

Study of Attitudes Towards Freedom and Responsibility Among Older Adolescents From Kyrgyzstan and the United States

Makhinur Mamatova

Sociology Department, American University of Central Asia, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Diane E. Wille

Indiana University Southeast, New Albany, U.S.A

The study revealed similarities in attitudes towards freedom, responsibility, and society by comparing the responses of 47 undergraduate students from Kyrgyzstan and 47 undergraduate students from the United States using the method of semantic differential (Kagan, 1991; Osgood, Tannenbaum, & Suci, 1957/1975) and the original Concept Questionnaire. The results of the study emphasize the universality of the values of freedom and responsibility, and the attitude towards society indicates the adaptive strain characteristic of late adolescence period.

Keywords: attitudes, freedom and responsibility, older adolescents, semantic differential

Late adolescence is characterized by a particularly intense transition from the world of childhood to the world of adults. The formation of socially approved ideas, attitudes, and behaviors among adolescents is a necessary condition for their healthy adaptation to the requirements and expectations of the social environment. The concepts of freedom and responsibility imply not only their interconnectedness, but also the importance of boundaries between personal freedom of an individual and freedom of others. Responsibility is a complex social feeling, the development of which is associated with the need for awareness and involvement of complex cognitive mechanisms. In the psychological context, the idea of individual freedom and responsibility to society cannot be considered outside of its connection with personal and social identity of the individual. Presentation of these concepts in individual consciousness and their impact on social behavior is largely determined by the specific settings of socio-cultural context. The analysis of attitudes toward these concepts and their linkage to self-image helps enrich our knowledge about social foundations of personality development of adolescents. This can also contribute to our understanding of psychological preparedness of adolescents to social commitment and civic engagement.

U.S.A. and Kyrgyzstan represent two polar worlds. Differences in history, culture, language, and social structure leave their mark on the specifics of ideas about social responsibility and individual freedom. Kyrgyzstan is one of the five Central Asian states partially situated on the route of the historic Silk Road. Until 1991, the republic was part of the Soviet Union and was heavily influenced by Russia. Over the short history of independence, Kyrgyzstan has experienced revolutions, social upheavals, inter-ethnic conflicts, and massive external and internal migration. Despite the difficult economic situation and high level of poverty, Kyrgyzstan

Makhinur Mamatova, Candidate of Psychological Sciences, associate professor, Sociology Department, American University of Central Asia, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Diane E. Wille, Ph.D., professor, Dean for Graduate Studies and Research, Indiana University Southeast, New Albany, U.S.A.

remains the only democratic country in the region with a strong civil society. Though Russian and Western influences are still strong in the region, Islam is becoming widespread. Such a mixture of various cultural influences, as well as complex socio-political processes taking place in Kyrgyzstan, are reflected in the formation of people's ideas about themselves, the perception of their personal freedom and social responsibility.

Studies of adolescents' attitudes towards the concepts of freedom and responsibility focus specifically on the development of autonomy or social/civic responsibility and less often on the study of their relationships. They are mainly represented by research on moral values in the field of developmental psychology (Finlay, Wray-Lake, Warren, & Maggs, 2015; Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011; Wray-Lake, Syvertsen, & Flanagan, 2016), studies of religious influence on the formation of social responsibility (Afriani, Baharudin, Yaacob, & Deuraseh, 2018; Gunnoe, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1999), the role of community service programs in civic engagement of adolescences (Reinders & Youniss, 2006; Yates & Youniss, 1998), political motivations of teenagers (Levy & Akiva, 2019; Quintelier, 2015), and development of adolescents' autonomy in different contexts (Benito-Gomez, Williams, McCurdy, & Fletcher, 2020; Hansen, Moore, & Jessop, 2018; McNeil & Helwig, 2015; Sanchez, Conte-Marin, Gómez-López, & Valero-Valenzuela, 2020). The relationships between freedom and responsibility in undergraduate students in Russia and the United States have been studied in a series of cross-cultural studies (Sheldon, Gordeeva, Leontiev, Lynch, Osin, Rasskazova, & Dementiy, 2017). Complex aspects of freedom and responsibility interrelationships in Cypriot adolescents have been studied by Frangou, Wilkerson, and Mc Gahan (2008).

This research focuses on cross-cultural comparison of attitudes toward freedom, responsibility, and society among late adolescents from Kyrgyzstan and the U.S.A. The goal of this research is to collect and analyze information pertaining to Kyrgyzstan and US students' attitudes about freedom, responsibility, and society, their interrelationships and their relation to students' self-image. It is hypothesized that the differences between the U.S. and Kyrgyz samples will be complex. The trials that have faced the Kyrgyz people will be evidenced in greater positivity towards the concepts of freedom and society, but as a country still in flux, social responsibility will not differ from the individualistic culture of the United States.

Method

Participants

Forty-seven undergraduate students from an American-style liberal arts university in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and 47 undergraduate students from the mid-sized university in Southern Indiana participated in this study. Participants mean age was 20.04 years in the Kyrgyz group and 19.9 years in the U.S. group. The Kyrgyz sample consisted of 37 females and 10 males and the U.S. sample included 29 females and 18 males. Forty-nine percent of Kyrgyz participants were Kyrgyz, 8.2 percent Russian, and 42.8 percent comprised other ethnicities. The majority of participants in the U.S. group were European American (87.2 percent), 6.38 percent African American, 4.3 percent multi-ethnic, and 2.12 percent Asian American. Data from these participants were collected in 2012 and 2015 for the Kyrgyz participants and in 2012, 2014, and 2015 for the US students.

Instruments

Participants completed a survey to provide basic demographic information. The Semantic Differential Technique (Osgood, Tannenbaum, & Suci, 1957/1975) in the Kagan (1991) version was used to assess

participants' attitudes toward four concepts: "I", "Society", "Freedom", and "Responsibility". The semantic differential consists of 12 bipolar scales on a rating interval from -3 to +3 for each scale. The position of minuses and pluses on the poles is interchanged from scale to scale. The scales are organized into three basic dimensions of Evaluation (E), Potency (P), and Activity (A). Each factor includes four bipolar scales of connotative adjectives. The factor E includes scales "smooth-rough", "dim-clear", "good-bad", and "sour-sweet". The factor P contains scales "feminine-masculine", "strong-weak", "small-large", and "complicated-simple". The Activity dimension involves scales "hot-cold", "quiet-loud", "sharp-dull", and "passive-active". The assessment of Evaluation, Potency, and Activity for the concepts "I", "Society", "Freedom", "Responsibility" shapes semantic representations of these concepts. The calculation of the EPA values as well as the semantic proximity of concepts was carried out in accordance with the standard procedures adopted in research using the semantic differential method (Heise, 1970; Osgood et al., 1957/1975; Kagan, 1991). Numerical data were processed using descriptive statistics, correlations, and the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U-test.

The Concept Questionnaire was designed to analyze content characteristics of the concepts ("I", "Society", "Freedom", "Responsibility"). The questionnaire consisted of the following open-ended questions:

1. How would you define yourself?
2. What is a society?
3. How do you see your place in the society?
4. What is freedom?
5. Do you agree with the statement that "freedom is an absence of all restraints"¹?
6. What is responsibility?
7. Is social responsibility interconnected with the individual freedom of the person?

The processing of the data obtained was carried out by calculating the number of characteristics, their percentage and the selection of the most common patterns/themes in the answers of the respondents.

Results

Semantic Differentials of the Concepts "I", "Society", "Freedom", and "Responsibility" in Kyrgyzstani Students

The results of the semantic scaling of the four concepts will be displayed as mean values of 12 scales of the differential and mean values of the factors of Evaluation, Potency, and Activity for the group. The first concept to assess the students' attitudes was "the I". The participants described their "I" as "smooth" ($M = 0.40$, $SD = 1.70$), "feminine" ($M = -0.46$, $SD = 2.22$), "hot" ($M = 1.14$, $SD = 1.58$), "clear" ($M = 0.65$, $SD = 1.80$), "strong" ($M = 1.44$, $SD = 1.33$), "loud" ($M = 0.31$, $SD = 1.87$), "good" ($M = 1.65$, $SD = 1.12$), "large" ($M = 0.38$, $SD = 1.59$), "sharp" ($M = 1.34$, $SD = 1.14$), "sweet" ($M = 0.97$, $SD = 1.52$), "complicated" ($M = 1.57$, $SD = 1.54$), and "active" ($M = 1.23$, $SD = 1.83$).

The picture of students' attitudes toward the notion of "Society" is as follows. "Society" is "rough" ($M = -0.82$, $SD = 1.79$), "masculine" ($M = 0.76$, $SD = 1.54$), "hot" ($M = 0.27$, $SD = 1.89$), "dim" ($M = -1.02$, $SD = 1.79$), neither strong nor weak ($M = 0.00$, $SD = 1.96$), "loud" ($M = 1.85$, $SD = 1.36$), "good" ($M = 0.59$, $SD =$

¹This slightly paraphrased statement is attributed to Harold Laski's reflections on liberty and the state referenced in Ball, W.M. (1931). [Review of the work *Liberty in the modern state* by Harold J. Laski]. *International Journal of Ethics*, 41(2), 240-242. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2377908>.

1.62), “large” ($M = 1.00, SD = 1.85$), “sharp” ($M = 0.12, SD = 1.63$), “sour” ($M = -0.12, SD = 1.67$), “complicated” ($M = 1.29, SD = 1.95$), and “active” ($M = 0.42, SD = 2.06$).

“Freedom” is described by such adjectives as “smooth” ($M = 0.85, SD = 1.99$), “masculine” ($M = 0.25, SD = 1.97$), “hot” ($M = 1.25, SD = 1.76$), “clear” ($M = 1.34, SD = 2.11$), “strong” ($M = 2.06, SD = 1.48$), “loud” ($M = 1.34, SD = 1.79$), “good” ($M = 1.93, SD = 1.35$), “large” ($M = 2.21, SD = 0.90$), “sharp” ($M = 1.14, SD = 1.45$), “sweet” ($M = 1.68, SD = 1.53$), “complicated” ($M = 1.25, SD = 2.16$), and “active” ($M = 2.12, SD = 1.58$).

“Responsibility” is “rough” ($M = -0.65, SD = 2.08$), “masculine” ($M = 1.44, SD = 1.70$), “cold” ($M = -0.19, SD = 2.26$), “clear” ($M = 1.00, SD = 1.96$), “strong” ($M = 2.25, SD = 1.16$), “loud” ($M = 1.68, SD = 1.66$), “good” ($M = 1.63, SD = 1.58$), “large” ($M = 2.38, SD = 1.07$), “sharp” ($M = 1.27, SD = 1.63$), “sour” ($M = -0.14, SD = 1.56$), “complicated” ($M = 1.68, SD = 1.72$), and “active” ($M = 1.89, SD = 1.50$).

The mean values of all three factors in the assessment of the “I” are positive. The maximum score is obtained for the Activity factor ($M = 1.00, SD = 0.46$). The Evaluation factor has a similar score ($M = 0.92, SD = 0.54$). The measurement of the Potency factor ($M = 0.73, SD = 0.96$) has the least value in the assessment of this concept. For the concept “Society”, the highest positive scores are Potency ($M = 0.76, SD = 0.55$) and Activity ($M = 0.67, SD = 0.79$) factors, while the mean value for Evaluation factor is the smallest and negative ($M = -0.34, SD = 0.73$). The values of all three factors for the concept of “Freedom” are characterized by high positive scores. The Activity factor ($M = 1.46, SD = 0.44$), and Potency factor ($M = 1.44, SD = 0.89$) receive the highest scores. The value of Evaluation factor is slightly lower ($M = 1.25, SD = 0.93$). The results of the average values for the concept of “Responsibility” show a high score for the factor of Potency ($M = 1.94, SD = 0.44$), a moderate score for the Activity factor ($M = 1.16, SD = 0.93$), and the lowest score for the factor of Evaluation ($M = 0.45, SD = 1.04$). In general, the assessment of all four concepts in this group is positive, with the exception of a negative assessment of the concept “Society”. Semantic representations of the four concepts of “I”, “Society”, “Freedom”, and “Responsibility” are visualized in Figure 1.

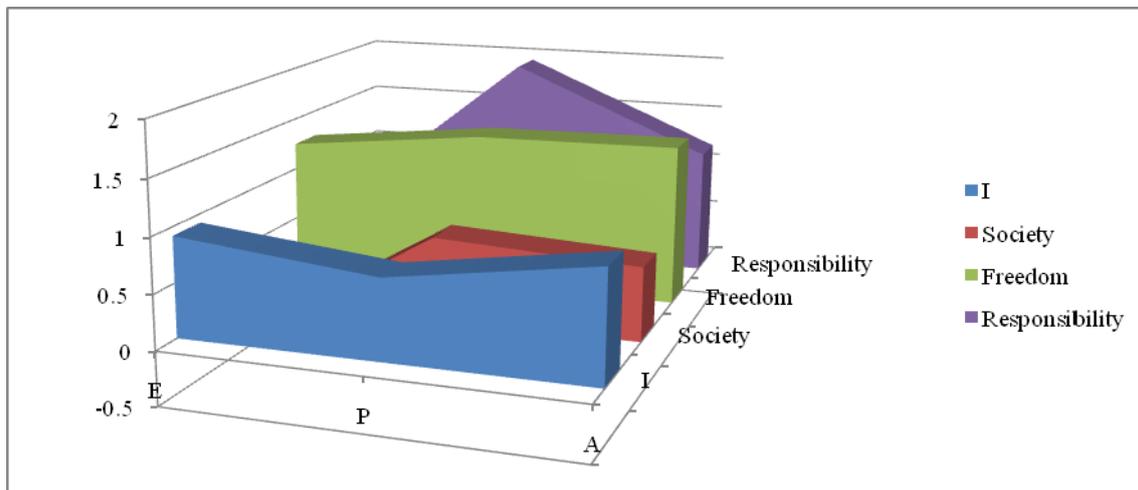


Figure 1. EPA profiles of the concepts “I”, “Society”, “Freedom”, and “Responsibility” in KG group.

D-score was calculated in order to measure semantic distance between the concepts (Table 1). D-score is a measurement of similarity/dissimilarity in attitudes toward the concepts (Heise, 1970). The lower this score, the greater the similarity in the assessment of concepts and emotional reactions, while a higher score indicates a

more pronounced difference in attitudes towards the assessed concepts (Heise, 1970; Kagan, 1991). Semantic distance between four concepts was calculated in pairs. First, the distances between “the I” and “Society”, “the I” and “Freedom”, and “the I” and “Responsibility” were measured. Then semantic distances between “Society” and “Responsibility”, “Society” and “Freedom”, and “Freedom” and “Responsibility” were calculated. The lowest D-score is found for the distance between “I” and “Freedom”, while the highest D-score is characteristic of the distance between “Society” and “Freedom”.

Table 1

Semantic Differences Between “I”, “Society”, “Freedom”, and “Responsibility” for Kyrgyz Group

	“I”	“Society”	“Freedom”
“Society”	1.30		
“Freedom”	0.89	1.80	
“Responsibility”	1.30	1.51	0.98

Note. Numbers are D-scores.

Statistically significant correlations of the EPA factors of the four concepts were represented by the following coefficients. Factor Evaluation of “the I” is strongly correlated with the Evaluation factor of “Freedom”, $r(2) = 0.97, p < 0.05$. Activity factors of “the I” and “Society” are strongly and negatively correlated, $r(2) = -0.98, p < 0.05$. Factors Potency of the “Freedom” and “Responsibility” are positively correlated $r(2) = 0.96, p < 0.05$.

Semantic Differentials of the Concepts “I”, “Society”, “Freedom”, and “Responsibility” in US Students

US students describe themselves (“I”) as “smooth” ($M = 1.21, SD = 1.41$), “feminine” ($M = -0.46, SD = 2.08$), “hot” ($M = 0.44, SD = 1.15$), “clear” ($M = 1.76, SD = 0.88$), “strong” ($M = 1.72, SD = 1.40$), “loud” ($M = 0.57, SD = 1.83$), “good” ($M = 1.74, SD = 1.05$), “large” ($M = 0.25, SD = 1.52$), “sharp” ($M = 1.51, SD = 1.03$), “sweet” ($M = 0.97, SD = 1.35$), “complicated” ($M = 0.63, SD = 1.89$), and “active” ($M = 1.00, SD = 1.71$).

For this group “Society” is “rough” ($M = -1.27, SD = 1.36$), “masculine” ($M = 0.59, SD = 1.32$), “cold” ($M = -0.46, SD = 1.45$), “dim” ($M = -0.68, SD = 1.46$), “weak” ($M = -0.06, SD = 1.76$), “loud” ($M = 1.89, SD = 1.12$), “bad” ($M = -0.19, SD = 1.56$), “large” ($M = 2.25, SD = 1.03$), “sharp” ($M = 0.27, SD = 1.39$), “sour” ($M = -0.80, SD = 1.05$), “complicated” ($M = 2.19, SD = 1.11$), and “active” ($M = 0.59, SD = 1.80$).

The notion of “Freedom” is described as “smooth” ($M = 0.14, SD = 2.07$), “masculine” ($M = 0.36, SD = 1.22$), “hot” ($M = 0.68, SD = 1.35$), “clear” ($M = 0.97, SD = 1.85$), “strong” ($M = 2.10, SD = 1.73$), “loud” ($M = 1.46, SD = 1.69$), “good” ($M = 2.38, SD = 1.13$), “large” ($M = 1.46, SD = 1.51$), “sharp” ($M = 1.25, SD = 1.45$), “sweet” ($M = 1.48, SD = 1.44$), “complicated” ($M = 0.72, SD = 1.86$), and “active” ($M = 1.38, SD = 1.64$).

“Responsibility” is described as “rough” ($M = -0.38, SD = 2.08$), “masculine” ($M = 0.40, SD = 1.13$), “hot” ($M = 0.31, SD = 1.14$), “clear” ($M = 1.31, SD = 1.78$), “strong” ($M = 2.21, SD = 0.88$), “loud” ($M = 1.12, SD = 1.58$), “good” ($M = 2.29, SD = 1.12$), “large” ($M = 2.12, SD = 1.05$), “sharp” ($M = 1.27, SD = 1.45$), “sweet” ($M = 0.23, SD = 1.27$), “complicated” ($M = 1.04, SD = 1.65$), and “active” ($M = 1.68, SD = 1.35$).

The mean values for Evaluation, Potency, Activity factors for the “I” show the highest score for the factor of Evaluation ($M = 1.42, SD = 0.39$). Potency factor has the lowest score ($M = 0.53, SD = 0.91$). Activity is relatively moderate ($M = 0.88, SD = 0.48$). Evaluation of “Society” is negative ($M = -0.73, SD = 0.44$). For “Society” the factor of Potency is highest ($M = 1.24, SD = 1.16$), and Activity is moderate ($M = 0.57, SD = 0.98$). The mean values for Evaluation ($M = 1.25, SD = 0.93$), Potency ($M = 1.16, SD = 0.77$), Activity ($M =$

1.19, $SD = 0.35$) factors of the “Freedom” are positive. “Responsibility” is assessed as Potent ($M = 1.44, SD = 0.87$) and Active ($M = 1.09, SD = 0.57$). However, Evaluation factor for this concept receives the lowest score ($M = 0.86, SD = 1.18$). Semantic profiles of EPA factors for all four concepts are represented graphically in Figure 2.

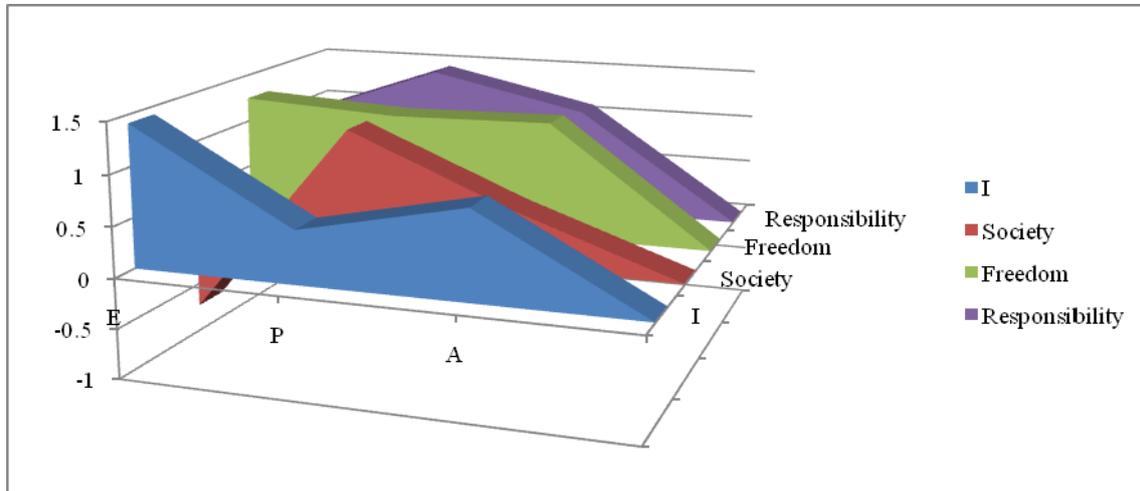


Figure 2. EPA profiles of the concepts “I”, “Society”, “Freedom”, and “Responsibility” in US group.

The semantic proximity of four concepts was calculated using D-score according to the scheme applied for the KG group. The results are represented in Table 2.

Table 2

Semantic Differences Between “I”, “Society”, “Freedom”, and “Responsibility” in US Group

	“I”	“Society”	“Freedom”
“Society”	2.30		
“Freedom”	0.72	2.08	
“Responsibility”	1.07	1.70	0.47

Note. Numbers are D-scores.

The shorter distance is found for the concepts of “Freedom” and “Responsibility” assuming affective similarity of attitudes toward them. The longest distances are found for the “I” and “Society” and “Society” and “Freedom”. Affective proximity of the concept “Freedom” to participants “selves” is also found.

Statistically significant coefficients of correlations were found between evaluations of “Society” and “Responsibility”, $r(2) = 0.96, p < 0.05$; Activity of the “I” and Evaluation of the “Freedom”, $r(2) = 0.96, p < 0.05$; Potency of the “I” and Activity of “Society”, $r(2) = 0.99, p < 0.01$; Potency factors of “Freedom” and “Responsibility”, $r(2) = 0.95, p < 0.05$.

Comparison of Semantic Representations of the Concepts “I”, “Society”, “Freedom”, and “Responsibility” Between KG and US Students

Comparing KG and US students’ scores for the four concepts, using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U-test revealed statistically significant differences for several scales in each concept. In the concept “I” the value of scale “smooth-rough” was higher in the U.S.A. group (Mdn = 2.00) than in the KG group (Mdn = 1.00), $U = 813.50, p = 0.024$ as well as for the “dim-clear” scale (Mdn = 2.00 and Mdn = 1.00 respectively), $U =$

721.5, $p = 0.003$. The KG group had a higher score (Mdn = 1.00) on the scale “hot-cold” than their US peers (Mdn = 0.00), $U = 739.5$, $p = 0.005$. The KG score for the scale “complicated-simple” (Mdn = 2.00) is also higher than that for the U.S.A. group (Mdn = 1.00), $U = 767.5$, $p = 0.009$. The comparison of group profiles shaped by these scales is visualized in the Figure 3.

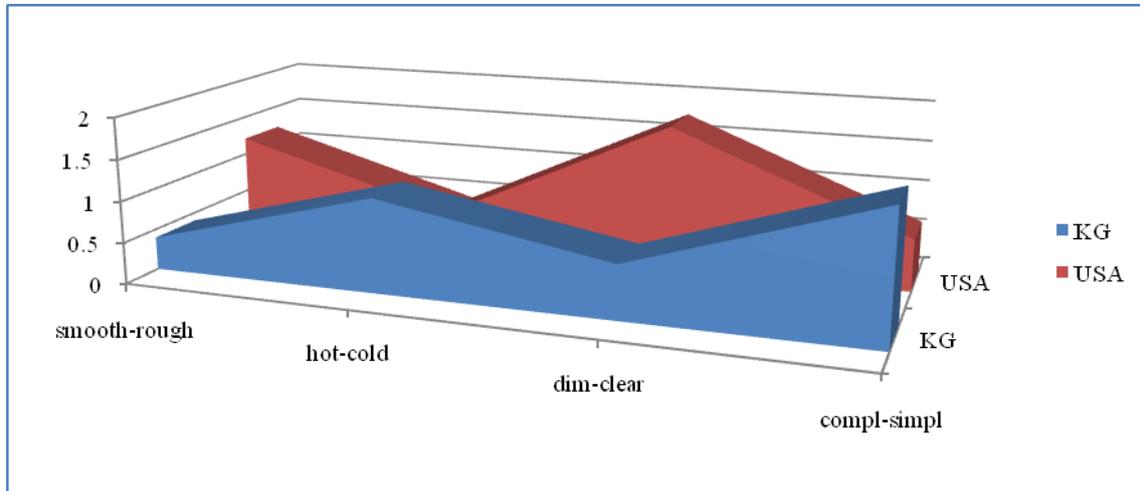


Figure 3. Comparative group profiles of the concept “I”.

For attitudes toward “Society” statistically significant differences were found for the scale “good-bad”. The KG group represents more positive attitudes (Mdn = 0.00), than the US group (Mdn = 0.00), $U = 781.5$, $p = 0.01$. US students describe “Society” as rather “cold” (Mdn = 0.00) than “hot” (Mdn = 1.00), $U = 800.0$, $p = 0.01$. “Society” for the US group is “large” (Mdn = 3.00) compared to the KG assessment (Mdn = 1.00), $U = 655.5$, $p = 0.00$. “Society” is more “complicated” for the US group (Mdn = 3.00) than that for their Kyrgyz counterparts (Mdn = 2.00), $U = 827.5$, $p = 0.02$. Figure 4 represents group profiles for the concept “Society”.

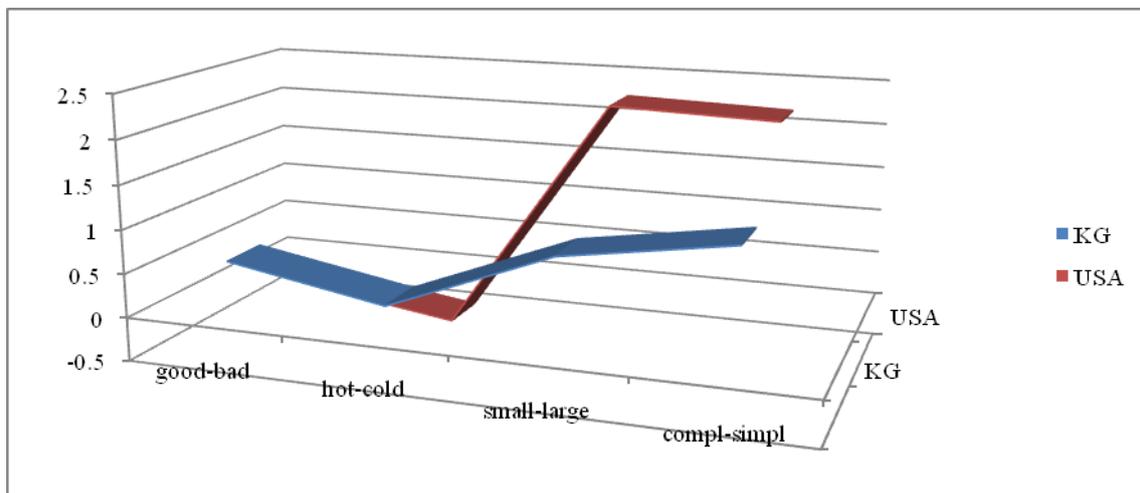


Figure 4. Comparative group profiles of the concept “Society”.

KG group scores are larger than the U.S.A. group scores in assessing the “Freedom”. Kyrgyz students describe it as “hot” (Mdn = 2.00) while US students give significantly lower scores (Mdn = 0.00), $U = 808.5$, $p = 0.02$. “Freedom” is “large” for both groups although the Kyrgyz group (Mdn = 2.00) gives more potency to it

comparing to the US group (Mdn = 2.00), $U = 810.0, p = 0.01$. For both groups “Freedom” is associated with “activity”, though the KG students score is higher (Mdn = 3.00) than the US group score (Mdn = 2.00), $U = 751.0, p = 0.004$. The Figure 5 visualizes these differences.

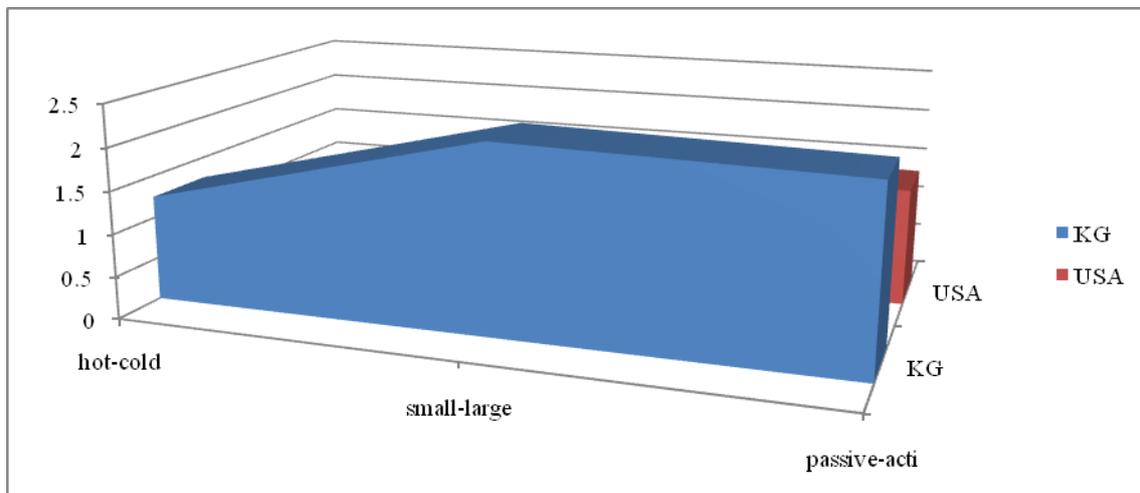


Figure 5. Comparative group profiles of the concept “Freedom”.

The concept “Responsibility” attributes to “masculinity” in both group with greater prevalence in Kyrgyz participants (Mdn = 2.00) than US students (Mdn = 0.00), $U = 637.0, p = 0.00$. “Responsibility” is “loud” for both, although the KG group (Mdn = 2.00) has higher scores than the US group (Mdn = 1.00), $U = 835.0, p = 0.03$. Evaluation of “Responsibility” is more positive for US students (Mdn = 3.00) than for the KG group (Mdn = 2.00), $U = 805.5, p = 0.01$. “Responsibility” is more complex for Kyrgyz students (Mdn = 2.00) than for the US group (Mdn = 1.00), $U = 809.5, p < 0.02$. These differences are represented in Figure 6.

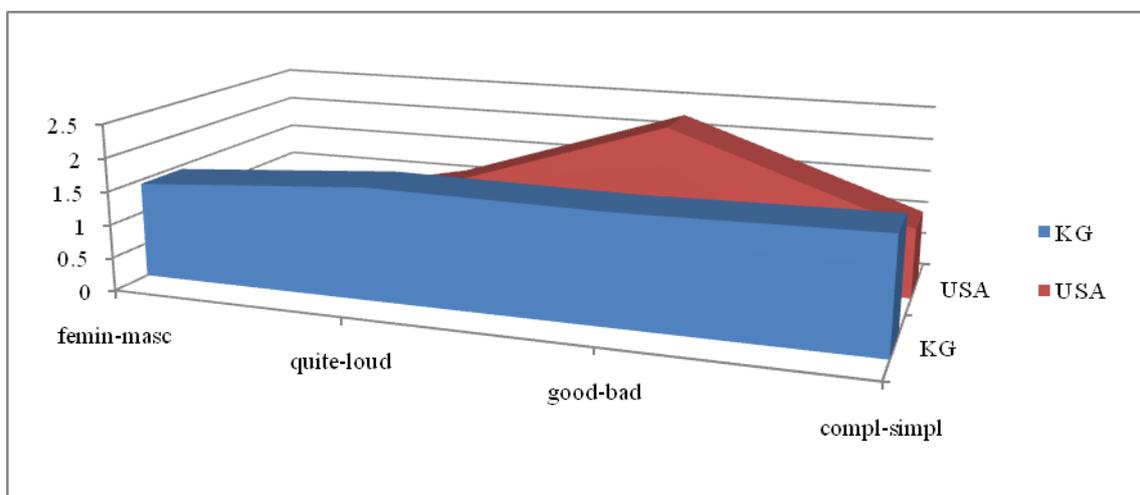


Figure 6. Comparative group profiles of the concept “Responsibility”.

Since four concepts form subjective semantic spaces, expressed by the sum of EPA numeric values, their graphical representation can illustrate intergroup differences and similarities (Figure 7). The graph shows the pronounced similarity of the shapes of the semantic spaces of the two groups, as well as the difference in the sizes of these spaces formed in the area of the concept “Freedom”.

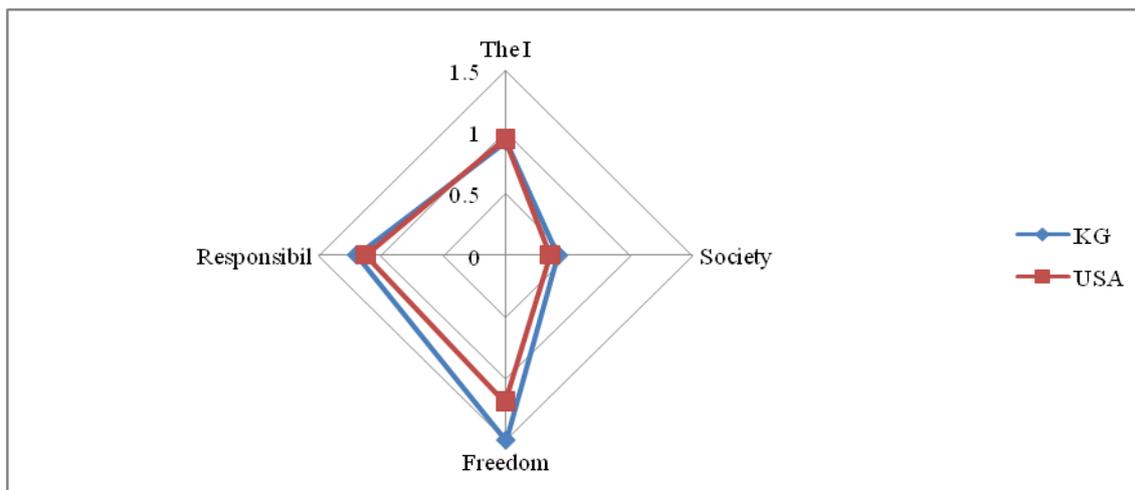


Figure 7. Semantic spaces of KG and US groups.

Comparative Results of the Concept Questionnaire Comparison of Kyrgyz and US Groups

The Concept Questionnaire consisted of seven questions. If the semantic differential allows the study of the connotative meanings of the concepts, then the purpose of the questionnaire was to identify subjective interpretations of these concepts. The combined assessment of connotative and denotative meanings of the studied concepts makes it possible to understand the representation of associative and rational components of the concepts in the consciousness of the participants.

How would you define yourself? For the first question the Kyrgyz group used 109 characteristics to describe themselves. The U.S. group used 123, a wider variety of self-descriptions. In both groups, positive self-evaluative characteristics prevailed, 82.56% for the Kyrgyz group and 80.5% for the U.S. group. This is consistent with the results of semantic differential assessment of the concept “I”; the factor E was positive for both groups which is a positive indicator of self-esteem.

The Kyrgyz group was dominated by a positive quartet of such characteristics as “purposeful” (11.11%), “responsible” (11.11%), “kind” (10%), and “calm” (11.11%). Characteristics of “active” and “good” were 5.6% and 4.44% percent, respectively. The following characteristics were found in single cases and in accumulative form accounted for 46.63% of self-descriptions. They are “friendly, cheerful, free, optimist, strong, emotional, punctual, flexible, scrupulous, naive, curious, loving, dreamer and sensitive”. Negative self-evaluations comprised 17.43% of the characteristics. These characteristics were also single cases: “bad, confused, impulsive, lost, passive, controversial, undisciplined, irresponsible, lazy, absent-minded, boring gamer, anxious, and fickle”.

In contrast to the Kyrgyz group, the spread of characteristics in the US group was wider. The predominant definitions were characteristics of the pattern “active/driven/motivated/passionate” (13.13%). The patterns “easy-going/outgoing/fun” and “nice/good/sweet” were 8.1% each. Three characteristics had the same percentage (6.06%): “hard-working”, “caring-helping”, and “strong-willed”. Three other traits “responsible” (5.05%), “independent” (4.04%), and “loving” (3.03%) were also common. The set of single positive traits characteristics represented 20.87% of total self-evaluations. They are “quiet, emotional, smart, ambitious, positive thinker, open for ideas, curious, laid back, happy, loyal, trust worthy and leader”. Among negative evaluations (15.4%) are “passive, depressed, negative and broken”. Neutral characteristics (4.1%) involved such self-descriptions as “normal, average person, and ordinary student”.

What is a society? In response to this question, the groups were noticeably similar. Eighty seven percent of the respondents in the Kyrgyz group and 91.5% of the US group described society in various words as a group of people united by culture, goals, laws, country etc. The key category in describing society was “a group of people”. Negative descriptions of society as a “grey mass” were found in either direct or various wording with negative connotations in 12.5% of Kyrgyz responses. This result is consistent with the E value of the semantic differential of the concept “Society” which represents negative evaluation of this notion ($M = -0.34$, $SD = 0.73$). In the US group, the negative characterization of society as ruthless was encountered in a single case. At the same time the E value of the semantic differential shows a negative result ($M = -0.73$, $SD = 0.44$).

How do you see your place in the society? To have a high social status and influence people was reported by 32.6% of Kyrgyz respondents. To help and benefit society was found in 21.7% of the responses for this group. Being outside of society was reported by 13.02% of this group. Being somewhere in the middle of the social hierarchy was reported by 6.51% of the Kyrgyz participants. The rest of the answers (26.17%) included such single descriptions as “don’t know, blurry, intelligentsia, responsible person” etc.

Similar patterns of responses were found in the US group. The students see their status in the society to be influential (27.7%), helping and contributing to the society (23.32%), and somewhere in the middle (14.9%). Other responses (34.08%) involved the set of single negative or undifferentiated characteristics such as “black sheep in society, near the bottom, insignificant, calm, law-abiding citizen, fully independent, be myself and another person”.

What is freedom? “Doing what you want” was the leitmotif of both groups’ responses although in the US group (55.12%) such an interpretation of freedom was more prominent than in their Kyrgyz peers (30.4%). There was a wider range of responses in the Kyrgyz group, making it difficult to combine them into patterns. The most common answers in this category were “goal, responsibility, self-expression, illusion, absence of problem, dream, abstraction, independence, will, choice” etc. Similar interpretations of freedom were found in the rest of US students’ responses. They are “self-expression, free will, choice and ability to live own life”.

Do you agree with the statement that “freedom is an absence of all restraints”? An overwhelming majority of the Kyrgyz group gave the answer “no” (71.61%), while in the other group only 57.24% answered negatively. Positive and undifferentiated answers distributed as follows. In the Kyrgyz group “yes” (23.87%) and “not sure” (4.52%). In the US group positive answers were found for 40.9% of the responses and others types in 1.86%. Among the explanations for the answers to this question in both groups, there was an idea that there is no freedom without restrictions.

What is responsibility? In answering this question, both groups showed unanimity, understanding responsibility primarily as a moral obligation and the ability to take charge for one’s own actions. This interpretation was found in 71.61% of the responses of Kyrgyz participants and 74.2 % of US students. The rest of the answers were similar in both groups: “burden, actions or willingness to make society better, trait, driver for self-realization, doing right things” etc.

Is social responsibility interconnected with the individual freedom of the person? Sixty-nine and half percent of the Kyrgyz respondents answered “yes”, 19.53% “no”, and 10.97% “not applicable/depends on”. At the same time 89% of US students answered “yes”, 4.2% “no”, and 6.8% “not applicable/depends”. The major theme in explaining positive answers in each group was the idea that a person is an integral part of society and it is impossible to separate these concepts.

Discussion

The hypothesis of this research consisted of three assumptions: (1) The Kyrgyz group will be characterized by greater positivity towards the concept of freedom; (2) the Kyrgyz group will represent more positive attitude towards the concept of society; (3) there will be no intergroup differences in the attitudes toward the concept of responsibility.

The analysis and comparison of the responses from the two groups highlight the most essential results for testing the first hypothesis. First, the concept of "Freedom" is positively assessed in both groups although statistically significant differences were found for three scales of the semantic differential "hot-cold" (factor A), "small-large" (factor P), "passive-active" (factor A). This means that the attitudes to freedom are similar in both groups although for Kyrgyz group, the attitude towards freedom as something hot, big, and active was more pronounced. The content of the image of freedom in the responses to the open-ended questionnaire also highlighted common themes and spoke more about similarities than differences. However, the consolidation of descriptions of the image of freedom is more prominent in the US group than in their Kyrgyz peers. This can be explained by the greater stability of ideas about what freedom is in US participants. This conclusion is confirmed by positive significant correlation in the US group, where perception of oneself as an active individual is highly correlated with the Evaluation factor of freedom. At the same time, in the Kyrgyz group, a statistically significant positive correlation was found only in unmediated evaluation of oneself (factor E) and evaluation of freedom. D-score is also consistent with the finding of greater stability of formed ideas about freedom in US students. It showed that attitudes toward oneself and freedom are affectively closer to each other in the US group than the Kyrgyz group. This means that identification of oneself as a free socially active individual is expressed more in US students than in their Kyrgyz counterparts. It is noteworthy that in both groups, almost equal high positive correlations were found in the assessment of freedom and responsibility as influential forces. Thus, it can be argued that the first hypothesis is not fully supported.

Affective attitudes quantified by EPA values toward the concept "Society" are not different between groups. Both evaluate society as negative, strong, and active. Statistically significant differences between groups were found for four scales of the differential. They are "good-bad" (factor E), "hot-cold" (factor A), "small-large" (factor P), and "complicated-simple" (factor P). In other words, society for the Kyrgyz sample is good, hot, large, and complex. Society is bad, cold, larger, and more complicated for US students. In this group, a strong positive correlation was found in the assessment of society and responsibility, which can be interpreted as the perception of responsibility imposed by social environment. The ideas about society and the respondents' place in it were distinguished by the striking similarity of descriptions and clear identification of common patterns in the answers of both groups.

D-scores for the semantic proximity between "I" and "Society" were the highest units, which means a large distance between concepts and, therefore, pronounced differences in associative emotional reactions towards them in each group. A lower D-score was found in the Kyrgyz group. Taking into account high D-scores for "society-freedom" axis in each group and larger D-score in US group this finding can be interpreted as a manifestation of experiences caused by social pressure and restrictions. Thus, we cannot confirm the second hypothesis, although there is some positive tendency towards society among the Kyrgyz participants.

Attitudes toward the concept "Responsibility" are statistically different on four scales: "feminine-masculine" (factor P), "quiet-loud" (factor A), "good-bad" (factor E), and "complicated-simple"

(factor P). This means that for Kyrgyz participants responsibility is more masculine, louder, and more complex while the evaluation of responsibility as very good is characteristics of the US group. A higher score on “masculinity” in the Kyrgyz group can be explained by cultural attitudes towards male functions. Understanding responsibility as moral obligation and accountability for one’s own acts and their consequences is found in both groups. A pronounced similarity is also found in understanding interconnections between freedom and responsibility. This result is supported by the strong positive correlations of the factor Potency between concepts of “Freedom” and “Responsibility” for each group. This result is also confirmed by the D-scores for the axis “I-Responsibility” and the axis “Freedom-Responsibility” in both groups. It is noteworthy that in the group of US students the semantic distance between freedom and responsibility was the lowest, which indicates a closer perception of the inter-relationship between these concepts in the US group. In this way it is possible to conclude that the third hypothesis is also not confirmed. However, it turned out that in both groups, ideas about the relationship between freedom and responsibility were more developed than about the social responsibility itself.

The research results can be explained by universality of the value and virtue of freedom and responsibility that are independent of the concrete socio-cultural context. At the same time, the attitude towards society as suppressive and restrictive can be viewed as an indicator of tension while interacting with the outside world, since late adolescents are still in the process of developing adaptive models of social behavior.

Conclusion

If we could draw a common psychological portrait of an older adolescent, one example is the meanings that our participants put into these concepts; it would be a person with good self-esteem, active, and self-confident; ambitious and goal-oriented, responsible and motivated, helping and caring, kind and friendly. This person has identified him/herself as a free individual living in a complex social environment and understanding the importance of personal accountability and value of individual freedom. Despite the fact that the study did not reveal intergroup differences, but, on the contrary, showed great similarity between the groups; it is necessary to point out that for the US group the idea of freedom and its interconnection with responsibility are more formed and expressed than in the Kyrgyz participants. The latter were born and matured in an extremely difficult historical period of the reorganization of the state and a dramatic change in society and culture that was just beginning to assimilate the ideas of individual freedom and social responsibility. Years after this study, today in Kyrgyzstan, one can observe a clear trend towards the active involvement of this generation of young people in the social and political life of the country. This generation can be called active conductors, first of all, of the ideas of personal and public freedom and the importance of civic engagement in Kyrgyzstan.

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