

**ПРЕДИЗВИЦИТЕ ЗА МЛАДИТЕ ЖЕНИ ВО ТРАНЗИЦИСКИТЕ  
ОПШТЕСТВА: СЛУЧАЈОТ НА РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА**

**THE CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN TRANSITIONAL  
SOCIETIES: THE CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

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**Апстракт**

Фокусот на трудот се културните вредности и практики на младите жени во Република Македонија изразени низ нивните гледишта за одредени аспекти на животот. Податоците произлегуваат од проектот *Европска студија на вредности*, спроведен во 2008 година во Република Македонија, како дел од меѓународно лонгитудинално истражување. Ставовите на младите жени на возраст од 18 до 31 година беа

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анализирани во контекстот на следниве културни вредности и практики: приоритети во животот, автоперцепција на среќата, доверба и социјална дистанца, професионален развој, преферирани активности во слободното време, прифаќање или одбивање на одредени однесувања и животни стилови, ставови кон бракот и семејството и статусот на жените во современите општества. Трудот има за цел да ја прикаже автоперцепцијата на младите жени во поглед на нивното место и улога во македонското општество – општество оптоварено со последиците на продолжената економска и политичка транзиција и, дополнително, неговата меѓуетничка консолидација и евро-атлантска интеграција.

**Клучни зборови:** вредности, идентитет, младина, Република Македонија, транзиција.

This paper is focused on the cultural values and practices of young women in the Republic of Macedonia expressed through their views on certain aspects of life. The data used derives from the *European Values Study* project conducted in 2008 in the Republic of Macedonia as part of an international longitudinal research. The attitudes of young women aged 18 to 31 were analyzed in the context of the following cultural values and practices: life priorities; self-perception of personal happiness; trust and social distance; professional development; preferred leisure activities; acceptance or rejection of certain behaviors and lifestyles; attitudes towards marriage and family and the status of women in modern society. The paper aims to show the self-perception of young women concerning their place and role in the Macedonian society - a society burdened by the consequences of the prolonged economic and political transition, and furthermore, its inter-ethnic consolidation and Euro-Atlantic integration.

**Keywords:** Values, identity, Youth, Republic of Macedonia, transition.

## Introduction

The investigation of the attitudes among a particular target group concerning certain values, value orientations or lifestyles entails some diligence in the deliberation of knowledge regarding the general features of a social climate. This diligence includes, among

other things, a sociological distance from the attitudes of young women in the country, even more so if we take into consideration the social consequences of the transition in the Macedonian society and the reevaluation of life priorities, guidelines and models. The state of affairs presented in this paper embodies an overview of the attitudes of a particular target group, namely young women aged 18 to 31, which expressed their views on a number of life practices, values and value orientations (as part of a representative sample of the Macedonian society (consisting of 1500 respondents) within the European Values Study project for the Republic of Macedonia in 2008).

Similar to most societies in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, the Macedonian society has continuously been undergoing processes that challenge and reevaluate all types of social and cultural values. What is obvious is the transformation of models, as well as the search for new cultural forms as frameworks for social action. The sociological research interest in the effects of the transition in the Republic of Macedonia is usually aimed towards the cultural change in the society as a whole, and furthermore, it encompasses the issue of changing value preferences and cultural landmarks at individual level.

In a transitional society, the cultural change, as expected, intensively juxtaposes the moral and overall life doctrines based on traditional values, as well as the values of socialism and the "new" forms of capitalism. At local level – as in this case the Macedonian society - these notions of global social systems can serve as analytical constructs for sociological diagnosis of the conditions, but at an individual level, they often produce value disorientation. In some aspects, this is discernible in the attitudes of young women analyzed in this paper. The data analysis indicated that our young respondents do not readily relate to consistent attitudes or value models on many issues. Thus, this paper will not operate with confirmation of certain value matrices and theoretical paradigms known in sociological theory.

Having in mind the assumption that the conditions and processes of global society signify a continuous process of transformation of capitalism (deriving from the vitality of that system), imposing it as the only possible system in terms of the "rule" of the Western technological and economic civilization and values that it generates, the phenomenon of position and structure of gender identities in this setting implies newly designed models (Giddens, 2009). Again, the differentiation of patterns is related to the disposition of certain socio-cultural contexts, especially when they are in a state of competition with the Western civilization matrices. This study is preoccupied with societies in a marginalized position (political, economic, cultural) whose transformations assume frequent and radical changes

in social conditions (from socialism to capitalism), compared to the civilization discourses that emanate a state of well-being and concentration of power. Consequently, this study presents an analysis of cultural values and practices of young women in the Republic of Macedonia after gaining its independence, expressed through their views on certain aspects of life. It refers to a period in which the Macedonian society is hampered by the consequences of the prolonged economic and political transition, as interethnic consolidation as well as the challenges of the Euro-Atlantic integration. The concept of cultural trauma introduced by Sztompka (2003) is, perhaps, the basic inspiration in this sociological discourse. Namely, we are aiming to define the processes that are expected to have an impact on the self-perception of young women aged 18-31, as well as their place and role in the Macedonian society. The target group belongs to the so-called "transitional generation" which is burdened by the conflict of personal characteristics of gender culture, and mostly influenced by the effects of rapid and controversial changes in the social system overall (Џенапоски, 2007). It is assumed that part of this generation has built its identity during the period of the establishing of new values. On the other hand, they have indirectly (through the experiences of their parents) been introduced to the traditional values (pre-socialist) as well as those principally inherited from the socialist era, and the relationship towards them within the predominant cultural policy of the newly created state.

## **Methodology**

### *Research methods and instruments*

The data used in the analyses, which are presented in this paper, derived from a questionnaire containing 141 items. The questions, usually designed to fit a Likert-type scale, were organized into six broad thematic sections. The survey was conducted in the period from July to September 2008, as part of the international longitudinal project named *European Values Study*.

For the purposes of this paper, the responses that were taken into consideration were related to several issues: the individual values, the attitudes towards work and professional development, the attitudes towards family, and the general trust in people and social distance among young women in the Republic of Macedonia. Participants' attitudes

were differentiated on the basis of some of their socio-demographic characteristics (education, age, religious affiliation, employment status, marital status, etc.).

### *Research sample*

The total number of respondents that participated in the survey was 1500, while the target group, whose responses were analyzed for the purposes of this paper, is 209 women aged 18-31. The comparative approach implied an analysis of the responses of 241 men of the same age as well. The survey was conducted in the eight statistical regions in the Republic of Macedonia (East, Northeast, Pelagonia, Polog, Skopje, Southeast, Southwest and Vardar). Most of the participants in the survey had completed four years of secondary education (67.3%), followed by those who completed university and postgraduate studies (26.1%), 4.4% of the respondents had finished three years of secondary education, 0.5% had completed primary education, and 2% had not obtained any education. In terms of marital status, 27.4% of the respondents were married, 1.4% were in a registered partnership and 71.2% were neither married nor in registered partnership. In terms of employment status, only 25.6% of the respondents were employed (42.9% of working-age women in the general sample declared that they were employed at the time of the survey). In terms of religion, 84.2% Christian and 15.8% Muslim women participated in the survey. Atheists were not included, since the number was statistically not significant.

### **Results and discussion**

One of the questions we believed can identify general trends related to value orientation of young women in the Republic of Macedonia is the one in which they declare the priority attributed to some specified aspects of life, ranking them on a scale 1 to 4 (1 "very important" and 4 "not important at all"), such as work, family, friends and acquaintances, leisure, politics and religion. The results showed that family was the highest priority ( $M_f=1.09$ ), followed by friends and acquaintances ( $M_f=1.17$ ), leisure time ( $M_f=1.23$ ), work ( $M_f=1.26$ ), religion ( $M_f=1.80$ ) and the least important is politics ( $M_f=2.70$ ).

The comparative analysis of male and female respondents aged 18 to 31 showed that male respondents had similar priorities, except in the case of politics, which was more important to them ( $M_m=2.44$ ;  $M_f=2.70$ ;  $t=1.293$ ,  $df=463$   $p<0.05$ ).

The age of the respondents did not prove to be very important differentiating factor for this question. Family, religion and politics were equally important to respondents of all age groups. Work, friends and acquaintances and leisure time were more important to young women, compared to the answers of the group of respondents aged 47-60 (work:  $M_{18-31}=1.26$ ;  $M_{61+}=2.05$ ;  $F=27.436$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.01$ ; friends and acquaintances:  $M_{18-31}=1.17$ ,  $M_{47-60}=1.34$ ;  $p<0.05$ ; leisure:  $M_{18-31}=1.23$ ,  $M_{47-60}=1.43$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

The analysis of the responses based on the respondents' religious affiliation (Christian and Muslim) showed that work and religion are equally important for them. However, young Christian women consider family, friends, leisure time and politics more important (family:  $M_{ch}=1.02$ ;  $M_{mus}=1.18$ ;  $t=3.900$ ;  $df=192$ ;  $p<0.01$ ; friends and acquaintances:  $M_{ch}=1.24$ ;  $M_{mus}=1.48$ ;  $t=3.015$ ;  $df=193$ ;  $p<0.01$ ; leisure:  $M_{ch}=1.32$ ;  $M_{mus}=1.73$ ;  $t=3.871$ ;  $df=193$ ;  $p<0.01$ ; politics:  $M_{ch}=2.69$ ;  $M_{mus}=2.97$ ;  $t=0.197$ ;  $df=192$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

In the context of recognizing the degree of self-realization of young women, we analyzed the responses to questions related to the respondents' perception of personal happiness, freedom of choice and control over their own lives and the satisfaction.

The assessment of the extent of personal happiness is performed on a scale 1 to 4 (where 1 stands for "very happy" and 4 "not happy at all"). The average score of the responses was  $M_f=1.89$ , indicating that the respondents perceived themselves as "quite happy".

The comparison of the answers of young female respondents with their male peers showed no differences when it comes to the perception of personal happiness.

Regarding the age of the respondents, a statistically significant difference was identified in the responses between young women and those over the age of 61, which declared themselves as less happy ( $M_{18-31}=1.89$ ;  $M_{61+}=2.15$ ;  $F=4.654$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

The results showed no correlation between the rating of personal happiness and the religious affiliation of the respondents.

In terms of the educational level of the young female respondents a tendency was identified, indicating that women with higher levels of education tend to declare themselves as happier.

An assessment of the possibility of free choice and control over their own life was measured on a scale 1 to 10, 1 representing the lowest level of control and freedom, and 10 the highest level. The general trend indicated that the respondents believed to have significant control over their own lives ( $M_f=7.26$ ). In this case socio-demographic

characteristics such as gender, age, education and religion did not show to be a differentiating factor in the answers of the respondents.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 expresses dissatisfaction and 10 life's satisfaction) respondents had the opportunity to evaluate their satisfaction in life. The mean value of the answers is  $M_f=6.92$ , which indicates a relatively high degree of satisfaction in life among the respondents. In this case, the socio-demographic characteristics had no significant role in the distribution of responses.

Generally speaking, when it comes to the degree of social distance expressed towards certain social groups, the responses of the young women did not differ significantly from the general trends based on the responses of the entire sample. Social distance was measured in terms of acceptance or rejection of certain groups of people as neighbors. The greatest social distance was shown towards: drug addicts ( $p_f=79.3\%$ ); people with a criminal record ( $p_f=66.2\%$ ); heavy drinkers ( $p_f=60.4\%$ ); people who have AIDS ( $p_f=57.0\%$ ); emotionally unstable people ( $p_f=47.1\%$ ); homosexuals ( $p_f = 46.9\%$ ).

The comparison of these answers with the ones of their male peers, indicated that the young women showed greater social distance towards drug addicts ( $p_m=67.8\%$ ;  $p_f=79.3\%$ ;  $\chi^2=7.717$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.01$ ;  $cc\chi^2=7.145$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.01$ ;  $\Phi=0.129$ ).

The analysis of the responses of young Christian and Muslim women showed that the latter express higher social distance towards all mentioned groups. However, among them, statistically significant differences were those related to the following groups: people of a different race, left wing extremists, right wing extremists, people with large families, immigrants/foreign workers, Jews, Gypsies. Data is shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Social distance among young Christian and Muslim women

	Christians (%)	Muslims (%)	Statistically significant difference
People of a different race	15.2%	45.2%	$\chi^2=14.746$ ; $p<0.01$ ; Phi=0.274; $cc\chi^2=2.923$ , $df=1$ ; $p<0.01$ ; Phi=0.274
Left wing extremists	28.5%	50.0%	$\chi^2=5.373$ ; $df=1$ ; $p<0.05$ ; $cc\chi^2=4.428$ ; $df=1$ ; Phi=0.169
Right wing extremists	25.5%	43.3%	$\chi^2=3.954$ ; $df=1$ ; $p<0.05$ ; $cc\chi^2=3.124$ ; $df=1$ ; $p=0.077$ ; Phi=0.145
People with large families	11.5%	30.0%	$\chi^2=7.053$ ; $df=1$ ; $p<0.01$ ; $cc\chi^2=5.630$ ; $df=1$ ; $p<0.05$ ; Phi=0.190
Immigrants/foreign workers	17.0%	33.3%	$\chi^2=4.332$ ; $df=1$ ; $p<0.05$ ; $cc\chi^2=3.352$ ; $df=1$ ; $p=0.067$ ; Phi=0.149
Jews	12.8%	33.3%	$\chi^2=7.960$ ; $df=1$ ; $p<0.01$ ; $cc\chi^2=6.505$ ; $df=1$ ; $p<0.05$ ; Phi=0.203
Gypsies	12.8%	29.0%	$\chi^2=5.274$ ; $df=1$ ; $p<0.05$ ; $cc\chi^2=4.101$ ; $df=1$ ; $p<0.05$ ; Phi=0.164

The age of female respondents indicated some differentiated attitudes regarding the expression of social distance. Older female respondents showed greater social distance towards people with a criminal record, heavy drinkers and homosexuals (people with a criminal record:  $p_{18-31}=66.2\%$ ;  $p_{32-46}=83.7\%$ ;  $p_{47-60}=85.5\%$ ;  $p_{61+}=79.4\%$ ;  $\chi^2=24.716$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.01$ ; heavy drinkers:  $p_{18-31}=60.4\%$ ;  $p_{32-46}=85.8\%$ ;  $p_{47-60}=79.0\%$ ;  $p_{61+}=77.1\%$ ;  $\chi^2=35.173$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.01$ ; homosexuals:  $p_{18-31}=46.9\%$ ;  $p_{32-46}=63.3\%$ ;  $p_{47-60}=59.6\%$ ;  $p_{61+}=65.1\%$ ;  $\chi^2=14.819$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). Young female respondents showed the greatest social distance towards people with large families ( $p_{18-31}=13.9\%$ ;  $p_{32-46}=8.3\%$ ;  $p_{47-60}=7.5\%$ ;  $p_{61+}=4.6\%$ ;  $\chi^2=9.016$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

The data suggested that the more educated female respondents showed a greater distance towards emotionally unstable people, while female respondents with the highest level of education in their responses show the greatest distance towards drug addicts and Jews (emotionally unstable people:  $p_{prim}=7.1\%$ ;  $p_{secon}=50.7\%$ ;  $p_{high}=48.1\%$ ;  $\chi^2=9.713$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p<0.01$ ; drug addicts:  $p_{prim}=85.7\%$ ;  $p_{secon}=74.5\%$ ;  $p_{high}=90.6\%$ ;  $\chi^2=6.434$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p<0.05$ ; Jews:  $p_{prim}=0\%$ ;  $p_{secon}=13.1\%$ ;  $p_{high}=25.0\%$ ;  $\chi^2=6.809$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).



The question of general trust in other people has shown that the majority of young women, 79.3% do trust other people, which follows the general trend in the answers of the total sample. The comparative analysis of the responses in terms of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents also showed no significant statistical differences.

The analysis of the questions concerning certain job-related aspects (career attitudes, opportunities for self-realization, work environment, expectations), showed no significant differences between the responses of the young female respondents with the ones obtained from the overall sample, as well as from the comparative analysis of responses by their male peers. Young female respondents single out the following aspects as the most important: good pay ( $p_f=95.1\%$ ), pleasant people to work with ( $p_f=89.2\%$ ), workplace safety ( $p_f=88.5\%$ ), learning new skills ( $p_f=85.9\%$ ), people being treated equally at the workplace ( $p_f=85.6\%$ ). On the other hand, these aspects were considered less important to them: generous holidays ( $p_f=53.9\%$ ), an opportunity to demonstrate initiative ( $p_f=69.6\%$ ); also, having a say in important decisions proved to be of a less importance ( $p_f=72.6\%$ ), as well as doing a job that benefits the society ( $p_f=72.9\%$ ), meeting people ( $p_f=74.3\%$ ) etc.

The possibility of taking initiative in the work process was of greater importance to young women, as well as meeting people, in which they agree with women aged 47-60 (meeting people:  $p_{18-31}=74.3\%$ ;  $p_{32-46}=69.5\%$ ;  $p_{47-60}=83.5\%$ ;  $p_{61+}=78.3\%$ ;  $\chi^2=8.192$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.05$ ; an opportunity to use initiative:  $p_{18-31}=69.6\%$ ;  $p_{32-46}=64.1\%$ ;  $p_{47-60}=30.0\%$ ;  $p_{61+}=50.6\%$ ;  $\chi^2=9.038$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

Concerning the level of education, a job that allows self-realization was more important to female respondents with a higher level of education ( $p_{prim}=53.8\%$ ;  $p_{secon}=82.8\%$ ;  $p_{high}=78.7\%$ ;  $\chi^2=6.110$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

To Muslim female respondents, generous holidays in the workplace are much more important than to the Christian female respondents ( $p_{ch}=48.2\%$ ;  $p_{mus}=76.7\%$ ;  $\chi^2=8.031$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

Free time and contents that young female respondents were offered as opportunities to use it ("meeting nice people", "relaxing", "doing as I want", "learning something new" were evaluated on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is "very important", and 4 "not important at all") proved to be almost equally important for young women, and for young men as well.

Their choice on this issue is not affected by their level of education, either. On the other hand, age does affect the responses of female respondents: as their age increases, it becomes less important for them to do what they want or learn something new (doing as I

want: M18-31=1.17; M32-46=1.25; M47-60=1.39; M61+=1.34; F=5.163; df=3; p<0.01; learning something new: M18-31=1.15; M32-46=1.25; M47-60=1.33; M61+=1.52; F=10.610; df=3; p<0.01).

The results showed that young female Christians considered as more important with whom and how they spend their free time when compared to Muslim women (Mch=1.16; Mmus=1.55; t=3.665; df=194; p<0.01).

In the context of the issues related to family life and marriage, the question on how much certain life practices are important for a successful marriage was also included. Generally speaking, young female respondents singled out the following as the most important: faithfulness (p<sub>f</sub>=94.0%), happy sexual relationship (p<sub>f</sub>=91.8%) and having children (p<sub>f</sub>=89.4%), and consider less important to be agreement on politics (p<sub>f</sub>=16.8%) and being of the same social background (p<sub>f</sub>=31%).

The comparison of the data obtained on the basis of the sex of the respondents showed that most of the offered options proved to be more important to the young female respondents, especially when it comes to the following: an adequate income, shared religious beliefs, good housing, being willing to discuss the problems that come up between husband and wife, and having some time for one's own friends and for personal hobbies / activities.

It should be noted that in terms of the age of the female respondents, the younger tend to prefer the following: living apart from the in-laws, quality sex life, the division of housework between partners, free time and friends (living apart from the in-laws: p18-31=57.5%; p32-46=51.5%; p47-60=47.2%; p61+=29.3%;  $\chi^2=26.824$ ; df=6; p<0.01; happy sexual relationship: p18-31=91.8%; p32-46=89.5%; p47-60=80.4%; p61+=68.8%;  $\chi^2=34.861$ ; df=6; p<0.01; sharing household chores: p18-31=72.4%; p32-46=53.0%; p47-60=55.0%; p61+=57.0%;  $\chi^2=20.043$ ; df=6; p<0.01; having some time for one's own friends and for personal hobbies/activities: p18-31=79.4%; p32-46=59.8%; p47-60=63.8%; p61+=64.4%;  $\chi^2=21.454$ ; df=6; p<0.01). The level of education had no significant impact on the priorities of the young female respondents.

Faithfulness, a decent income, good living conditions, a life apart from parents, a fulfilling sexual relationship, the willingness of partners to talk about problems, and free time are more important to Christian female respondents. Finally, free time and friends are more important to young unmarried female respondents. Data is shown in **Table 2**.

**Table 2.** Importance of certain life practices for a successful marriage among young Christian and Muslim women.

	Christians (%)	Muslims (%)	Statistically significant difference
Faithfulness	97.5%	90.3%	$p < 0.05$ ; $df = 2$ ; $\chi^2 = 6.489$
An adequate income	90.6%	58.1%	$p < 0.01$ ; $df = 2$ ; $\chi^2 = 24.6$
Good housing	85.5%	48.4%	$p < 0.01$ ; $df = 2$ ; $\chi^2 = 28.325$
Living apart from your in-laws	62.4%	35.5%	$p < 0.01$ ; $df = 2$ ; $\chi^2 = 17.108$
Happy sexual relationship	94.9%	75.0%	$p < 0.01$ ; $df = 2$ ; $\chi^2 = 12.655$
Being willing to discuss the problems that come up between husband and wife	91.8%	74.2%	$p < 0.01$ ; $df = 2$ ; $\chi^2 = 18.026$
Having some time for one's own friends and for personal hobbies/activities	82.1%	64.5%	$p < 0.01$ ; $df = 2$ ; $\chi^2 = 17.333$

When asked whether "a child needs a home with both a father and a mother to grow up happily", 88.8% of the respondents agreed with that reasoning. There were no noticeable differentiations in the answers concerning the conducted comparative analysis according the sex of the young respondents ( $p_m = 87.7\%$ ). Furthermore, the level of education of the young female respondents did not show to have an impact on their views on this issue.

The elderly respondents were more likely to agree that children need a home, a father and mother to grow up happily ( $p_{18-31} = 88.8\%$ ;  $p_{32-46} = 95.1\%$ ;  $p_{47-60} = 94.3\%$ ;  $p_{61+} = 100.0\%$ ;  $\chi^2 = 15.871$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Also, Christian women agreed with this view more than Muslim women ( $p_{ch} = 93.7\%$ ;  $p_{mus} = 74.1\%$ ;  $\chi^2 = 10.612$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Married female respondents agreed more strongly with the presented position than the respondents that have never been married ( $p_{mar} = 98.2\%$ ;  $p_{sing} = 84.7\%$ ;  $\chi^2 = 7.219$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $cc\chi^2 = 5.940$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Asked whether they considered that "a woman has to have children to be fulfilled or this is not necessary", most of the young female respondents ( $p_f = 78.5\%$ ) supported the view that the feeling of fulfillment among women is related to having offspring. The female respondents were more accepting of this position than male respondents ( $p_m = 68.0\%$ ) of the

same age ( $df=1$ ;  $\chi^2=5.831$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). A similar, but more pronounced trend, is observed in the responses of young married female respondents, of which 89.3% expressed agreement with the previous statement ( $p_{mar}=89.3\%$ ;  $p_{sing}=74.1\%$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $\chi^2= 5.433$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The most adult group of female respondents agreed with the statement that the feeling of fulfillment among women is closely related to having children ( $p_{18-31}=78.5\%$ ;  $p_{32-46}=85.7\%$ ;  $p_{47-60}=84.9\%$ ;  $p_{61+}=90.7\%$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $\chi^2= 8.479$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

Regardless of age, religion and education, almost all women do not consider marriage to be an outdated institution. In this context, differences are noted among young unmarried women, which show lower level of agreement ( $p_{mar}=8.9\%$ ;  $p_{sing}=28.0\%$ ;  $\chi^2=8.269$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.01$ ;  $cc\chi^2=7.205$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

Young male respondents aged 18 to 31 are also inclined towards accepting the view that marriage is not an outdated institution ( $p_m=80.2\%$  said that marriage is not an outdated institution).

The concept of being a single mother without a stable relationship with a man was more accepted by young female respondents as compared to young male respondents ( $p_m=44.6\%$ ;  $p_f=65.0\%$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $\chi^2= 22.712$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). Also, this option is more acceptable to youngest female respondents ( $p_{18-31}=65.0\%$ ;  $p_{32-46}=50.6\%$ ;  $p_{47-60}=48.4\%$ ;  $p_{61+}=41.1\%$ ;  $df=6$ ;  $\chi^2= 22.682$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). Women with secondary or higher education were more inclined to accept the possibility of such a choice ( $p_{prim}=30.8$ ;  $p_{secon}=70.2\%$ ;  $p_{high}=61.5\%$ ;  $df=4$ ;  $\chi^2= 10.613$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The marital status of the respondents did not seem to affect their stance on this issue. Greater propensity for this practice was shown in the responses by Christian women ( $p_{ch}=68.8\%$ ;  $p_{mus}=32.1\%$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $\chi^2= 22.193$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

The respondents were offered claims related to the attitudes towards certain aspects of marriage and family relationships, measured on a scale of one to five, ranging from full compliance to total rejection. The mean values of their responses showed some inconsistencies in terms of their being open or closed to the acceptance of the offered concepts. Namely, young female respondents agreed most with the claim that "people should decide for themselves whether to have children or not", while at the same time showing no great distance to the assertion that "it is a duty towards society to have children". Also, the attitude towards freedom of choice about producing an offspring was not accepted when it comes to the position of gay couples adopting children, or founding their own family. Although young women showed some degree of tolerance towards the possibility of partners living together without marriage, they did not reject the claim that

marriage or a long-lasting relationship is necessary for happiness (which is consistent with the high degree of acceptance of the claim that marriage is not an outdated institution).

The comparison of responses according to the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents showed differences in terms of gender, age, religion and marital status, while the education level did not appear to be a discriminatory factor.

The analysis of the responses of the participants of different sex showed an obvious tendency for men to agree much more strongly with the claims that: "a marriage or a long-term stable relationship is necessary to be happy" (Mm=2.46; Mf=2.71; df=455; t=2.239;  $p<0.05$ ) and that "it is a duty towards society to have children" (Mm=2.50; Mf=2.79; df=455; t= 2.837;  $p<0.01$ ). On the other hand, for young female respondents it was more acceptable that "it is alright for two people to live together without getting married" (Mm=2.49; Mf=2.27; df=462; t= 2.084;  $p<0.05$ ) and that "people should decide for themselves whether to have children or not" (Mm=1.67; Mf=1.49; df=464; t= 2.707;  $p<0.01$ ).

The age of the respondents indicated tendencies that could be considered expected if one accepts the stereotype that older women cultivate more traditional views on marriage and the family (as determined in some preliminary views on marriage, family and life in general). For example, young women agreed less with the statement that "a man has to have children in order to be fulfilled" (M18-31=2.20; M47-60=1.84; M61+=1.76; df=3; F= 7.365;  $p<0.01$ ) and the view that "a marriage or a long-term stable relationship is necessary to be happy" (M18-31=2.71; M32-46=2.31; M47-60=2.35; M61+=2.22; df=3; F=5.843;  $p<0.01$ ), and that for them it was more acceptable that "it is alright for two people to live together without getting married" (M18-31=2.27; M47-60=2.75; M61+=3.05; df=3; F= 9.968;  $p<0.01$ ). Older female respondents generally agreed more with the statement that "it is a duty towards society to have children" (M18-31=2.79; M47-60=2.36; M61+=2.23; df=3; F= 7.365;  $p<0.01$ ). What appeared as a common commitment for almost all age groups was the relatively high degree of disagreement with the possibility for homosexual couples to adopt children (M18-31=3.94; M32-46=4.12; M47-60=4.04; M61+=4.56) .

The concepts of two people living together without getting married (Mch=2.19; Mmus=2.97; df=191; t= 3.742;  $p<0.01$ ) and for people to decide on their own whether to have children (Mch=1.45; Mmus=1.68; df=194; t= 1.987;  $p<0.05$ ) was more acceptable for young female Christian respondents. Predictably, for married respondents the view that men must have children to feel fulfilled (Mmar=1.71; Msing=2.39; df=193; t= 4.396;  $p<0.01$ ) was more acceptable as well as that marriage or a long-term relationship is necessary to be happy (Mmar=2.18; Msing=2.89; df=197; t= 3.681;  $p<0.01$ ).

One of the questions in the block related to family and marriage provided an opportunity to examine the attitudes of the respondents towards specific contemporary challenges facing the family in the context of professional engagement and the opportunity for self-realization of women and changes in marital roles. Respondents' attitudes were measured on a scale of one to four, from full compliance to absolute rejection of the proposed position. Young female respondents reached greater agreement on the following positions: that "both husband and wife should contribute to household income" ( $M_f=1.33$ ); that "men should take as much responsibility as women for the home and children" ( $M_f=1.40$ ); and that "having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person" ( $M_f=1.50$ ).

In this context, the comparative analysis of the responses according to the sex of the respondents showed statistically significant differences. Young female respondents expressed greater agreement than their male peers in terms of the following attitudes: "a working mother can establish just as warm and secure relationship with her children as a mother who doesn't work" ( $M_m=1.92$ ;  $M_f=1.75$ ;  $df=421$ ;  $t=2.242$ ;  $p<0.05$ ); "having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person" ( $M_m=1.84$ ;  $M_f=1.50$ ;  $df=442$ ;  $t=4.740$ ;  $p<0.01$ ); and "both husband and wife should contribute to household income" ( $M_m=1.56$ ;  $M_f=1.33$ ;  $df=462$ ;  $t=3.764$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). Young men, on the other hand, expressed greater agreement with the view that "a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works" ( $M_m=2.50$ ;  $M_f=2.76$ ;  $df=410$ ;  $t=3.147$ ;  $p<0.01$ ), that "a job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children" ( $M_m=2.17$ ;  $M_f=2.36$ ;  $df=382$ ;  $t=2.250$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and that "being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay" ( $M_m=2.38$ ;  $M_f=2.63$ ;  $df=362$ ;  $t=2.613$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

When it comes to the age of the female respondents, differences can be observed in terms of the following attitudes: young female respondents were more inclined to agree that "a working mother can establish just as warm and secure relationship with her children as a mother who doesn't work" ( $M_{18-31}=1.75$ ;  $M_{32-46}=2.03$ ;  $M_{47-60}=1.84$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $F= 3.729$ ;  $p<0.05$ ); that "having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person" ( $M_{18-31}=1.50$ ;  $M_{47-60}=1.69$ ;  $M_{61+}=1.73$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $F= 3.335$ ;  $p<0.05$ ); that "both husband and wife should contribute to household income" ( $M_{18-31}=1.33$ ;  $M_{61+}=1.59$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $F= 5.362$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and that "in general, fathers are as well suited to look after their children as mothers" ( $M_{18-31}=1.61$ ;  $M_{32-46}=1.94$ ;  $M_{47-60}=1.88$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $F=5.787$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). What was obvious in the analysis of the responses of the other age clusters (aged over 32), was the tendency to agree more with the view that regardless of work, a woman's highest priority are the home

and the family (M18-31=2.36; M32-46=2.03; M47-60=2.02; M61+=1.98; df=3; F= 7.575;  $p<0.01$ ).

The overview of the responses differentiated by the educational level of the young female respondents showed few statistically significant differences. The female respondents with lower levels of education agreed to a greater extent with the following attitudes: that "a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works" (Mprim=2.15; Msecon=2.75; Mhigh=2.90; df=2; F=4.001;  $p<0.50$ ); that "being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay" (Mprim=2.00; Msecon=2.63; Mhigh=2.86; df=2; F=5.119;  $p<0.01$ ); that "both husband and wife should contribute to household income" (Msecon=1.28; Mhigh=1.51; df=2; F=3.574;  $p<0.30$ ) and that "in general, fathers are as well suited to look after their children as mothers" (Msecon=1.49; Mhigh=1.98; df=2; F=6.829;  $p<0.01$ ). It is important to note that the structure of employed young women is dominated by those with the highest education level, which might have had an effect on the responses.

The only difference between Christian and Muslim female respondents is that Christians agreed more that employment was the best way for a woman to feel independent (Mch=1.45; Mmus=1.77; df=192;  $t=2.410$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

Young married respondents agreed more with several attitudes: that children are neglected if the mother is employed (Mmar=2.47; Msing=2.88; df=186;  $t= 2.938$ ;  $p<0.01$ ); that the house and the children are a priority for most women (Mmar=1.98; Msing=2.52; df=177;  $t= 3.776$ ;  $p<0.01$ ), and that the status of housewife is as fulfilling to women as employment (Mmar=2.04; Msing=2.87; df=174;  $t= 6.142$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

Unemployed young women agreed to a larger extent that employment is the best way for a woman to be independent (Memployed=1.73; Munemployed=1.43; df=198;  $t= 2.667$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

The attitude of the female respondents towards freedom of choice was examined with the question under which circumstances would they approved or disapprove of abortion. Out of the overall sample of young women, 70.2% approved of abortion when the woman is not married. More than a half of the same population approved of abortion when the couple does not want to have more children ( $p_f = 64.9\%$ ).

If we compare these answers to those of young men we can conclude that men ( $p_m=60.2\%$ ) approved of abortion less in the case when a woman is not married (df=1; F=0.104;  $p<0.05$ ).

Young women, when compared to all other age groups of female respondents, demonstrated a greater approval of abortion in both mentioned cases (if the woman is not

married: p18-31=70.2%; p32-46=59.2%; p47-60=54.7%; p61+=41.1%; df=3;  $\chi^2= 22.793$ ;  $p<0.01$ ; if a married couple does not want to have any more children: p18-31=64.9%; p32-46=63.1%; p47-60=59.9%; p61+=40.0%; df=3;  $\chi^2= 16.499$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). The level of education did not prove to be a discriminating factor for the attitudes of the young female respondents.

Christian respondents approved of abortion more in both cases (if the woman is not married: pch=72.4%; pmus=50%; df=1;  $\chi^2= 5.520$ ;  $p<0.05$ ; if a married couple does not want to have any more children: pch=70.2%; pmus=41.4%; df=1;  $\chi^2= 8.948$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

Young female respondents indicated low level of interest in politics (the level of interest was measured on a scale of four, 1 meaning "very interested", and 4 "not interested at all"). Statistically significant differences were noted only considering the level of education ( $M_{prim}=3.43$ ;  $M_{high}=2.65$ ; df=2;  $F=4.560$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) and the sex ( $M_m=2.51$ ;  $M_f=2.92$ ; df=462;  $t=4.543$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). However, it is important to note that all respondents in the sample showed relatively low interest in politics.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 stands for "never" and 10 stands for "always") the respondents were given the opportunity to assess the validity of certain life practices, lifestyles and behaviors. The responses of the young respondents showed that they justified highly the following practices: artificial insemination or in-vitro fertilization ( $M_f=7.61$ ), divorce ( $M_f=6.07$ ) and abortion ( $M_f=5.21$ ). On the other hand, they justified the least the following behaviors: "taking and driving away a car belonging to someone else (joyriding)" ( $M_f=1.71$ ), "claiming state benefits which you are not entitled to" ( $M_f=1.78$ ), "cheating on tax if you have the chance" ( $M_f=1.82$ ) and "avoiding a fare on public transport" ( $M_f=1.82$ ).

When the data obtained was compared in terms of some socio-demographic characteristics we identified some statistically significant differences (**Table 3**):



**Table 3.** Assessment of the validity of certain life practices, lifestyles and behaviors among male and female respondents aged 18-31

	Males aged 18-31 (M)	Females aged 18-31 (M)	Statistically significant difference
Cheating on tax if you have the chance	2.35	1.82	df=456; t=2.428; p<0.05
Taking the drug marijuana or hashish	2.43	1.88	df=453; t=2.517; p<0.05
Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties	2.26	1.83	df=458; t=1.985; p<0.05
Having casual sex	5.31	3.95	df=449; t=4.279; p<0.01
Avoiding a fare on public transport	2.59	1.82	df=465; t=3.678; p<0.01
Prostitution	2.92	2.18	df=451; t=2.878; p<0.01
Genetic manipulation of food stuffs	3.08	2.22	df=427; t=3.370; p<0.01

The analysis of the data according to the level of education of the young female respondents indicated that, surprisingly, the educational level is proportional to the justification of genetic manipulation of food products (Mprim=1.31; Msecon=2.02; Mhigh=2.84; df=2; F=3.915; p<0.05).

The results of the data obtained of the compared answers of Christian and Muslim respondents are shown in **Table 4**.

**Table 4.** Assessment of the validity of certain life practices, lifestyles and behaviors among Christian and Muslim respondents

	Christians (M)	Muslims (M)	Statistically significant difference
Claiming state benefits which you are not entitled to	1.48	3.23	df=188; t=5.228; p<0.01
Cheating on tax if you have the chance	1.46	3.65	df=191; t=6.770; p<0.01
Taking and driving away a car belonging to someone else (joyriding)	1.45	2.90	df=182; t=4.004; p<0.01
Lying in your own interest	2.74	4.14	df=190; t=2.561; p<0.05
Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties	1.61	2.70	df=190; t=2.982; p<0.01
Abortion	5.35	3.70	df=184; t=2.325; p<0.05
Divorce	6.28	4.57	df=192; t=2.685; p<0.01
Euthanasia (terminating the life of the incurably sick)	3.71	2.29	df=185; t=2.438; p<0.05
Avoiding a fare on public transport	1.59	3.06	df=193; t=4.594; p<0.01
Genetic manipulation of food stuffs	2.05	3.36	df=173; t=2.864; p<0.01
Artificial insemination or in-vitro fertilization	8.12	5.00	df=184; t=4.915; p<0.01

### Conclusion

The obtained results did not point to any coherent cultural models concerning the value system of young women in the Republic of Macedonia, but they also did not exclude completely the possibility of discovering some indicators in the process of evaluation of things. These indicators, for example, revealed certain inconsistencies, and on the other hand some stereotypes that are expected in the process of building attitudes and behaviors, especially given the lack of differentiation in comparison to the perceived general trends derived from the analysis of the overall sample. It can be assumed that these conditions

only reflect the general mood of the youth of the transitional generation, especially when it comes to women. The results of the analysis show that young women in the Republic of Macedonia identify themselves as quite happy (although self-perception to greater happiness increases with the increase of the level of education), they feel they have relatively high control over their lives and are relatively satisfied with their lives. On the other hand, the highest priority in their lives holds the family, followed by their friends and acquaintances and leisure time, things generally more related to the private sphere. Less important for them are work, religion and politics - institutions seen as part of the public sphere and belonging to certain collectives (although in modern democratic societies religion is also considered as part of the private sphere). This is probably due to a more traditional approach towards religion which is characteristic of Macedonian society, especially in the context of linking religious and ethnic identity. Considering that the target group of the survey shows a high degree of distrust towards others, as well as social distance towards certain groups of people, it could be assumed again that young women are encapsulated in their private sphere, whereas they see the social sphere as a place in which they do not feel confident. The relationship towards their work, which young respondents recognized as an area of self-fulfillment, and which belongs to the public sphere, and also their relationship to certain family values, no matter how important they may be to them in a more traditional sense (in which they still see themselves as persons with a right to individual choice), induces a possible self-consciousness about the role of women in contemporary Macedonian society.

The critical attitude towards the social practice (public sphere) is obvious, taking in regard the relatively low level of trust in the institutions of the system, a degree of trust that corresponds to the answers of the general sample.

In terms of a more reliable analysis of possible inconsistency in the responses of the participants in the survey, several of their views regarding the acceptance or rejection of models of governance, such as attitudes towards the development of governance in our country, were tested. In the light of these issues the participants showed a tendency to recognize the ideal, typical values of democracy, but also the inconsistent, objective social indicators that democracy generates on a general level in the Macedonian political system (Authors, year of publication).

Certain types of collective identity as the religious affiliation and age, which are related to the experience of the young female respondents or the relation towards experience and various life practices, proved to be a discriminatory factor in many

circumstances (generational gap, distinctiveness of cultural identity). Our expectations that the level of education of young women in Macedonia should be an influential agent in the design of their value preferences have not been confirmed for most of the questions.

Religious affiliation of young women who took part in the survey shows distinction in views, especially when it comes to social distance towards certain categories of people. In this context we can talk about slightly more pronounced xenophobia among young Muslim women. Generally speaking, when it comes to the degree of expressed social distance towards certain social groups, the responses of the young women do not differ significantly from the general trends in terms of the responses of the entire sample. The responses of the young women and men are not very different except on certain issues, given that they are part of a population placed in the same social context. Differences generally relate to matters of marriage and family life, where young men demonstrated more traditional views about these institutions.

These important features of the value profile of the young Macedonian woman only confirms the general picture of the value vacuum in a society that has recently come out of one model of socio-cultural and values system and now tends to build another one. There, the lost sense of value preferences produced coexistence of often incompatible values such as the hardening traditionalism, at the one hand, and a postmodern condition of comfort, but also instability, on the other.

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