

Complex Values in Different Cultures: Some Research Results of Psycholinguistic Experiments With Russian and Swedish Students

Vladimir Shabes
Herzen State Pedagogical University,
St-Petersburg, Russia

Ekaterina Troshchenkova,
Tamara Potapova
St-Petersburg State University,
St-Petersburg, Russia

Lena Ivarsson, Ulla Damber,
Göran Bostedt
Mid Sweden University, Härnösand,
Sweden

In the article on the basis of the psycholinguistic experimental data obtained in 2009-2010 from Russian and Swedish students, we consider internal features of several complex values (“Harmony”, “Freedom”, “Democracy”, “Tolerance” and “Patriotism”) and analyze their external systemic organization, taking into account both specificity of the two cultures and gender specifics. We argue that value concepts are hierarchically organized, forming different generalization levels from the simple to the more complex ones with intricate overlapping among different complex values within the system. This research is a stage in a complex experimental work aimed at comparing Russian and Swedish values (the project on Swedish Institute grant).

Keywords: value system, complex value, psycholinguistic experiment, cultural similarities/differences, gender similarities/differences

Introduction: Overview of the Project and Focus on Its Second Stage

The article discusses some results of a series of psycholinguistic experiments with Russian and Swedish students from the universities in St-Petersburg and Vyborg in Russia and in central Sweden. The experiments were conducted in 2009-2010. The project 00724/2009, named “Values in Mono- and Poly- Cultural Understanding”, was financed by the Swedish institute and had three main stages.

There are numerous definitions and classification of “values” from the philosophical (axiological), psychological, sociological, etc., positions. From the point of view of the modern cognitive approach, values are a part of knowledge distributed among the members of a community that fixes attitudes and evaluations by this community (and individuals that it comprises) of some events (natural phenomena, people’s actions, inner changes, for example, in human bodies), standard evaluations of the objects of the world that play some roles in those event, etc.. Together with goals and norms, values play an important role in planning and behaviour, in

Vladimir Shabes, Ph.D., professor, Department of Romanic Language, Herzen State Pedagogical University.

Ekaterina Troshchenkova, Ph.D., associate professor, Department of English Philology and Cultural Linguistics, St-Petersburg State University.

Tamara Potapova, senior lecturer, Department of English for Economy and Law Faculties, St-Petersburg State University.

Lena Ivarsson, Ph.D., assistant professor, Department of Education, Mid Sweden University.

Ulla Damber, Ph.D., assistant professor, Department of Education, Mid Sweden University.

Göran Bostedt, Ph.D., associate professor, Department of Education, Mid Sweden University.

understanding and interpreting of the scenes perceived from reality or read about in texts. As a rule, values get formed and fixed with the help of natural language. By “value”, we mean a concept that enters the system of the analogous distributed evaluative representations.

An important feature of the value system is its multi-dimensional structure:

Firstly, values are organized according to the parameter of “importance” (positive-neutral-negative) in relation to each other. The data about this systemic organization of value concepts can be obtained in a psycholinguistic experiment with the use of graded standard methodology that combines ranging and scaling (about the method in general see IIIa6ec, 1989; applied to values see Shabes, Bostedt, Troshchenkova, Ivarsson, Damber, & Potapova, 2011).

Secondly, according to the hierarchical (hypo-hyperonymical) parameter of concreteness-abstractedness, the parameter of concreteness-abstractedness means that several concrete (simple) values may form (enter into) a more abstract (general) value. These multi-componential values are that we call “complex” here (Cf. the idea of different levels of cultural conceptualizations in Sharifian, 2011, p. 108). In this article, on the basis of the experimental data, we consider internal features of such complex values and their external systemic organization, taking into account both specificity of the two cultures and gender specifics. As our study is limited with regard to the age of our respondents and their occupation, we do not claim that the results obtained should be necessarily extrapolated to the whole culture. However, we think that the age group we chose—students from 19 to 30 years old—is important, because this is the age when values get more or less formed and rather rigid for future changes, at the same time, those are people whose values are to influence the whole culture for several decades to come.

The first stage of the study was aimed at obtaining a list of values from the representatives of the two cultures where they would also mark whether they thought that the values they enumerate are important just for them or for the society or both. The lists that we got as a result of this stage contained a great variety of values. One of the results of their analysis led us to the second stage of studying complex values, which we will elaborate further in this article.

It turned out that the value concepts given by our respondents in the first stage are clearly of different degree of generality. Thus, they may be clustered, forming several hierarchical levels where the simpler value concepts of the lower level enter a more complex value of the higher level which serves as an umbrella for them.

One of the problems that immediately attract our attention was the fact that there were a number of complex values (mentioned by the Russian and Swedish respondents during the first stage) that, on the face of it, looked very similar. The words used to denominate those values—such as democracy, tolerance, patriotism, etc.—being internationalisms seemed very familiar in any language and created an illusion that their meanings were the same. However, during our discussions of the first stage within a group of experts (as we represented three native speakers of Russian and three native speakers of Swedish), it became obvious that the understanding of the underlying value concepts was dramatically different and an important source of potential conflict in intercultural communication.

This led us to the second stage in our study where we concentrated on researching several complex value concepts, five of which—“Harmony”, “Freedom”, “Democracy”, “Tolerance” and “Patriotism”—will be described in detail in this article.

The third stage of the study dealt with a number of those concepts that we assumed simple and was aimed

at finding relative importance of those values in the two cultures. The respondents were to rank, according to their individual preferences, the same list of 31 values from the most to the least important. Further statistical analysis and counting the mean for each value allowed transforming individual subjective ranking into a socio-cultural objective grading of value concepts within the system for the two cultural focus groups.

The data, obtained during the three stages of our experiments, allow carrying out quantitative and qualitative (content) analysis, taking into account the following factors:

- (1) Intercultural comparison in general (comparing Russian and Swedish values) without gender differentiation;
- (2) Comparison within one national and cultural group with the focus on gender (comparing separately for Russians and Swedes male and female values);
- (3) Intercultural comparison with the focus on gender (comparing Swedish and Russian males and females according to the gender factor);
- (4) Comparison of different values (including those that are close in their contents) within one culture without gender differentiation.

We shall focus on all these opportunities for comparison in relation to the five above-mentioned complex values which were chosen for detailed analysis for several reasons. Firstly, these values seem to be of significant socio-cultural importance, as they are constantly referred to and negotiated in public discourses, such as political speeches or mass media. The exclusion for this is “Patriotism” for Sweden, but as it is quite important for Russia, we decided to include it for comparison. Secondly, these values have interesting interrelations that will allow us to demonstrate cohesiveness and sophisticated structure of value systems in general as well as use these five values as an example illustrating the methods that may be productively used within cognitive-psycholinguistic approach to studying values.

During the second stage of our research, Russian and Swedish respondents were given lists of complex values (11 and 10 values, correspondingly, that we considered complex on the basis of the first phase of the study). The respondents were asked to enumerate for each stimulus concept, and all the concepts that, according to their opinion, may be included into the given ones (much like birch, oak, etc. which may be included into the concept of a tree). We, thus, aimed our task at obtaining a clear picture of hypo-hyperonymic relations in simple and complex value hierarchies. However, as we shall see in the analysis of the results, the outcome from the respondents was more diverse and is evidence of much more complicated system organization than we could originally suppose.

Comparison of the Results for Both Genders Between Russian and Swedish Cultures

The questionnaire on complex values was filled in by 79 Russians and 62 Swedes. The number of answers obtained for each complex value varies in both cultures, but what can be immediately noticed is the significant difference in the average number of answers for the two cultures: the data is given in Table 1 for those five values that we chose to focus on in this article.

The fact that in both cultures responses for each stimulus form several clusters (as we shall consider in more detail later) does prove, in our view, the complex nature of the values chosen. However, as one can see from Table 1, in Russian questionnaire, most of the respondents were giving more than one answer to each stimulus, while in general, it is not so for the Swedes. For Russians, one can notice that for most values that we analyze here the number of answers was around 287.5 (3.6 reactions per respondent), except for

“Harmony”—the stimulus that caused noticeably greater amount of reactions, almost twice as big as for others. As to Swedes, “Patriotism”, on the contrary, did not produce a variety of reactions. Thus, one may say that the complexity of the concepts in question in Russian is far greater than in Swedish.

Table 1

Number of Respondents' Reactions to the Complex Values Used as Stimuli in the Experiment

Complex value stimulus	Number of answers	
	Russia	Sweden
1 Harmony	511	65
2 Freedom	280	68
3 Democracy	293	60
4 Tolerance	278	63
5 Patriotism	299	43
Average number of reactions for the five abovementioned stimuli	332.2	59.8
Average number of reactions per respondent for the five abovementioned stimuli	4.2	0.96

Content analysis of the answers allows speaking about both similarities and differences in understanding complex values in the two cultures. Let us focus, firstly, on those reactions that were similar for the same stimulus across the cultures. However, some preliminary explanations are necessary here. As clustering of the answers was done by the experts (that is by the Russian part of our research group for the Russian questionnaires and the Swedish part of the research group for the Swedish ones), we fully understand there may be a deal of subjectivity in both which answers to combine as one cluster and how general those clusters should be. It is, of course, possible, especially with Russian material where the amount of reactions is bigger to get two or three sub-clusters that further may be united into one more general cluster. This issue may influence cross-cultural comparison what should be considered the same cluster of reactions.

For “Harmony”, there are quite a big number of clusters matching cross-culturally, and the main ones are as following in Table 2.

Table 2

Main Components of Harmony as a Complex Value According to the Experimental Results

Harmony	Percentage from the total number of answers	
	Russia (%)	Sweden (%)
Tranquility, calmness and placidity	23.2	23.1
Balance, balance in life	8.1	12.3
Well-being	4.2	13.8
Satisfaction	2.6	4.6
Freedom, independence	2.3	3.1
Peace, life without conflicts	2.9	1.5
Happiness	3.2	3.1

In general, for these value stimulus Russian responses include more or less all that we can find in Swedish ones plus some additional clusters that are absent with Swedes, for example, “Understanding” (6.5%), “Agreement” (4.8%), “Order” (2.3%) and some others. Within Swedish responses, one can find a group connected to the idea of “Relaxation” (to fish, coffee breaks, relaxing on the couch, vacation, outdoor recreation, sports)—13.8%. This cluster can be only relatively compared to Russian concepts of “Comfort” (2.9%) and “Meditation, relaxation” (1.6%), the latter being much less “down-to-earth” than with Swedes and

placed by us within a cluster of “metaphorical associations” together with responses like “soul”, “sky”, “life”, “sun”, etc., which are to be discussed later.

It can be seen also that even among cross-culturally matching clusters, we can speak about those that are similar because of their equal “weight” within the total of reactions (e.g., “Tranquility” and “Happiness”) and those that are different as their share in the total of answers in one culture is significantly larger than in the other (e.g., “Well-being” and “Balance”).

“Tolerance”, for which the main matching clusters of answers are given in Table 3, shows the same tendency—the share of the matching clusters may be different cross-culturally (“Patience” and “Acceptance”).

Table 3

Main Components of Tolerance as a Complex Value According to the Experimental Results

Tolerance	Percentage from the total number of answers	
	Russia (%)	Sweden (%)
Patience	6.5	19
Acceptance, openness in mind	4.7	20.6
Respect	11.9	9.5
Humanity, love for people	2.5	3.2
Consideration, compassion and sympathy	5	3.2
Forgiveness	0.7	3.2

For Russians, the concept of “Tolerance” is closely connected to that of “Terpimost” (19.8%), actually, the two words (one borrowed—“tolerantnost” that was given as a stimulus word, and “terpimost”) coexist in modern Russian and often may be viewed as absolute synonyms, thus, this answer takes a significant share of reactions in Russian questionnaires. There are also important clusters of “Understanding” (8.3%), “Politeness, Tact” (5.8%), “Kindness” (4%) and some others that are absent in Swedish answers. On the other hand, there is “Humble” (7.9%) with Swedes that cannot be found in Russian answers.

The main matching clusters for “Democracy” and “Freedom” are given in Table 4 and Table 5, respectively.

Table 4

Main Components of Democracy as a Complex Value According to the Experimental Results

Democracy	Percentage from the total number of answers	
	Russia (%)	Sweden (%)
Freedom (including different types of freedoms such as freedom of speech, etc.)	24.9	11.7
Equality	12.3	3.3
Choice, elections	10.2	28.3
Majority rule, rule by people and participation in decision-making	8.2	31.7
Observing human rights	8.9	6.7
Solidarity, together	1.7	5

The idea of “Freedom” is rather equally associated with the concept of “Democracy” for Russians and Swedes (see Table 5) and the share of this concept is not big. However, in the experiment where “Democracy” serves as a stimulus the situation is different: “Freedom” is mentioned twice more often by Russians as a component of “Democracy”, while it is vice versa for “Choice, elections”. And it is curious that the share of “Majority rule” as a component of “Democracy” is almost four times bigger in Swedish culture than Russian

one. The analysis of the “weight” of other matching components also gives evidence of significant dissimilarity of the two cultures in interpreting this concept. In addition, it is interesting to mention sporadic “geographical associations”: There is an association of “Sweden” with the concept of “Freedom” for Swedes and an association of “the West” for “Democracy” in Russian answers.

Table 5

Main Components of Freedom as a Complex Value According to the Experimental Results

Freedom	Percentage from the total number of answers	
	Russia (%)	Sweden (%)
Independence	13.6	14.7
Democracy	2.5	2.9
Choice, vote	9.3	10.3
Opportunity, to do what you want	8.2	14.7
Responsibility	1.1	4.4
Free will	2.5	10.3

At last, Table 6 represents the main matching clusters for “Patriotism”. It is possible to see that though they take similar share from the total number of reactions in Russian and Swedish cultures (38.8%-39.5%), in general the concept is understood rather differently.

Table 6

Main Components of Patriotism as a Complex Value According to the Experimental Results

Patriotism	Percentage from the total number of answers	
	Russia (%)	Sweden (%)
Love for the country	18.7	18.6
Pride for the country	8.4	16.3
Loyalty	8.4	2.3
Culture and traditions	3.3	2.3

As one can see from Table 6, if “Love for the country” has equal share as a component for “Patriotism” in both cultures, Swedes do emphasize “Pride” more than Russians which may as well be connected with the negative associations that we shall discuss later. For Russians, Patriotism includes a number of components with positive connotations absent in Swedish answers, such as “Duty” (6.7%), “Ability to sacrifice, dedicate one’s life and interests to the country” (5%), “Service to the country, being useful to the country, being active and not indifferent to what is happening in the country” (8.3%), “Heroism, courage” (5.4%), “Defense” (2.7%), and some others.

Let us now focus on a specific group of answers where the given value is associated with some negatively assessed entities. Normally, for positive values these associations are either absent or their amount is negligible compared to the total number of reactions. That is the reason why we tend to call these answers “Negative association tail” (Formally, we count as tail associations those that were mentioned just once or twice in the experiment). However, in some cases, as we shall see their amount can grow, showing the fact that while in some culture, the concept may be perceived as a positive value, in another, it may be viewed as negative or almost negative one.

Table 7 shows the negative association tail for the two cultures in our experiment. Exact percentage number, actually, may vary depending on whether you include some associations that are on the verge of

negativity into the tail or not. However, no matter how one counts it, the general tendency remains obvious in cross-cultural comparison.

As one can see from Table 7, negative association tail can be found mostly with Russian respondents. This, however, may be due to the fact that the total number of reactions is significantly larger and, thus they are much more various. With this situation in mind, it gets, hence, very vivid in case of “Patriotism” how more than a quarter of all Swedish answers carry a negative connotation. Those are reactions like “Ethnocentrism”, “Racism”, “Male dominance”, “Nationalistic perspectives”, etc. The tendency to associate Patriotism with Nationalism as an anti-value can be seen in Russian answers as well, though it is not as obvious as Swedes. Nevertheless, the potential to interpret “Patriotism” in a negative clue is similar for the two cultures and demonstrates its vulnerability as a value concept, with the general trend for abusing this value up to the moment when it turns into an anti-value.

Table 7

Negative Associations Tail for the Complex Values in the Experiment

Complex value stimulus	Approximate percentage from the total number of answers	
	Russia (%)	Sweden (%)
Harmony	0.9	0
Patriotism	2.8	25.6
Freedom	3.4	0
Tolerance	4.7	0
Democracy	6.3	0

In Russia, the stimulus that caused most of the negative reactions is “Democracy”. These are “Lie”, “Deception”, “Uncertainty”, “Instability”, “Disorder”, “Bribery”, “Nothing is true”, “Everything is allowed”, “Betrayal”, “Gang rule and no laws”, “Collapse”, “Humiliation”, etc.. The character of associations in this case (“The thing that we failed to build in this country” and “The West”), probably, shows dissatisfaction with particular regime rather than general skepticism about “Democracy” as such. However, it is, of course, impossible to assess, judging by the results of this experiment, the degree to which disappointment in a particular democracy damages the idea of “Democracy” as a positive value.

One more group of answers which seems to be worth looking into is the cluster that we called “Metaphoric association tail”. Strictly speaking, the mechanism of the metaphoric association is definitely used in a broader set of answers than we include into this cluster, but, for convenience of our description, we would like to elaborate here only upon those positive reactions to a stimulus complex value that are quite distant from the core meaning of the value nomination, but form a “halo” of quite vivid and creative associations. The reason why we chose to mention them separately is that they seem to happen relatively often with some stimuli, while others do not induce them.

Most of this kind of associations can be found with Russian answers to “Freedom” (10.5% from the total of answers) and “Harmony” (8.1%), and the other three stimuli caused none of them. For “Freedom”, these are answers like “Space”, “Lightness”, “Flying”, “Breath”, “Wind”, “Speed”, “Night”, etc.. For “Harmony”, they look like “Joy”, “Silence”, “Soul”, “Music”, “Life”, “Sun”, “Pleasure”, “Inspiration”, etc.. With Swedes, the number of such answers is significantly less, but it is interesting that answers like “Joy” and “Silence”, similarly to Russian part of the experiment, are found among reactions to “Harmony” and for “Freedom”, there are answers like “Nature” and “Fishing”. Thus, the stimuli that induce the answers of this sort are the same in

the two cultures which should be taken into consideration when trying to assess general similarity—difference in the interpretation of the stimulus complex values cross-culturally.

Comparisons Focused on Gender Factor: Cross-Cultural and Within One Culture

Some interesting similarities and differences in understanding complex values can be seen when analyzing the data from the gender point of view—both comparing the results for males and females within one culture and cross-culturally.

Let us have a closer look at each complex value we have chosen to describe in this article. The first value we are going to analyze is “Democracy”. Russian males and females, while having produced a quite long list of common responses, still differ in terms of how frequently they mention this or that component. The top 5 mentioned components of “Democracy” can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8

Gender Differences in Understanding Democracy in Russian Culture

Components	Female (%)	Male (%)
Freedom (incl. Freedom of speech—8%)	27.6	21
Equality	16.7	5.9
Choice, elections	10.9	9.2
Observing human rights, legitimacy	6.3	12.6
People at power	5.7	11.8

The data show that, as the most frequently mentioned components coincide, Russian males and females basically understand “Democracy” in a similar way. However, there are differences in the weight of each component, and sometimes, other details are important. It should be noted, for example, that the words “choice” and “elections” are of the same root in Russian, “elections” actually being the plural of “choice”, and though this response can be rather equally found with both males and females, the word in plural meaning “elections” was only mentioned by males, while females opted for a more general idea. Also, only females describe “Democracy” as “Solidarity”, “No violence/conflicts”, “Mutual respect”, “Understanding” and “Tolerance”, which may be the evidence that their view of the concept is less “political” and much broader, possibly being connected to their inclination (more than in case of males) to resolve difficult situations peacefully and through negotiations, this being transmitted to the idea of political organization of power.

This more general view of “Democracy” with females can be also seen in the “Negative association tail”. While males mention such things as “Bribery”, “Everything is allowed”, “No self-government” and “Gang rule” that reflect their higher interest in legitimacy issues, female negative associations are “Lie”, “Deception”, “Uncertainty”, “Delusiveness” and “Disorder”.

Speaking about Swedish basic cluster of reactions for “Democracy”, one can see that the most frequent answers for males are the following: “Public governance” (27%), “Right to vote” (14%), “Rights” (10%) and “A way of governance, including possibilities of making choices” (10%), the latter seems to correlate with Russian choice. As to females, they mostly mention “Right to vote” (14%), “A way of governance including possibilities of making choices” (14%), “Be able to influence decision making” (10%) and “Freedom to speak” (10%). Comparing Swedish male and female responses within the basic cluster with the Russian ones, we may notice that among the most frequent reactions with the Swedish respondents are “Public governance” and “A way of governance, including possibilities of making choices”, among the Russian respondents—“Freedom”

and “Freedom of speech”. We may notice that a more general in its meaning “Public governance” is more frequent for males (27%) than for females (7%). The stimulus with a more special, narrow meaning “A way of governance including possibilities of making choices” has the frequency 14% for females and 10% for males, which may be interpreted as that males tend to mention a more general quality, whereas females—a narrower, more specific one. If we look at the responses of Russian males and females, we find similar reactions—“Freedom” and “Freedom of speech”, where there is a more general “Freedom” (28% females, 21% males) and a more specific “Freedom of speech” (14% females, 10% males), which do not follow the Swedish pattern. The overall comparison of the basic cluster reactions between the nations shows that only one reaction “Freedom of speech/Freedom to speak” (Sweden) is common. So, we may say that different genders within one culture, both in Russia and Sweden, show much more similarity with each other, than if we compare the same gender cross-culturally. It seems that males in both nations are more “politically committed” than females.

As for specific male/female reactions, not found with the other gender responses, in Swedish answers, we find them only in the “tail”: male only—“Sweden”, “Co-decision making”, “Majority rule” and female only—“Joint separation of power”, “All people are equal”, “Respect”, etc. (Compared with Russians where we notice specific gender reactions within the basic cluster, though that may be due to the fact that overall number of reactions is significantly larger).

Second value we are going to look at is “Freedom”. For this stimulus, Russian and Swedish males and females have produced rather similar basic clusters within their cultures, and more differences can be found in the periphery reactions.

Speaking about the basic cluster, Russian males most frequently mention “Independence” (12.6%), “Opportunity” (8.1%), “Choice” (7.2%), “Respect of the rights” (5.4%) and “Absence of limits, boundaries, duties, coercion” (5.4%). As to Russian females, for them the most frequent reactions are “Independence” (14.2%), “Choice” (10.7%), “Opportunity” (8.3%), “Equality” (7.1%) and “Absence of limits, boundaries, duties, coercion” (6.5%). Thus, one can see that the five most mentioned components of “Freedom” coincide but for one position, and those that coincide are rather close in the percentage of mentioning.

It is interesting to mention that one of the reactions among the Russian respondents is “Volya” (a synonym of Freedom with the root meaning “will”), which is less popular with males (1%) than females (4%), and also reactions “Equality” and “Absence of limits” with males are less popular—2% and 5% respectively. Another issue that is also worth mentioning is semantic connection between “Absence of limits” and “Volya” in Russian culture.

As to the Swedish part of the experiment, males most frequently mention “Leave/vacation from job/school” (15.8%), “Being independent” (13.2%), “To do what you want” (13.2%), while females often respond with “Free will” (16,1%), “To do what you want” (16,1%), “Freedom of choice” (16,1%) and “Being independent/economic independence” (13%). Overall, except for the “Leave/vacation” reaction, which can be only found with Swedish males, both genders seem to be rather close in their reactions in the basic cluster. Both genders have “Free will” among their responses: It is much more frequent with females (16%), as only 5% of males mention it. Also, we may see semantic connection between “Free will” and “To do what you want”, both being somewhat close to Russian “Volya”.

For the sake of further correlation with the concept of “Patriotism”, it may be worth noting that only Swedish males produced such answer as “Sweden” to both stimuli—“Democracy” and “Freedom”.

Among the answers by Swedish respondents, we also observe quite a long male (“Vacation from job” and

“Economic independence”) and female (“Self-confidence”, “Trust”, “Not being driven by fixed time and obligations”) tail of associative reactions. Special attention should be paid to specifically male responses, such as “Fishing”, “Travel” and “Driving license”—that can be compared to the Russian male associative tail—“Breath”, “Wind”, “Speed”, “Night”, “Road” and “Water”. Both “tails” produce an image, stereotypically regarded as a male one, and it can be compared with a female stereotype (Swedish “Tranquility” And “Russian Lightness”, “Inner Harmony”, “Air” and “Reflection”). If the male reactions give an image of cars, fishing and travel, the female ones lead to images of peace, quiet and reflection.

Next complex value in our analysis will be “Patriotism”. In both cultures, both genders most frequently gave such responses as “Love for one’s country” (Swedish females—21%, males—17%; Russian females—22.4%, males—12.9%) and “Pride for one’s country” (Swedish females—16%, males—17%; Russian females—7.1%, males—12.9%).

If we look at the lists of responses produced by Russian and Swedish respondents, there is difference in the number of reactions, common for both genders within each culture. The reactions “Love for one’s country”, “Pride for one’s country” and “Nation” (5% females, 4% males) are the only common reactions for Swedish genders, while Russian respondents have 23 reactions in common.

If we compare the two genders in Russian culture, their responses to “Patriotism” as a stimulus are close, according to the frequency of mentioning, in such reactions as “Duty” (males—6%, females—7.1%), though males emphasize more such aspects of Patriotism as “Heroism” (males—7.8%, females—3.8%) and “Ability to sacrifice, dedicate one’s life and interests to the country” (males—6%, females—4.4%). The fact that Russian respondents of both genders used quite a number of nominations referring to the issues of “Duty”, “Heroism”, “Courage” and “Defense” can be explained by connecting the concept of “Patriotism” with the historical memory of Russia participation in the WWII. Russian females more frequently mention “Respect”, such as for the elder, other people living in the country (males—3.4%, females—8.7%), which links these aspects of “Patriotism” to another complex value—“Tolerance”.

The Swedish respondents differ greatly in their responses in basic cluster: females respond with “We manage by ourselves”, “Traditions”, “Preserving the language” and the males used such nominations as “Stand for what we believe in”, “Sweden”, “Freedom” and “Democracy”. We may see that the concepts of “Sweden” and “Democracy” are liked again in the male responses, this time in relation to “Patriotism”. Some interesting conclusions may follow from the comparison of the negative associations to the concept of “Patriotism”. Let us compare negative associations according to gender, as they are given in Table 9.

Table 9
Gender Differences in Negative Associations to Patriotism

Russian respondents		Swedish respondents	
Male	Female	Male	Female
Politics, turning into a zombie, deception, offence, army	War, nationalism, stubbornness, inveteracy	Ethnocentrism, Americans, racism, incorrect values	Male dominance, excessive respect to one’s national identity, nationalistic perspectives, one nation’s values are a benchmark for good

As we may see Russian females as well as both genders in Swedish culture associated this complex value with “Ethnocentrism” and “Nationalism”, in contrast to Russian males, who negatively associate “Patriotism” more with state control over the individual and with ambiguously evaluated concept of the “Army”, as military

service itself—traditionally connected with patriotic ideas—is not very popular in Russia today. Also, we can mention that only Swedish females used such negative reaction as “Male dominance”, which may be explained by highly developed feeling of gender awareness typical of Swedish women.

Another complex value to be discussed is “Tolerance”. In Swedish culture, the most frequent answers for females were “Acceptance” (19%), “Humble” (15%), “Indulgent” (11%), “Patience”, “Respect others” and “Openness in mind” (each 8%). For Swedish, males they are “Patience” (27%), “Acceptance” (19%), “Respect others” (11%), “Indulgent” (11%), “Humble” (3%) and “Openness in mind” (3%). We may see that, though the reactions are common for both genders, their frequency may be different, which is particularly noticeable in case of “Patience” that is much more often understood as a component of “Tolerance” by Swedish males. It is interesting to note the same tendency in Russian culture, where “Patience” is named as a component of “Tolerance” twice more often by males than females.

The most frequent reactions to “Tolerance”, mentioned by Russian female and male respondents with more or less equal frequency, are “Respect” (12.4%-11%), “Acceptance, open-mindedness” (4.5%-5%), “Calmness” (2.8%-3%) and “Tact” (2.2%-2%). However, most of the answers that can be seen both in male and female groups do differ in frequency. Thus, females much more frequently view such concepts as “Understanding” (female—10.1%, male—5%), “Compassion, sympathy” (female—6.7%, male—2%), “Politeness” (female—5.1%, male—1%) and “Kindness” (female—5.6%, male—1%) as components of “Tolerance”. Males more frequently than females mention “Help, care” and “Peaceful solution of the problems”.

Russian males were different from females in that they produced a significant number of negative reactions to the stimulus of “Tolerance”, such as “Weakness”, “Foolishness”, “Inertness”, “Passivity”, etc.. Most of these answers seem to group around the idea that being tolerant makes you weak somehow. It is particularly interesting that in female tail reactions, there are opposite answers like “Strong” and “Power”.

Both national groups generated reactions with positive connotation, though those answers are different for each culture and gender. For example, Swedish males regard this value as including “Solidarity”, “Freedom from prejudice”; females—“Humanity” and “Insightfulness”. Russian males positively regarded this value as “Good sense” and “Justice”; females—mostly through qualities of people who are tolerant, such as “Decency” (which itself is a complex value), “Being well brought up” and “Good education”. Swedish females describe the value under analysis referring to “Broadminded”, which is close to reactions of Russian females. Only Russian males mentioned “Equality” as an aspect of “Tolerance”.

The last complex value to be analyzed from the point of view of the gender factor is “Harmony”. Starting with the basic cluster answers for Swedes, we may say that the most frequent female responses are the same for males, only with some difference in the frequency of mentioning. This can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10

Gender Differences in Understanding Harmony in Swedish Culture

	Female (%)	Male (%)
Tranquility	41	12
Wellbeing	17	14
Balance in life	13	16
Satisfaction	7	7

The most frequent answers for Russians can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11

Gender Differences in Understanding Harmony in Russian Culture

	Female (%)	Male (%)
Calmness	23.6	10.9
Balance	9.3	6.3
Tranquility	6.6	2.3
Understanding	6.6	6.3
Agreement	3.8	6.3
Well-being	4.4	3.9

The comparison shows that the most frequent responses from the basic cluster of reactions for two genders are very similar, as well as the less frequent ones of the same cluster. Cross-cultural comparison between the cultures shows that there are a number of reactions, such as “Balance” and “Tranquility”, “Satisfaction”, which are common for both genders of both cultures.

Speaking about evaluation loaded tail associations for this value stimulus, one can mention that only Russian males produced a very small negative tail (“Utopia” and “Monotony”). There were, however, a lot of positive tail associations, which, in case of Swedes, bear some distinct gender differences: While Swedish males associate “Harmony” with “Relaxation” and “Friends”, females give more answers connected with health, love, no conflicts and general happiness. It is rather interesting that Russian males emphasize friendship and outdoor recreation (like Swedish males), but also mention love, health and other issues like Swedish females.

General Overview of Internal Structure of Complex Values

From the point of view of the mental representations theory, the last variant of analysis is especially interesting, as it can throw light on the trends in the inner organization of the value concepts system.

It proved that, on the whole, in Russian and Swedish cultures, complex (abstract) value concepts have hierarchical inner structure. Besides, value concepts have external association links. Let us consider in detail, for instance, inner structure of such value as “Democracy” in Russian society. This concept at a subordinate level (level of hyponyms) is represented by the three main component concepts. These are “Freedom”, “Power” and “Human rights”.

In its turn, “Freedom” is differentiated into: “Personal freedom” and “Political freedom”. “Personal freedom” includes more particular “Equality”, “Self-realization”, “Freedom of thought”, etc., while “Political freedom” presupposes “Freedom of choice” that can be further differentiated into the “Right to elect” and the “Right to be elected”. It is extremely interesting that all these concepts simultaneously enter the contents of the superordinate concept of “Human rights”. “Freedom” and its hyponyms turn out to be at the same time a characteristic of “Human rights”, which presuppose (characterize) the concept of “Freedom”.

Does that mean that “Human rights” and “Freedom” are absolute synonyms? It seems that “Human rights” and “Freedom” are just partly synonymous. “Freedom” includes “Human rights” codified by law as one main but by far not the only component in its contents. “Freedom” also includes opportunities in any sphere of human life (creative, research, political, etc.), while “Human rights” focus “conceptual attention” on those

political rights and freedoms that are legally fixed by the authority (power).

“Power” is also a link in a hierarchical chain. It can be differentiated into “Majority power (rule by people)”, “Responsibility of the authorities” and “Supremacy of the law”, it provides “Social guarantees”, it is based on a “Multi-party system”, etc.. “Power” is generated by (derived from) “Human rights” and “Freedoms” and is their guarantor.

Now one can compare the data, obtained for the concept of “Democracy”, with the analogous experimental data, obtained separately for the concept of “Freedom”. Both concepts are cross-descriptors for each other (“Democracy” contains “Freedom” and, vice versa, “Freedom” contains “Democracy”). Both concepts also include “Equality”, “Responsibility” and “Independence”. At the same time, “Democracy” is characterized by political “Power” and its hyponyms that are absent in “Freedom”, while “Freedom” includes “Opportunities” and their “Types”, “Lack of limits”, etc..

Thus, our analysis shows that the concept “Democracy” is, in particular, a top of the hierarchical system that is based on generalized, interconnected and rather close in meaning value concepts of “Freedom”, “Power” and “Human rights”. In other words, these value concepts are different generalizations based mainly on the same set of more concrete concepts. If we view “Freedom” separately, we shall see the analogous structure which has “Independence” and “Opportunities” as its main components. As to quantitative correlation between value concepts of “Democracy” and “Freedom” (according to the number of mentioning by the respondents), “Freedom” and its components take 52.2% from the contents of “Democracy”, but “Democracy” and its components take only 32.2% from the contents of “Freedom”.

Let us now pass on to external associative links of “Democracy”. These are “Society”, “Government”, “Form of Government”, “Politicians” and “President”. Besides, respondents give some positive associations like “Happiness”, “Honesty”, “Truthfulness”, “Decency”, “Accessibility”, “Openness”, “Well-Being”, “Being Developed”, “Security”, “Certainty” and “Order”. For the Russian society, for “Democracy”, as we have already mentioned in the intercultural comparison of the results, there is also a number of negative associations.

Conclusions

The joint Russian-Swedish research showed that the central structure in the multi-structural system of value concepts is a hierarchy, formed as different generalization levels, and this is true for both cultures and both genders. Each particular value concept in such a system can be either simple (indivisible into more concrete ones) or complex (of a different degree of generality). It was found out that, besides internal connections in this hierarchy, value concepts also have external associative connections that emphasize their dependency on such factors as culture and gender.

Complex value concepts can be both similar and different in volume and contents when compared cross-culturally or between genders. It turns out that some complex value concepts demonstrate greater degree of similarity (thus, less difference) in gender comparisons (within one culture), others—at a cross-cultural level (within one gender). These data allow us to suppose that there is an impact on the quality of understanding and evaluation of verbal and non-verbal events from culture, gender and which particular value is in question.

Complex value concepts are formed on the basis of the same (or very similar) set of simple values. And it turns out that, rather often within one culture, two or more different complex values can include the same

simple values in different degrees. These complex concepts have significant overlapping, however, they cannot be called synonymous or antonymous, and we argue that we deal here with a specific case of mental intrasystemic relations.

References

Shabes, V. Y. (1989). *Event and text*. Moscow: Higher Education School.

Shabes, V., Bostedt, G., Troshchenkova, E. , Ivarsson, L., Damber, U., & Potapova, T. (2011). *An experimental study of russian and swedish value systems: Interculturalism, meaning and identity*. Conference eBook 8-10.04, Prague, Czech Republic.

Sharifian, F. (2011). *Cultural conceptualizations and language: Theoretical framework and applications*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.