Stability and change in value priorities among Croatian adolescents

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Background

Values are:
- enduring beliefs that guide behavior in daily situations and that are preferred personally or socially to opposite values (Rokeach, 1973)
- desirable goals that transcend specific situations and serves as guiding principles in people's life (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987; 1990)

Adolescence is the time when young people set the goals they want to achieve in their lives. During adolescence they also set the standards important to them in life and establish a certain hierarchy of personal values. Thus, we were interested in the stability and change of value hierarchy and importance of different value orientations among adolescents over the period of 8 years in which Croatia went through major economic and social changes.

The main question is what determines relative ranking order of a specific value in a value hierarchy at the individual and social levels. Current research results emphasize the complexity of the relationship between the relative position of a value in value hierarchy and the possibility to satisfy this value. By now, specific conditions which determine importance of specific values have still not been precisely defined.

According to Schwartz et al. (Schwartz & Bardi, 1997; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990) a hierarchy of specific values is in accordance with life circumstances. Thus, relative importance of a certain value increases with the increased possibility of its assurance, and it decreases with the decreased possibility of its assurance. However, for certain values different mechanisms are in operation. For values that represent growth needs (e.g. self-actualization) people will reduce their importance if they are unable to realize them. But for values that represent deficiency needs (e.g. safety) the greater the deprivation, the more important the value that represents deficiency need.

Objectives

To determine stability and change over the period of 8 years in:
- value hierarchy
- factor structure of Value orientations scale
- importance of value orientation

Method

Sample

Two nationally representative samples of adolescents
- year 1998, N= 2823
- year 2006, N= 876

Instruments

The same two instruments were used to assess adolescents' values in both studies.
· List of values - respondents ranked 7 values in order of their importance to them by using a numbers from 1 to 7 (1="the most important to me" to 7="the least important to me")
· Value orientations scale - respondents rated importance of 18 values by using a five point Likert scale (1="not important to me at all" to 5="extremely important to me")

Results

Figure 1. Percentage of respondents who have chosen specific value as one of three most important to them
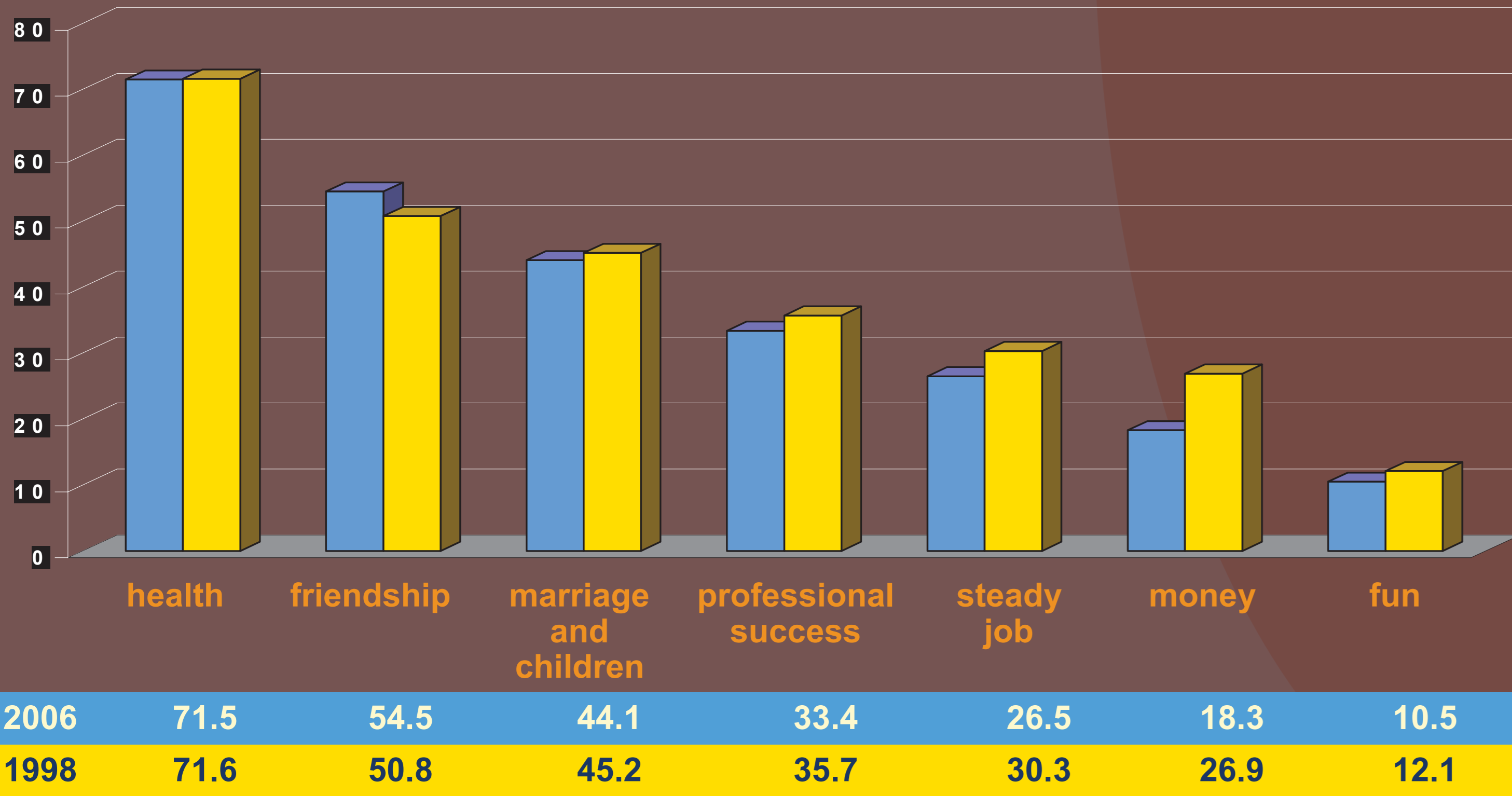

	health	friendship	marriage and children	professional success	steady job	money	fun
2006	71.5	54.5	44.1	33.4	26.5	18.3	10.5
1998	71.6	50.8	45.2	35.7	30.3	26.9	12.1

Table 1: Comparison of value hierarchy based on average ranking values

Values	1998			2006		
	Median	Mode	Mean	Median	Mode	Mean
· **health**	1	1	2.21	1	1	2.01
· **friendship**	3	2	3.39	3	2	3.11
· **marriage and children**	4	2	3.81	3	3	3.75
· **professional success**	4	4	4.08	4	4	4.02
· **steady job**	4	6	4.37	4	5	4.35
· **money**	5	6	4.51	5	6	4.70
· **fun**	6	7	5.63	6	7	5.75

It is worth noticing that the value hierarchies found for the both samples were remarkably stable between 1998 and 2006. In both years, the most important values were health, friendship, getting married and having children, and the least important were money and having fun (Figure 1 and Table 1). These results are in accordance with the results from other countries.

Table 2: Factor loadings (principal component analysis, oblimin rotation) and descriptive statistic for 18 values

Value orientations	conventional		hedonistic		self-actualization		M (SD)	
Values	1998	2006	1998	2006	1998	2006	1998	2006
· doing what you like and what enables you to create something new					-.67	.74	4.33 (0.928)	4.44 (0.906)
· accomplishing warm, friendly relationships with others					-.59	.69	4.39 (0.818)	4.42 (0.859)
· loving someone and being loved					-.52	.69	4.73 (0.684)	4.68 (0.764)
· doing something in which you can realize your capabilities and interests					-.46	.63	4.31 (0.853)	4.30 (0.867)
· being independent in making your decisions in life					-.57	.56	4.37 (0.892)	4.43 (0.857)
· having power and possibility to influence other people			.78	.78			3.01 (1.245)	2.88 (1.322)
· being well respected in society			.72	.67			3.71 (1.067)	3.68 (1.128)
· having a comfortable life and an easy job			.65	.65			3.81 (1.108)	3.88 (1.075)
· earning lots of money and having a high economic standard			.70	.61			4.16 (0.941)	4.24 (0.969)
· having fun and enjoying oneself in life	-.38		.42	.54	-.55	.33	3.99 (1.009)	3.76 (1.125)
· living a stable, comfortable life without ups and downs	.39	.34	.39	.46			4.08 (0.968)	4.11 (0.908)
· experiencing lots of excitement		-.37	.34	.37	-.52	.49	4.01 (0.935)	3.98 (0.936)
· living in accordance with one's own religious background	.74	.70					3.35 (1.240)	3.47 (1.277)
· doing something for other people, helping people who have problems	.57	.59				.35	4.21 (0.860)	4.17 (0.955)
· being honest, and living in accordance with personal moral principles	.69	.55				.43	4.34 (0.867)	4.31 (0.933)
· living in harmony with your family and friends	.66	.45				.47	4.44 (0.837)	4.47 (0.803)
· having a good education and gaining new knowledge	.51	.38				.40	4.23 (0.897)	4.32 (0.930)
· accomplishing something that will contribute to society	.48	.31				.32	3.80 (1.011)	3.84 (1.018)
% of variance explained	26.9	7.4	11.9	11.8	8.2	29.5	47.1	48.8

· p <.01

Table 3: Correlations among value orientations (2006-blue; 1998-yellow; p<.01)

Value orientations	conventional	hedonistic	self-actualization
conventional	1	.33	.58
hedonistic	.31	1	.44
self-actualization	.52	.39	1

Factor analyses, using principle component analyses with oblimin rotation, of the 1998 data and 2006 data yielded essentially the same three-factor solution (Table 2). In 1998 factors accounted for 47% of the total variance, and in 2006 for 49% of the total variance. These three factors were identified as follows: conventional, hedonistic, and self-actualizing value orientation.

Constructed subscales prove to have satisfactory and similar reliability coefficients (Table 4). Similarities of correlations obtained among those three subscales in 1998 and 2006 also indicate stability of value orientations' relations (Table 3).

In both years adolescents gave the highest importance to self-actualizing values, and the lowest importance to hedonistic values (Table 4). Differences among attached importance to three value orientations proved to be statistically significant in both years (p<.01), while there were no significant differences in importance adolescents attached to each value orientation between two years (p>.05). However, at the level of specific values significant changes were found in 6 out of 18 analyzed values (Table 2).

Table 4: Descriptive statistic and reliability coefficients for value orientations

Value orientations	conventional			hedonistic			self-actualization		
	α	M	SD	α	M	SD	α	M	SD
2006	.75	4.10	0.653	.76	3.79	0.689	.74	4.45	0.598
1998	.73	4.06	0.625	.76	3.82	0.669	.70	4.42	0.567
p	.141			.207			.184		

Conclusion

Since Croatia in the past 17 years went through significant and turbulent socio-economic changes, and since value priorities are not independent of societal changes, some degree of change in value priorities could be expected. However, results obtained in our study indicate stability of value hierarchy and value orientations among adolescents over the period of 8 years. We researched values in the personal domain on which societal changes have less influence, and in which those changes are less noticeable than in the domain of work and political values. Thus, stability in value hierarchy and value orientations obtained in this study is not surprising, and could be explained by the type of values we examined.