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Future dreams and hopes of prospective professionals: The effect of gender and speciality

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The paper outlines the study on how dreams unfold for Latvian university students, considering gender and two specialities: physiotherapy and management. The theoretical framework draws on studies of gender and career speciality differences in future consciousness during the emerging adulthood. The narrative technique of story-writing was used with a sample of 18–22 years-old first-year students ($N = 30$) asking them to describe their future dreams and hopes. The categorical-content perspective assisted in interpretation of narratives by a thematic analysis complemented with the quantification of textual units. The central categories extracted from narratives showed a certain similarity with those found in other cultural contexts. Women more than men stressed finances, self-realization, occupation, and children. Both genders expressed a similar urge to romance / family, friendship, travel, and social recognition. While self-realization by physiotherapy students was dreamed about less often than romance / family and finances, management students stressed these three categories at a similar rate. The speciality variable was less influential than gender. The results indicate an influence of economic situation on students' value system and the impact of reversal in gender orientation on states' demographical and economic situation in future.

Key words: dreams, gender, speciality, university students, narrative analysis

Introduction

It is important to explore the future aspirations not only for adolescents, but also beyond this age, at the beginning of university studies, be-

cause the orientation of hopes and dreams of prospective professionals and their subsequent efforts to embody them will significantly contribute to the creation of the sustainable or unsustainable value foundation for our society in

the next few decades. Many studies traditionally compare the hopes and dreams of men and women; in this study, beside the gender comparison, we will contrast also the hopes and dreams of students from two differently oriented specialities. Usually, to study this topic, psychology students are selected as a sample; we will choose the students of care-oriented speciality of physiotherapy and business-and-profit-oriented prospective tourism managers.

Hopes and dreams are among the valuable issues within currently burgeoning orientation in psychology – positive psychology. One of the founders of positive psychology, Seligman (2009), indicates that the problem with psychology in the twentieth century was to think that people are pushed by the past, instead of thinking that they are pulled by the future. Nowadays, the researchers are using several terms to designate the objects of the studies on the “pull by future”, e.g., future aspirations (Sherwood, 1989; Moreno, 2007), future goals (Gita, 2010), life goals (Brdar, Rijavec, Miljković, 2009), life priorities (Mosher, Danoff-Burg, 2007), future orientation (Seginer, 2003; Steinberg et al., 2009), etc. In this narrative study, the concept of future hopes and dreams will be utilized as more relevant for the specific qualitative data collection approach.

At the outset, let's turn to the notion of future consciousness, which helps to locate the psychological concept of future hopes and dreams in a wider context. According to Lombardo (2006), future consciousness is part of our general awareness of time, our temporal consciousness of past, present, and future. It includes the normal human capacities to anticipate, predict, and imagine the future, to have hopes and dreams about the future, and to set future goals and plans for the future. Future consciousness includes thinking about the future, evaluating different possibilities and choices, and having feelings, motives, and attitudes about tomorrow. Lombardo defines

“future consciousness” as “the total integrative set of psychological abilities, processes, and experiences humans use in understanding and dealing with the future” (ibid., p.1).

Besides, not only adolescents, but even mature adults demonstrate a great variability in the ability to imagine the possible futures, to set goals and to plan. Some people are more oriented to the present or immediate future; others are more “future-oriented.” Moreover, the capacities of imagination and in particular, imagining different scenarios for the future vary greatly among people. Our attitudes, modes of thinking, and frames of mind regarding the future may also vary from the negative, counter-productive, or apathetic to the optimistic, positive, and active. Finally, there seems to be a significant cultural variability in future consciousness (Lombardo, 2006). Describing our hopes and dreams, we do it according to our individual abilities to imagine the possible future within the actual implicit framework of positive mindset and our specific cultural context.

Hopes and dreams in emerging adulthood

Studies on hopes and dreams and peculiarly on the future hopes and dreams of young adults are very few, and this research will try to fill the gap considering the hopes and dreams of university students currently situated in a very specific and tough social and economic context in one of the developing countries – Latvia.

Age from 17 to 22 years is a transition period from adolescence to adulthood. In Latvia, similarly as in other countries, this early adult transition period (Levinson, 1996) for the young people is rather common for entering higher education. This age is also coined as the emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2010) characterized by identity exploration, instability, focus of self, feelings of in-between. Arnett (2006) indicates that this is the “age of possibilities,

when hopes flourish, when people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives" (p. 8). He describes it as an age of high hopes and great expectations, in part because few of their dreams have been tested in the fires of real life. Emerging adults look to the future and envision a well-paid, satisfying job, a loving, lifelong marriage, and happy children who are above average. Eventually, the necessity to extend the studies of individual dreams and hopes also beyond the adolescence is justified by the idea that the development of identity does not stop by the end of adolescence (McAdams, 1993; Sokol, 2009) and the first year of university studies may be considered as a very important transitional period in the life of an individual (Briggs, Clark, Hall, 2012).

By analogy with the differentiation of life goals, following Kasser and Ryan (2001) we can distinguish intrinsic and extrinsic orientations of dreams and hopes. Intrinsically oriented dreams involve personal growth, emotional intimacy, and community service, while extrinsic dreams include financial success, physical attractiveness, and social fame and / or popularity. While it has been assumed that intrinsic orientation is more coherent with human nature and needs and move towards self-knowledge and community feelings, extrinsic dreams could be less consistent with the positive human nature. Possibly, they are shaped by culture, and usually involve obtaining symbols of social status (e.g., highly marked products and brands) and a positive evaluation by other people. Sometimes even the romantic partner may be evaluated in terms of his/her social status.

Generations raised in bad economic times are more materialistic than those raised in prosperous times, and national recessions generally increase people's materialism. It has been suggested that poor economic conditions cause feelings of deprivation or insecurity and that people may compensate for these feelings by focusing on materialistic goals. During eco-

nomie prosperity people become more likely to value 'post-materialist' goals (Brdar et al., 2009). It could be assumed that in Latvia as in a transitional country, in the current state of economic recession the extrinsic orientation would prevail in future dreams and hopes of university students. Also, it would be reasonable to expect that women and physiotherapy students in their dreams and hopes somehow would be more prone to the intrinsic orientation in comparison with men and management students.

The previous studies show that the most significant categories of dreams and hopes do not change with the cultural context and starting from adolescence until the age-thirty transition period. The literature on hopes and dreams has focused mainly on how adolescents, particularly those in their mid-teens, have perceived their future lives (e.g., Beal, Crockett, 2010; Nurmi, 1991; Seginer, Halabikheir, 1998; Shek, Lam, Lam, Tang, 2004; Sirin, Diemer, Jackson, Gonsalves, Howell, 2004).

For adolescents, occupation and romantic relationships were the most frequently mentioned dreams (e.g., Nurmi, 1991). The most frequently mentioned dreams by first-year Australian university students aged 17 to 33 were also occupational, financial, romantic dreams and dreams about children. Other less pronounced dreams included travel, leisure and hobbies, friendships, parents and siblings, religion and spiritual matters as well as political beliefs (Whitty, 2001).

Although the present-day intergenerational study in the US shows that more recent generations of Americans evidence lower levels of community feeling as seen in less intrinsic and more extrinsic life goals, less concern for others, and a lower civic engagement (Twenge, Campbell, Freeman, 2012), for men and women of all ages, being a good parent and having a successful marriage continue to rank significantly higher on their list of priorities than

being successful in a high-paying job or career (Patten, Parker, 2012). Eighty-three percent of young adults say that being married someday is a “very important” or “important” goal, and only 5% said marrying was unimportant to them (Scott, Schelar, Manlove, Cui, 2009).

Differences in future hopes and dreams

Past research has found some difference in the hopes and dreams of males and females. Roberts and Newton's (1987) review of four unpublished dissertations based on Levinson's theory found that, unlike those of men, women's dreams were usually split between occupational and interpersonal goals. Other studies of adolescents' dreams in the 1980s have found that boys tended to be more interested in material dreams, whereas girls were more interested in dreams related to future family (Nurmi, 1991).

Later studies with university students in Australia also found that women more than men foresaw the need to juggle their dreams, such as relationships, children and a career. Furthermore, a particular type of young women was identified, who wanted to find the perfect partner, have children, and become very successful in their career, and there was little time for leisure. These results suggest that, despite the growing strength of the women's movement in the nineties, women still see themselves as the primary caregivers (Whitty, 2001). Blakemore, Lawton, and Vartanian (2005) have found that women had a higher drive to marry than did men. An example of another aspiration is that women have rated as more important to them to be well educated (Abowitz, Knox, 2003). Santroc (2007) specifies that Erikson found gender differences in vocational exploration with men more concerned with establishing a career and women more concerned about establishing a family. These claims were supported by research in the

1960s and the 1970s, but subsequent research has not found any support for gender differences. Women in the 2000s are just as likely to be career-oriented as men are.

A study of college students in the US (Moreno, 2007) indicates that women think about various future aspirations more often than men. Women also tend to think more about stereotypical feminine goals such as relationships and child-bearing than men. The majority of both men and women expected to complete the graduate program, getting married, becoming a parent, having a career, and being financially secure. Men ranked completing a graduate program much higher than women did, but women equally ranked the importance of family and occupation.

Recent studies (2010 and 2011) in the US show that in a reversal of traditional gender roles, young women (18–34 years old) now surpass young men in the importance they place on having a high-paying career or profession (survey findings from the Pew Research Center). Two thirds (66%) of young women aged 18 to 34 rate career high on their list of life priorities, versus 59% of young men (Patten, Parker, 2012).

For men and women of all ages, being a good parent and having a successful marriage continue to rank significantly higher on their list of priorities than being successful in a high-paying job or career. Thus, the increased importance women are now placing on their careers has not come at the expense of the importance they place on marriage and family (Patten, Parker, 2012). Men were more likely than women to indicate that they would sacrifice their career, education, and traveling for a romantic partnership (Mosher, Danoff-Burg, 2007).

Therefore, starting from the 60s and 70s until present, we can notice some kind of reversal in gender orientation in affluent Western countries toward important life goals, the increased importance of career for women and of

romantic partnerships and family for men. At the same time, family and parenting as the first and career as the second priority is a feature of both genders.

Analysis of the available literature has revealed a couple of studies on gender differences in the dreams and hopes of first-year college or university students, while differences between students from different specialities have not been scrutinized yet.

In Latvia, similarly as in other countries, an increasing number of men enter the profession of physiotherapy lately. As studies in the Swedish context show, female novice physiotherapists are oriented to the roles of supervisor and treater, they are patient-oriented and experience a great job satisfaction in their close relationship with patients, while male physiotherapists see themselves more like coaches and entrepreneurs. They are team-oriented and unsatisfied with team leaders, salaries, and organization (Öhman, Hägg, 1998). A phenomenological study of graduating physiotherapy students (Lindquist, Engardt, Garnham, Poland, Richardson, 2006) indicated three categories of their professional identity – the Empowerer, the Educator and the Treater. Another study of Swedish physiotherapy students (Öhman, Stenlund, Dahlgren, 2001) show that their preferred facilities after graduation are sports medicine clinics and fitness centres; also, private practice and health promotion are highly valued. Care of the elderly and hospital work are not preferred. Men are more likely to choose the programme related to their interest in sports and physical activity; they prefer to become the owner of a private clinic and to work in sports medicine and fitness centres.

Just a few studies can be found on the values, roles, and professional identity of management students (e.g., Aaltio, 2008). Manager is a person responsible for planning and directing the work of a group of individuals, monitoring their work, and taking corrective actions when

necessary. Lately, a substantial increase in the proportion of women in management has been observed on the global scale. The hospitality sector is an area where the employment rate of women is quite high. Women are performing different jobs at both the managerial and operations levels. As to the gender issues, in the study of Finnish researchers Aalto and Peltonen (2009) Russian women entrepreneurs expressed a subjectively rich sense of their own entrepreneurship with no signs of marginality, and had an optimistic outlook on the future with wishes to expand and develop their businesses. One could presume that physiotherapy students would be more intrinsically oriented toward self-development, interaction, communication, while managers should be more extrinsically positioned to reach success in business and career.

Narrative approach to studies of future consciousness

The future consciousness can be studied using surveys and interviews; in this case, the narrative story-writing approach was selected as more relevant for the study of hopes and dreams – a narratively oriented aspect of future consciousness. A narrative is essentially a written or spoken account of connected events with an underlying time dimensions (Howitt, 2010). It is important that narratives are cultural texts and reflect the culture and the culture's ways of talking narratively (McAdams, 2008), so the cultural (aside from political and economic) context of Latvia in the first decade of the 21st century intertwines the stories of young people in this study. The narrative approach of story-writing also allowed to avoid more socially desirable responses evident when asking students to reveal their hopes and dreams in the form of a quantitative questionnaire (Whitty, 2002).

The thematic approach employed in this study is useful for theorizing across a number

of cases – finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report. A typology can be constructed to elaborate a developing theory. Because the interest lies in the content of speech, analysts interpret what is said by focusing on the meaning that any competent user of the language would find in a story. Language is viewed as a resource but not a topic of investigation (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, Liao, 2004). In this study, also the contexts of utterance, gender, and speciality of the Latvian university students of a certain age are taken into account.

According to Smith's (1987) review, the female self in autobiographies was characterized as self-effacing, oriented to private life, sensitive to others' needs, relational and subjective, anecdotal and fragmentary in composition. The male self-narratives were read as self-centred, self-assured and independent, linearly organized and oriented towards public life and socially notable personal achievements.

To sum up, this study aims to explore how dreams unfold for first-year university students considering gender and two distinctively oriented specialities – physiotherapy and tourism management – asking three main questions: 1) What are the central categories in the narratives related to the hopes and dreams of first-year students? 2) What gender differences are evident in the hopes and dreams of first-year students? 3) What differences are evident in the hopes and dreams of first-year physiotherapy and management students?

Method

Sample

First-year students from two Latvian universities, representing the middle socio-economic area level, participated in this study. The sample (15 men and 15 women) consisted of 18–22-year-olds ($M = 19.7$, $SD = 0.87$) including 18 physiotherapy students (9 women and

9 men) and 12 tourism management students (6 women and 6 men). For all of them, it was their first time of pursuing higher education. Eight students lived in their own apartments, while others lived either with parents or in university dormitories. Ten students were the only children in the family. Two students were already married, and five students lived together with their girl-friend / boy-friend. Only one respondent already had children. The vast majority of the sample consisted of Latvians.

Method and procedure

The narrative technique of story-writing was used for this study. Specifically, a spontaneous personal narrative based on identity as a life-story was elicited while young people have selected the possible future scenarios depending on how they see themselves in their current lives.

The participants first completed a short questionnaire asking for their demographic details. Then they were invited to read the instructions asking to describe the students' future hopes and dreams about how they would like to see their life in 10 years time. The students were asked to write the story in the third person, including as much detail as possible, particularly avoiding censoring details that seem irrelevant and refraining from psychological interpretation. Participants were requested to include any circumstances that could help or already help to reach their dreams / goals and to produce the most vivid story about how they will achieve their dreams / goals. Students were given 40 minutes to complete the task. Issues related to the confidentiality and anonymity of provided data were included at the end of instructions.

The instructions to participants were based on the instructions from previous studies about participants' perception of their future life (Gillespie, Allport, 1955; Mönks, 1968; Poole, 1983; Whitty, 2001, 2002). Writing in the third person has helped to have a distanced, descriptive view on one's own life (Haug, 1987). Par-

ticipants were also specifically asked to avoid using psychological interpretation, so that they would not attempt to evaluate their lives and actions (Whitty, 2001).

Data analysis

The categorical-content perspective as an interpretative perspective to the narrative analysis (Howitt, 2010) was applied in this study. A thematic content analysis was carried out to clarify the number and types of dreams and conduces of these dreams included in the stories. The analysis of story content provided the text units that were then quantified. At first, texts indicated the presence of already expected themes, however, every narrative contained several themes. All themes included in the narratives were documented regardless of the number of participants mentioning them (Whitty, 2001). Citations illustrating both the central and the atypical themes were extracted from the narratives.

Results

Central categories of hopes and dreams

Altogether, 356 different cases of categories and 17 main categories were elicited from the stories about the students' hopes and dreams. The generalization of larger categories was considered, but declined for two reasons. First, the number and content of the main categories elicited in the study is comparable with the number and content elicited from other similar studies (e.g. Whitty, 2002); second, larger categories would not permit the necessary detail and richness of analysis, especially if one is interested in differences by gender and speciality.

There were very few independent conduces to dreams mentioned in the narratives of students, and in some cases it was problematic to split the dreams and their conduces. Therefore, rather than examining the conduces separately, if possible, they were included as independent themes of the dreams.

Because of the small number of participants, to improve the precision of presentation, the average number of each category was calculated based on the percentage of a given category within the entire pool of categories (not on the number of participants mentioning a given category).

The number of categories (including subcategories) of different dreams and hopes as well as the conduces to them in the stories of students varied from 5 to 17. On average, 10.9 different categories of dreams were drawn from the narratives by men, while narratives by women contained 12.6 categories of dreams. Prospective tourism managers on average provided 10.9 and future physiotherapists 12.3 different categories of dreams.

In general, the highest percentage calculated from the pool of all 356 categories was detected for the categories of romance / family (17.7%), finances (17.1%), self-realization (14.3%), occupation (10.4%), and children (8.15%). Other dreams included: friendship (6.18%), parents / siblings (4.78%), travel (4.5%), social recognition (3.37%), hobbies (sports) (3.09%), health (2.25%), and immigration (2.25%). Categories such as caring for weak (1.7%), freedom (1.4%), security (1.12%), religion (0.56%), and politics (0.28%) were mentioned just by a few students (see Table 1). Several central categories, e.g., finances, self-realization, occupation, romance/family, children, contained subcategories and in many cases a single story could contain several subcategories, for instance, finances and / or romance / family. Because of space limits, these subcategories will not be analysed further.

Quantitative differences by gender and speciality

The distribution of categories of university students' dreams by gender is reflected in detail in Table 1.

If males in their dreams prioritise the category of romance / family, followed by finances and self-realization, the first place on the females' list take finances, followed by romance / family and self-realization. In quantitative terms, romance / family is similarly recognized by both genders. From the first five priorities, this is a sole category similarly supported by males and females. As to the central categories of finances, self-realization, occupation, and children, they are more pronounced in the dreams of females. The largest discrepancy is observed for the category of finances (20.4% for females and 16.5% for males). The categories which obtained the medium support similarly from both genders are friendship, travel, and social recognition. Dreams about helping the parents and siblings were a little more popular among the female students, while hobbies (sports) were more extensively supported by males. Though not

numerous, more male students dreamed about immigration, freedom, security, and politics, but young females were aspiring more towards health, caring for weak, and religion.

Also, the distribution of categories of university students' dreams by speciality is reflected in detail in Table 1. It should be noted that there is an identical number of females and males in each speciality group. While for the physiotherapy students romance / family and finances were two most important categories of dreams, at some distance followed by self-realization, occupation, and children as the important categories of a gradually descending value, management students stressed the categories of romance / family, finances, and self-realization at a similar rate (16.8%). For management students, these categories at some distance are followed by the categories of occupation, children, and friendship.

TABLE 1. Distribution of categories of university students' dreams by gender and speciality

#	Category of dream	Gender				Speciality				Total	
		Males		Females		Physiotherapy		Management		n	%
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
1	Romance/family	29	17.7	34	18.0	41	18.5	22	16.8	63	17.7
2	Finances	27	16.5	34	20.4	39	17.6	22	16.8	61	17.1
3	Self-realization	21	12.8	30	15.9	29	13.1	22	16.8	51	14.3
4	Occupation	14	8.54	23	12.2	20	9.01	17	13.0	37	10.4
5	Children	13	7.93	16	8.47	18	8.12	11	8.40	29	8.15
6	Friendship	10	6.10	12	6.35	14	6.31	8	6.11	22	6.18
7	Parents/siblings	7	4.27	10	5.29	11	4.95	6	4.58	17	4.78
8	Travel	7	4.27	9	4.76	11	4.95	5	3.82	16	4.50
9	Social recognition	6	3.66	6	3.17	7	3.15	5	3.82	12	3.37
10	Hobbies(sports)	10	6.10	1	0.53	8	3.60	3	2.29	11	3.09
11	Health	3	1.83	5	2.65	6	2.70	2	1.53	8	2.25
12	Immigration	6	3.66	2	1.06	5	2.25	3	2.29	8	2.25
13	Caring for weak	2	1.22	4	2.12	3	1.35	3	2.29	6	1.70
14	Freedom	5	3.05	0	0.00	4	1.80	1	0.76	5	1.40
15	Security	3	1.83	1	0.53	4	1.80	0	0.00	4	1.12
16	Religion	0	0.00	2	1.06	1	0.45	1	0.76	2	0.56
17	Politics	1	0.61	0	0.00	1	0.45	0	0.00	1	0.28

Note: n – number of cases in each category.

As the numbers show, the speciality variable was less influential than gender. However, some differences could be found: e.g., the categories of romance / family, finances, travel, hobbies (sports), health, freedom, security were stressed more by physiotherapy students, whereas self-realization, occupation, and caring for weak were stronger in management students' narratives. The largest discrepancy was observed for the category of occupation (9.01% for physiotherapists and 13.0% for managers). Categories such as children, friendship, parents / siblings, social recognition, immigration, and religion were similarly represented in life-stories of both specialities.

The Spearman correlation coefficient matrix shows a little higher significant positive correlation between the categories of dreams in physiotherapy and management students ($r_s = .95, p < .001$) than between those of males and females ($r_s = .82, p < .001$).

Qualitative presentation by gender and speciality

Here are some examples from extracts from the stories. Let's turn first to the main categories of finances, occupation, romance / family, and self-realization. Because of space limitations, only some facets of these categories will be revealed in the qualitative mode.

The majority of women have tried to explain why they dream about material affluence – to fulfill their own dreams, to support parents and children:

Although money will not be the main thing in her life, she will always have enough, in this way she will be able to fulfil her dreams – to travel, to look great” (woman, physiotherapy).

“She has not left her parents alone. Working in her recently established private practice, she has a decent salary so as to be able to provide for and support her parents” (woman, physiotherapy).

“She wants to be rich so as to ensure that her children do not have a tough childhood,

as she could enjoy everything she wants to” (woman, physiotherapy).

Many students of both specialities dream about their own private practice, united team, and eminent professionalism:

“She will work in some popular tourism company – travel agency. Her job will be both in office and connected with business trips (...). She will not be the chief of this company, though, her position in the company will be quite high” (woman, management).

“She will have a university diploma, knowledge, and skills to start a business. In 10 years she will work in her own enterprise, well-developed, and marketable. Her enterprise will be a strong rival to others. Employees of this enterprise will be united, sociable, and their common wish will be advancement of the enterprise in rain or shine” (woman, management).

“She will have her own private physiotherapy practice employing two nurses or other specialists, who will really respect and be polite toward the chief (her). She will have her own clients – everybody will like her and repute her as very professional in her position” (woman, physiotherapy).

Following the global trend, young men in Latvia also dream about romance, marriage, family. They want to be able to provide for their family, and some of them hope to marry a perfect housewife (symbol of social status):

“If he needs to decide about the priorities – family or career – without delay and unequivocally he will go for family. Of course, money is a very important thing in his life, since he needs to provide for the family, house, and welfare” (man, management).

“Most likely he will marry some beautiful and solicitous woman. They would have one child already. His wife for sure would be a well-educated person, although she would stay home, rise their child and do all housework” (man, physiotherapy).

“He has a wife of his age or younger, who does not work because of her husband's well-paid job, although she is not lazy and does different other chores...” (man, management).

More women than men wrote about their self-realization that would not stop at the university graduation:

„After 10 years she will strive for knowledge even more. She will use every opportunity for her professional development, she will collect information and use it in her practice, combining it with her knowledge in other areas” (woman, physiotherapy).

„In order to perfect herself, every year she will go to international workshops all over the world” (woman, management).

Interestingly, the category of immigration appeared in the dreams of only six men and two women. This category is usually not observed in the life goals of students from affluent Western countries:

“Most likely he will live abroad, possibly in some Western European country close to a large city. He and his wife would live and work abroad, because in Latvia they would find even less possibilities to work than today” (man, management).

“He will try to find a job in Latvia, but if he will have better proposals from abroad, he will certainly work there” (man, physiotherapy).

“He will work either in Russia or in Germany, since these countries are strong in different areas of medicine, and he would have well-paid job there” (man, physiotherapy).

“He lives in Cyprus together with his wife from Spain whom he met during his field practice in Madrid” (man, management).

Discussion

The central categories of hopes and dreams of first-year students

The discussion about the results should be started by noting that the contents of people's imaginings of the future are strongly influenced by different sociocultural factors that mark a particular context in which they live. The future orientation of men and women reflects the roles and possibilities defined for them by the current cultural context of a given time and place (Greene & DeBacker, 2004).

The central categories in the narratives related to the hopes and dreams of first-year students are rather close to those obtained in a similar study in Australia (Whitty, 2001). Similarly as in this research, several subcategories were found for central categories of dreams and hopes. Both in Australia and Latvia, in terms of the first five priorities, the categories of romance / family, occupation, finances, and children were found in students' stories about their dreams and hopes, though in a different quantitative proportion. Bearing in mind that the Australian sample was older than Latvian students and the research in Australia was conducted more than 10 years ago, Australians prioritize occupational and financial dreams above romance / family, while Latvians dream most about romance / family and finances. It is unusual and can become an object for further investigations, that for Latvian students the third place is taken by self-realization dreams which are not prevailing in similar studies in other countries, albeit the occupation that evidently could benefit from such self-realization is mentioned by Latvians less often. The other congruent dreams are about travel, leisure / hobbies, friendships, parents / siblings, religion, and political beliefs. Latvian narratives contained also such uncommon categories of dreams as social recognition, health, immigration, caring for weak, freedom, and security; many of them could be explained by a specific cultural, economic, and time context.

The Latvian students, though represented by a very small sample, in general follow the trend, currently found in the US, that being a good parent and having a successful marriage ranks higher than being successful with the career (Patten, Parker, 2012).

To proceed with the analysis, we should consider that the central role in determining the content of future consciousness belongs to values and value-driven motivation (inclu-

ding ethics and morals) (Lombardo, 2006). Extrinsic and intrinsic orientation in dreams and hopes is the manifestation of students' values and motivation.

The quantitative presentation of dreams in Table 1 brings an evidence that Latvian students in the given sample have quite a balanced structure of extrinsic and intrinsic goals. Intrinsically oriented dreams could be romance / family, self-realization, friendship, care for weak, and religion, while the extrinsic orientation bears such categories of dreams as finances, occupation, social recognition. However, a deeper look into the narratives shows that actually, even such seemingly intrinsic goals as self-realization and family can serve as a means for extrinsically oriented goals. The ideology of materialism shines through the majority of stories. This effect could be explained by the research finding that economic instability leads to heightened materialism (Kasser, 2002). In transitional countries with economic difficulties and people who have relatively few financial assets, for some of them extrinsic goals could represent means for achieving other, more important intrinsic goals (like completing education or helping parents) (Brdar et al., 2009). This explanation is bolstered by the quotes from students' stories provided above. Therefore, the meaning and effects of extrinsic goals in transitional countries could be different from those in affluent countries (Brdar et al., 2009). Specifically, the current influence of the economic situation on the dreams is clearly exposed in the category of immigration: eight students out of 30 have mentioned their dream to leave the country and find a job and home abroad.

Differences in the hopes and dreams of first-year students by gender and speciality

Women were more talkative and open than men in terms of the provided categories of

dreams and hopes that in some way confound with the findings by Moreno (2007) about the more extensive orientation toward future by college women.

Partially in tune with Smith (1987), Knox et al. (2000) and Segal et al. (2001), stories of women were oriented to private life and sensitive to others' needs; however, a strong strive toward independence was also noticeable. Again, the self-narratives by men were self-centred, mostly linearly organized and oriented towards public life and socially notable personal achievements, although positive disposition toward close relationships dominated in many stories.

Interestingly, achievement-oriented dreams about the finances and occupation prevailed in the stories of women. These findings follow and even exceed the trend found in previous studies in Western countries, showing the reversal in gender orientation toward important life goals, an increased importance of finances and career for women and romantic partnerships and family for men. Even more, in our sample, not like in other countries (cf. Blakemore et al., 2005), family is the first priority in the dreams of men and second (after finances) for women. This succession of quantitative ranks for each gender (in relation to family and career achievements) becomes even more visible if we sum up the categories of finances and occupation. Therefore, at the outset, the assumption that women in their dreams and hopes somehow would be more prone to the intrinsic orientation than men seems not to be true. On the other hand, considering the evolutionary need for women to take care of her children, the desperate strive for finances in times of economic recession is quite understandable. However, there is some evidence in favour of the mentioned assumption, since women are more inclined towards such intrinsically oriented categories as self-realization (cf. Abow-

itz, Knox, 2003), children, parents / siblings, caring for weak, and religion. This controversy could be interpreted as a woman's strive to have a strong financial background in order to fulfil her intrinsically oriented dreams.

Again, in line with suggestions from Mosher and Donoff-Burg (2007), several factors may explain why men were somehow more willing than women to prioritize romantic relationship above achievement goals. First, in many recent studies college women's desire for educational and career achievement prevails. Thus, women in our study may have been very interested in career success and hesitant to abandon their goals for a romantic relationship. In addition, men, in contrast to women, appear to obtain more emotional support from their opposite-sex relationships than their same-sex friendships and marriage's protective psychological and physical health effects are notably stronger for men than women (Berkman, Breslow, 1983; Kiecolt-Glaser, Newton, 2001). Thus, men in our sample may have been more willing than women to sacrifice some goals for an emotionally intimate partnership; besides, for some of them, the beautiful housewife and perfect children can be also the symbols of their financial and career success.

The assumption that physiotherapy students in their dreams and hopes would be more prone to the intrinsic orientation than management students did not prove right. In general, both specialities seem not to differ in their orientations. Similarly as the prospective physiotherapists in Sweden, their counterparts in Latvia also dream about their own private practice. The same is true also for the management students who often dream about their own travel agency or hotel. Similarly as noted in the study by Öhman, Stenlund, and Dahlgren (2001), Latvian prospective physiotherapists men selected this programme because of their interest in sports and physical activity,

they dream to become the owners of a private clinic and to work in sports medicine and fitness centres as well as continue their sport activities in future.

Management students stressed three categories (romance / family, finances, and self-realization) as most important and at a similar rate, probably because their stronger orientation toward materialistic values and a more optimistic view toward their possibility to change their life was based on their own intrinsic resources.

Speaking about differences in the rating of dreams and hopes and the popularity of separate categories, the speciality variable is less influential than that of gender.

Limitations and further research

Despite the internationally comparable outcomes of this research, the methodology did have some shortcomings. Firstly, the small number of respondents could inhibit our implicit wish for a wide extrapolation of the findings; secondly, the capabilities of written fluency of some students could hamper their expression of dreams and hopes to a full extent. Also, for some respondents, prompts about particular dreams could help to include these dreams into their story.

Differences in dreams could also be caused by the different emotional states in the moment of story-writing. Positive and negative emotional states in the present influence the creation, development, and sustainability of goals for the future; happiness in the present amplifies and strengthens future goals; sadness weakens goals (Lombardo, 2006).

The further research could be oriented toward testing the extracted categories with the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year university students. Research with a more extensive sample and monitoring the differences in dreams and hopes for a larger scope of specialities would be of some interest.

The described research has several benefits not only for scientific community, but also for the students themselves as the enhancing future consciousness improves higher-order cognitive abilities, especially planning, problem solving, critical thinking skills and integrative understanding, and gives the meaning, purpose and hope to life (Lombardo, 2006). Turning to the potential transformational validity of this study (Cho, Trent, 2006), it is also implicitly connected with the psychotherapeutic discourse of students' life as, according to White (2004), narrative practitioners explore the clients' purposes, values, dreams, hopes, and commitments as well as the times they have influence over the problems that trouble them. Also, the obtained categories could be used as the first step in compiling a quantitative survey concerning the Latvian students' hopes and dreams.

Conclusions

According to Lombardo (2006), humans need to expand further their ability to imagine and think about the future. Given the pervasiveness of goals and purpose in most of human behaviour, the argument has been made in psychology that a person's conceptualization of the future is a fundamental determinant in explaining human action (Lombardo, 2006), or, as stated by Greene and DeBacker (2004), "future orientation can be a powerful motivator of current behavior" (p. 92).

The central categories extracted from the life-stories of Latvian first-year university students were romance / family, finances, self-realization, occupation, children, and friendship, showing the overall match with the main categories of dreams and hopes found in other

cultural contexts. The variable of speciality was less influential than gender in relation to the differences among the selected groups. Women more than men stressed their dreams related to finances, self-realization, occupation, and children. Both genders expressed a similar urge to romance / family, friendship, travel, and social recognition. While for the physiotherapy students self-realization was less important than romance / family and finances, management students stressed these three categories at a similar rate.

The dreams and hopes of the young generation are an important signal for the value foundation of our society in the next few decades: the obtained results show a significant and comprehensive influence of the economic situation on the young people's value system and warns about the reversal in gender orientation, which could have a significant impact on the demographical and economic situation in future. The study also demonstrates the importance of considering the development of dreams on a micro-level both in quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Such an approach allows researchers to understand in more detail the complexity of young people's dreams of their future lives.

As to the practical implications of the results, they would be of interest for directors of relevant study programs in universities, the university student guidance sector, as well as for psychologists and psychotherapists working with young people in the transitional countries. And ultimately, the outcomes of this study allow us to produce different scenarios for a possible future and speculate about the challenges posed by the necessity to create a sustainable value foundation for Latvia and other transitional countries.

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Būsimųjų profesionalų ateities svajonės ir viltys: lyties ir specialybės įtaka

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Santrauka

Šis straipsnis analizuoja Latvijos universitetų dviejų specialybių – fizioterapijos ir vadybos – abiejų lyčių studentų svajones. Teorinį pagrindą sudaro lyties ir pasirinktos specialybės skirtumų, turėsančių įtakos sąmoningumui ateityje, analizė studentų tapsmo suaugusiais metu. Tiriamoje pirmo kurso studentų grupėje buvo taikomas pasakojamasis / naratyvinis istorijų rašymo metodas – jų prašyta apibūdinti savo ateities svajones ir viltis. Kategorinė turinio perspektyva padėjo interpretuoti studentų pasakojimus, naudojant tematinę analizę ir įvertinant tekstų skaičių. Iš šių pasakojimų išsikristalizavusios pagrindinės kategorijos rodo tam tikrą panašumą su kituose kultūrinuose kontekstuose aptinkamomis kategori-

jomis. Moterys labiau negu vyrai pabrėžė finansus, saviraišką, profesiją ir vaikus. Abi lytis išreiškė panašius romantikos, šeimos, draugystės, kelionių ir socialinio pripažinimo siekius. Fizioterapijos studentų svajonės apie saviraišką buvo retesnės už svajones apie romantiką / šeimą ir finansus, o studijuojantieji vadybą visas šias tris kategorijas pasirinko panašiai. Specialybės kintamasis dydis turėjo mažesnę įtaką negu lyties. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo ekonominės situacijos įtaką studentų vertybių sistemai ir atvirkštinį poveikį lytims, žvelgiant į demografinę ir ekonominę situaciją ateityje.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: svajonės, lytis, specialybė, universiteto studentai, pasakojamoji / naratyvinė analizė.

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