

Intergenerational value transmission within the family and the role of emotional relationship quality

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Emotional relationship quality of adolescents/emerging adults toward their mothers is addressed: (1) as a transmission belt for the intergenerational transfer of general values and (2) regarding the two-step model of value internalization. The sample consisted of $N = 73$ dyads of mothers and their 12–25-year-old children (51 daughters, 22 sons) living in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Mothers and adolescents/emerging adults reported on their general value orientations; in addition, adolescents/emerging adults reported on emotional relationship quality toward mothers. In a subsample of $n = 46$ mother-adolescent/emerging adult dyads, additional information was available regarding maternal socialization goals, adolescents'/emerging adults' perceptions of these goals, and adolescents'/emerging adults' perceived value similarity with mothers. Attachment/closeness of adolescents/emerging adults toward their mothers was related to higher, whereas dislike and worry were related to lower value consensus/congruence. Furthermore, dislike was linked to lower accuracy of value perception, whereas closeness/attachment and worry corresponded with higher perceived similarity to mothers.

Keywords: intergenerational value transmission; emotional relationship quality; mothers; adolescents; emerging adults

A crucial aspect of intergenerational relations is the passing on of the social and cultural heritage from one generation to the next – also referred to as generative socialization (Lüscher et al., 2010). Intergenerational value transmission occurs as part of social learning when members of different generations interact with each other. These learning opportunities take place to a large extent in the family as primary socialization agent, for instance, during ordinary interactions, shared activities, or discipline situations which are embedded in family relationships with a specific emotional quality (Padilla-Walker, 2008; Schönplflug, 2009; Trommsdorff, 2009). Although many authors have underlined the importance of emotions of parents and their children toward each other in the context of socialization (e.g. Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Hoffman, 2000), few studies have directly addressed the roles of emotions in the value transmission process (see also Schönplflug, 2009).

In response to this gap, we focused here explicitly on the role that emotional relationship quality between adolescents/emerging adults and their mothers plays: (1) for the intergenerational transmission of general value orientations (i.e. conservatism and prosocial orientations, as well as self-fulfillment/hedonism), and (2) for the two steps that are supposed to be involved in the value internalization process, that is, adolescents'/emerging adults' accuracy of perception and acceptance of parental messages.

Emotional relationship quality as transmission belt

A recurrent finding in research on intergenerational value transmission has been that values are not always transmitted in the same way and to the same extent. Rather, several so-called *transmission belts* – of contextual, sociodevelopmental, or relational nature – may foster or hinder transmission (Schönplflug & Bilz, 2009). Emotional relationship quality has often served as an explanatory variable for the effectiveness of various relational transmission belts such as parenting styles, family climate, or dyadic relationship aspects, although emotional relationship quality itself was seldom directly measured in these studies.

For instance, an authoritative parenting style, characterized by warmth and responsiveness, was found to be an effective transmission belt for various contents; in contrast, a rigid-authoritarian style which has been associated with angry and coercive attitudes of parents in Western societies rather weakened transmission (Rohan & Zanna, 1996; Rudy & Grusec, 2001; Schönplflug & Bilz, 2009). According to these studies, parenting styles that create emotionally positive parent-child interactions increase the openness of family members for each other's viewpoints, whereas parenting styles that create a negative emotional relationship quality in the family, thereby distancing child and parent, have a reverse effect (see also Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2004).

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