud, 2007). For example, a parent who initially did not value education highly may encourage his or her curious and inquiring child to study and learn. Support for this explanation might be found in analyses that show that children's values can account for the distinction between parents' personal and socialization values. To the best of our knowledge, there is no direct research on this differentiation process, and the current study intends to fill this gap.

THE CURRENT STUDY

In a sample of 603 Israeli families, we investigated whether parents differentiate their own values from the values they want their children to adopt and whether children's values play a role in this process. We hypothesize that (1) parents differentiate their personal values from their socialization values. We expect the parents to rate self-oriented values as more important for their children to have than for themselves, as well as to rate other-oriented values as less important for their children than for themselves. We also suggest that adolescents' values will show a unique contribution to parents' *socialization* values, over and above parents' *personal* values. We therefore hypothesize that (2) once parents' personal values are controlled for, adolescents' values will predict parents' socialization values.

METHOD

Respondents

Data were drawn from a study of family value processes (Knafo & Schwartz, 2003). Six hundred and three Israeli families participated in the study. We excluded 39 immigrant families because parenting has different impacts on value socialization for them (Knafo & Schwartz, 2001) and ended with 564 families. Sixteen percent of the families were single-parent families (mothers in 85%). In 39% of two-parent families, only one parent (87% mothers) responded. Adolescents' age ranged from 15 to 19, with 95% between 16 and 18 (M = 17.1; SD = 0.7), and 57% of the adolescents were female. As detailed by Knafo and Schwartz (2003), this sample fairly reflects the study population of Israeli Jewish high-school students from state and state religious schools in terms of socioeconomic status.

Procedure

Families of adolescents were recruited by telephone, using phone numbers from student directories for the 11th or 12th grade and included if the adolescent (one per family) and at least one parent had consented to participate (46% of contacted families). A researcher visited each home to administer the questionnaires and provide necessary explanations. Family members were assured their responses would not be disclosed to others and each member responded in privacy. The study was conducted in accordance with the institutional review board.

Instrument

Demographic data were collected along with the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ; Knafo & Schwartz, 2003; Schwartz, Melech, Lehmann, Burgess, & Harris, 2001; Schwartz & Rubel, 2005). The PVQ includes short verbal portraits of 40 people. Each portrait describes a person's goals, aspirations, or wishes that point implicitly to the importance of a single broad value. For example: "He thinks it is important to do things the way he learned from his family. He wants to follow their customs and traditions". This portrait describes a person for whom tradition values are important. Or the portrait "She really wants to enjoy life. Having a good time is very important to her" describes a person who cherishes hedonism values. To measure respondents' own values, they were asked to indicate for each portrait, "How much like you is this person?" (1 = *not like me at all*; 6 = *very much like me*). Thus, respondents' own values were inferred from their self-reported similarity to people who were described in terms of particular values. Females and males got sex-specific version such that females got descriptions in terms of *she/her* and males got descriptions in terms of *he/him*. To measure socialization values, parents indicated: "How would you want your son/daughter to respond to each item?" Individual items that were intended to measure specific values (two to five items per value) were centered around the average of all items (to reduce problems or scale use, as in Schwartz, 1992), and averaged to obtain an importance score for each of the values. The reliabilities ranged between .72 and .81 for self-oriented and other-oriented values for mothers and fathers.

RESULTS

To examine our first hypothesis that parents differentiate between the values they believe in and the values they would like their children to adopt, we ran (2 × 5) repeated-measures ANOVAs contrasting parents' personal values and their socialization values, separately for the five self-oriented and the five other-oriented values. As shown in Table 1, our hypothesis was confirmed. Significant differences between personal and socialization values were found in all of the values under study, except for fathers' universalism values. As hypothesized, self-oriented values were more important for parents when thinking of their children than when thinking about their own values, mothers, $F(1,544 = 100.61$, $p < .001)$, fathers, $F(1,368 = 37.61$, $p < .001)$, with an effect size (η^2) of 16% (mothers)and of 9% (fathers). In contrast, other-oriented values were less important for parents when thinking of their children than when thinking of their personal values, mothers, $F(1,544 = 138.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 20\%)$, fathers, $F(1,368 = 33.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 8\%)$. We also performed paired *t*-tests between self-oriented and other-oriented values by comparing the summary of the absolute differences between personal and socialization values. The differences between personal and socialization values for self-oriented dimensions were significantly larger than the differences among other-oriented values for fathers ($t(345) = 5.38$, $p < .001$) and mothers ($t(504) = 6.47$, $p < .001$).

According to our second hypothesis, the differentiation between parents' personal and socialization values reflects individual differences in adolescents' values. To test this hypothesis, we performed a hierarchical regression with parents' personal values (Step 1), and adolescents' values (Step 2), as predictors of mothers' (Table 2) and fathers' (Table 3) socialization values, controlling for the gender of the child and socioeconomic status. A separate regression was run for each value. These analyses showed that parents' personal values positively predicted their socialization values, accounting for 5%–39% of the variance.

Despite the consistency between parents' personal and socialization values, the analyses also showed a specific contribution of adolescents' values to parents' socialization values, beyond the effect of parents' personal values. Similar results were found for all values, and for both parents, although they were not significant for mothers' self-direction and for fathers' achievement and benevolence values. While modest in size (averaging 2%), the direction of contribution was positive in all cases. This suggests that when parents differentiate between their personal and socialization values, the difference is in the direction of the values of their adolescent children, even when the former are controlled for.

DISCUSSION

When parents set desired values for their children, they rely to a great extent on their own personal values (Whitbeck & Gecas, 1988). But it seems that parents also consider their adolescent children's values, and thus differentiate their own personal values from their socialization values, as we demonstrate in this study. Hence, the values parents wish their children to adopt do not simply reflect their own personal values. The current investigation

TABLE 1
A Comparison Between Parents' Socialization Values and Parents' Personal Values

	Mothers' socialization values		*Mothers' personal values*			*Fathers' socialization values*		*Fathers' personal values*		
Value	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*(*df* = 544)	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*(*df* = 368)
Self-oriented values										
Self-direction	4.44	0.66	4.27	0.63	−5.12**	4.38	0.55	4.31	0.64	−2.23*
Stimulation	3.36	1.04	2.91	1.69	−6.02**	3.15	1.05	2.93	1.19	−3.57**
Hedonism	3.86	1.00	3.51	1.11	−6.94**	3.73	0.98	3.56	1.06	−2.86**
Achievement	3.66	0.83	3.38	0.89	−6.83**	3.76	0.70	3.49	0.88	−6.24**
Power	2.51	1.17	2.42	1.11	−1.90[a]	2.96	1.11	2.83	1.14	−2.13*
Other-oriented values										
Security	4.31	0.57	4.57	0.61	9.33**	4.29	0.53	4.46	0.83	3.96**
Conformity	3.72	0.79	3.91	0.99	4.80**	3.80	0.74	3.90	0.77	2.07*
Tradition	3.31	0.98	3.48	0.94	4.38**	3.34	0.89	3.48	0.91	3.33**
Benevolence	4.70	0.70	4.92	0.61	6.59**	4.60	0.45	4.69	0.48	4.02**
Universalism	4.46	0.61	4.54	0.51	3.00**	4.38	0.47	4.41	0.56	1.20

[a]$p < .05$, 1-tailed; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

TABLE 2
Hierarchical Regression of Mothers' Socialization Values on Mothers' and Adolescents' Personal Values

	Step 1				*Step 2*						
	Mothers' personal values				*Mothers' personal values*			*Adolescents' values*			
Value	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	R^2	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	R^2 change
Self-direction	.30	.05	.34***	.17	.29	.05	.32***	.1	.06	.11*	.012
Stimulation	.34	.05	.36***	.14	.32	.05	.34***	.17	.06	.18**	.03
Hedonism	.33	.05	.36***	.14	.32	.05	.36***	.04	.07	.04	.001
Achievement	.37	.06	.35***	.16	.33	.05	.38***	.21	.06	.19**	.03
Power	.51	.06	.49***	.26	.48	.06	.46***	.14	.05	.15**	.02
Security	.55	.04	.58***	36.	.52	.04	.55***	.14	.04	.17***	.03
Conformity	.2	.04	.23***	.14	.2	.04	.23***	.2	.06	.2***	.04
Tradition	.59	.06	.52***	.32	.52	.06	.46***	.25	.07	.21***	.04
Benevolence	.17	.08	.13*	.05	.17	.08	.13*	.29	.11	.16*	.02
Universalism	.44	.05	.47***	.22	.43	.05	.47***	.16	.05	.19***	.03

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

joins a handful of studies that shed light on the differences between parents' personal and socialization values (e.g., Tam & Lee, 2010; Whitbeck & Gecas, 1988). This literature indicates that, to understand the way the values of parents relate to those of their children, we should consider not only parental personal values, but also the values parents want their children to adopt, their socialization values. The differentiation between personal and socialization values is meaningful to the socialization process, as parents who are high in differentiation have been shown to convey their values less successfully to their adolescent children (Knafo & Schwartz, 2001).

Distal and proximal social contexts contribute to parental value differentiation. In the distal social context, parental value differentiation can be explained by the tendency of parents to help their children adjust to societal norms (Tam et al., 2012). Israeli parents may perceive Israeli norms as changing toward a more individualistic and less communal society (Doron, 2007) and therefore stress self-oriented socialization values. This shift can also explain the larger differences between

TABLE 3
Hierarchical Regression of Fathers' Socialization Values on Fathers' and Adolescents' Personal Values

	Step 1				*Step 2*						
	Fathers' personal values				*Fathers' personal values*			*Adolescents' values*			
Value	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	R^2	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	R^2 change
Self-direction	.44	.04	.5***	.3	.43	.04	.48***	.15	.04	.17***	.03
Stimulation	.34	.05	.38***	.15	.34	.05	.38***	.2	.05	.2***	.04
Hedonism	.31	.05	.35***	.15	.29	.05	.33***	.16	.06	.16**	.02
Achievement	.39	.04	.49***	.24	.38	.04	.47***	.08	.05	.09[1]	.007
Power	.48	.05	.49***	.24	.46	.05	.47***	.14	.05	.16**	.02
Security	.55	.04	.56***	.33	.52	.04	.55***	.14	.04	.17***	.03
Conformity	.47	.05	.48***	.12	.45	.05	.46***	.12	.05	.13**	.02
Tradition	.57	.05	.59***	.4	.53	.05	.54***	.17	.05	.18***	.03
Benevolence	.39	.05	.42***	.2	.39	.05	.4***	.06	.04	.07	.005
Universalism	.52	.04	.62**	.4	.50	.04	.6***	.09	.04	.11*	.01

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.
[1]$p = .08$.

personal and socialization values of self-oriented values compared with other-oriented values. Parents' efforts to adjust their children's values to changing norms are stronger for values that stress self-enhancement and personal development.

A proximal social context explanation notes dissimilarities in the roles of adolescents and their parents, related to their respective life stages (Roest et al., 2010). Adolescents are in the process of searching for and establishing an autonomous self; hence, they have different developmental tasks, societal expectations, and social roles (Erikson, 1968). Their value priorities reflect these differences (Schwartz, 2012). Parents who wish to support their children in their self-development journey assign more self-oriented values and less other-oriented values to their adolescent children than they themselves hold.

In addition, adolescents' values were found to relate to parental values, such that parents' socialization values were predicted by children's values over and above the prediction by parents' own personal values. Parents may acknowledge (explicitly or implicitly) that their children have a unique set of values that differ from their own; thus, they may be willing to adapt their socialization values in a way that fits their children's values. The findings are in line with Kuczynski et al.'s (1997) reciprocal model, according to which the socialization process is not unidirectional with parents transmitting values to passive receivers, but instead children contribute to their own socialization. Particularly in the case of adolescents who become independent in their values and ideals (Zentner & Renaud, 2007), we propose that a possible mechanism by which this reciprocity occurs is through changes that parents make in their socialization values whose aim is to fit their children's values.

Once we acknowledge that children may affect their own socialization process, we can better understand why parents appear to transmit different values to each of their children (Feinberg & Hetherington, 2000). Within-family variation in children's own values may therefore account for the variation in parental socialization practices toward each of their children. Taking a broader perspective, processes of social change can also be understood in terms of the impact that adolescents have on their parents, as children may be social initiators who influence adult decision making. For example, adolescents tend to be more open to changes than are adults (Knafo & Schwartz, 2001; Schwartz, 2012), and as a result they can advance new perspectives in society or be the initiators of cutting-edge ideas and norms (Bengtson & Troll, 1978).

Note that the contribution of adolescents' values to parents' socialization values was rather small. Parental personal values predicted parents' socialization values more strongly. Nevertheless, these small effects are robust, as they appeared in all ten values for at least one of the parents. Future research should look for other factors that contribute to the differences between parents' personal values, and their socialization values. Likely candidates might be the values of other family members. In addition, major life changes may be important to these differences, as in the example of immigrant parents who may desire for their children who

grow up in the new country alternative values from the ones that were common in the old country (Knafo & Schwartz, 2001).

Some methodological issues are noteworthy. The strengths of the study include a large sample and an established measure of a broad set of values. Although we controlled for parents' and adolescents' personal values, we did not address other factors in the closer environment, such as siblings, or in the wider environment, such as the neighborhood culture, which may also shape parents' socialization values. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of this study limits causal inferences from the findings, as noted; children's values can be one possible explanation of the differences between parental personal and socialization values, while a third factor such as cultural norms can explain both. Future longitudinal studies are needed to establish causal explanation. Future research should also address the relationships between parents' own personal values, their desired values for their children and their socialization practices. Finally, the cultural context may be important. The Israeli culture is characterized by especially low power distance (a cultural focus on a distance between individuals with different social status; Hofstede, 2001). The lower importance given to status relationships may make it easier for parents to modify their socialization values based on those of their adolescent children. Research in other countries will broaden our understanding of the role that culture might play in processes of family socialization for values.

The current findings provide a preliminary support for the bidirectional family influence model, according to which adolescents are not passive receivers of parental values but rather are active agents who influence the socialization process. Thus, socialization should be considered as a mutual process whose outcomes are the result of a reciprocal negotiation between parents and children.

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