

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Master Thesis

International Students' Values in Imaginations of a Desired Future

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January 2019

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Abstract

Via narrating people can establish who they are, what they value in life or imagine who they want to become, forming a narrative identity. Contrary to exploring narratives about past events, future narratives offer the possibility to get to the realm of possible selves, thus, who we might become in the future. Analysing such possible enables to examine values of an individual. Such values, however, are embedded and evaluated in a sociocultural context. In order to analyse an individual's values and the influences a sociocultural environment might have on an individual the circular continuum theory by Schwartz was adopted. According to the model the higher order values self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement and openness to change vs. conservational form two basic conflicts due to their contrasting motivations. To analyse what values individuals in an intercultural environment prioritized, the current study adopted the instrument of narrative future letters with millennial students as participants. Within the sample a strong aspiration for openness to change values came to the fore. This was followed by the values self-enhancement and self-transcendence. Conversational values were valued least frequently. Moreover, four different patterns could be found, indicating the conflicting potential of the four higher order values. However, it appeared that the millennial students imagined different manners to sidestep such conflicts, implementing opposing values in their possible behaviour. Also, it came to the fore, that conflicts between values appeared which theoretically have compatible motivations. This calls into question in how far Schwartz's theory can be adapted in order to explain these findings.

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1. Introduction

Via narrative futuring, it is possible to understand how individuals imagine their future. Based on future imaginations, people create possible-selves. Such possible selves are developed by present day values and are influenced by the immediate sociocultural environment. Values are elementary to produce possible-selves. They are mental portrayals of our basic motivations and serve as standards to represent what we weigh as important and desirable. In 1992, Schwartz introduced the circular continuum model, with the goal to identify a universal set of values and states that people from different countries even have a similar notion about values and their appointed importance. This notion may be a consequence of globalisation, which affected an interplay of societal viewpoint and individual values. As a result, also cultural values may change. Under the aspect of globalisation, the current study uses narrative futuring within a sample of international students to explore values of the current self and draw interferences about the sociocultural setting.

1.1 Narratives

Narrating a story is an essential and unique part of human life (Lieblich, Zilber & Tuval-Mashiach, 2008). By developing a story about oneself and one's life, people can find a way to make meaning of their life (Taylor, 1989). This happens in the greater sense of understanding their history and the decisions based upon their past experiences. Looking back on one's life enables the storyteller to take authorship, integrating and accepting even negative events, to explain the personal development (Westerhof & Bohlmeijer, 2014). Ultimately, via narrating, people can establish who they are, what they value in life or imagine who they may want to become, forming a narrative identity (Sools, Triliva & Filippas, 2017).

Consequently, it can be argued that stories about oneself or one's life world are based on reminiscence and are influenced by past experiences. However, Abraham Maslow (1968) argues that "man has his future within him, dynamically active at this present moment" (p. 15). Thus telling, writing or sharing stories about oneself, might not solely be about past occurrences, but can also encompass imaginations about the future. According to Sools et al. (2017) the process of visualizing what is yet to come, can be compared to the process of recalling the past, as both processes are coloured by the interpretation of the present self. While the present self can take authorship about the interpretation of past events, occurrences in the past cannot be changed. Whereas in the future, what will happen is not cast in stone as it is still to come. It is "by definition the domain of the possible, the not present and the 'not yet'" (Sools, Tromp, Mooren, 2015, p. 351).

Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that the contemplation about what might happen in the future and who we might become in the future, our so-called possible-self, makes our present sense of the future dynamic. The thought about who we could become, either a feared or a desired possible-self can drive our current behaviour. It can motivate us to move in a designated direction to either prevent a feared future or to invest in behaviour which could possibly bring us closer to a sought-after future. Besides encouraging one to adjust its behaviour in favour of the future, possible-selves also serve another purpose. Possible-selves can have an evaluative function. According to Markus and Nurius (1986), current behaviour, occurrences, successes or failures are not evaluated isolated. Such an evaluation is coloured based on an individual's aspiration of what they hope or fear in the future. Thus, the student, who dreams of becoming a doctor one day, might evaluate a bad grade in biology quite differently than a student with a different possible-self in mind. While one failure or success might not be of any significance for one individual, the interpretation of the event might differ for someone else, based on the evaluative context the possible-self creates. Moreover, the evaluative function between the possible-self and the current self is of a reciprocal nature. Not only has the imagination of the possible-self its evaluative influence on the current self, but also, is the creation of the possible self-determined by the values of the current self (Dunkel & Kerpelman, 2006, Sools, Triliva, Fragkiadaki, Tzanakis, 2017). However, this set of human values is not simply created completely autonomously. The whole formation of values is rather embedded and evaluated in a sociocultural context, provided by the media or the current social surroundings (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Sools et al. 2017).

Exploring narratives about possible-selves, also called narrative futuring, facilitates to shed light on how individuals make sense of their lives. It paves the way to analyse motivators of behaviour which in turn are shaped by cultural settings (Bhatia, 2011).

1.2 Values

Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that the contemplation about our future-selves drives and helps us to evaluate our current behaviour. By analysing possible-selves, this motivational and evaluative function can be made explicit. But on what premises is such a hoped or feared future built upon? According to Schwartz (1992) values predict our behaviour, they are mental portrayals of our elementary motivations and serve as standards or guidelines, on which an individual socially justifies decisions and behaviour. Moreover, values are considered to be intrinsically positive, representing what individuals weigh as crucial and worthy (Roccas & Sagiv, 2017). Contrary to goals, norms or attitudes, values are abstract, relatively constant over time and situations (Kluckhohn 1951; Rokeach 1973; Schwartz 1992).

1.2.1 Values according to Schwartz

In 1992, Schwartz first introduced the Circular Continuum of Values theory, with the goal to identify a universal set of values recognizable in all different societies (Schwartz, 2012). The Circular Continuum of Values soon became the dominant theory in the research area, due to its replicable results across different cultural samples (Davidov, Schmidt & Schwartz, 2008; Döring, Blauensteiner, Aryus, Drögekamp, & Bilsky, 2010; Lee, Soutar, & Louviere, 2008; Rohan 2000). According to Schwartz et al. (1992; 2012), for each individual, values vary in importance. The more a value is considered important, the more one is inclined to behave according to such value and achieve goals which represent it. Differing in importance is an essential part of the decision-making process as values can either be compatible, incompatible or insignificant to each other. To elaborate, Schwartz (1992) developed a circular model of values which enables to distinguish between the different relationships (see Figure 1).

The upper half of the outermost circle gives an overview of the values which promote growth and self-expansion, which are more likely to be prioritized when a person is free of fear. The lower side of the outermost circle bundles the values which are sought after in case of threat and fear to protect the self. The second circle marks values which are either focused on the self, a personal focus, or on others or established organisations, a social focus. Further, the model differentiates within these four higher-order values more specific value bundles, which are mapped in the third circle. The groups are self-enhancement, self-transcendence, openness to change and conservation. Self-enhancement defined by Schwartz (1992) centres self-interest and control over people and resources, as well as gaining and showing competence according to social standards and achieving success. Self-transcendence stands for accepting, tolerating, caring and being concerned about the well-being of either people that are close (in-group) or regardless to which group they belong to (out-group). Openness to change bundles values that implicate the enthusiasm for novelty, actions and new experiences. Contrary to such values, conservation values are directed at keeping traditions or the status quo, self-restriction and order. Based on the respective motivations linked to these values, Schwartz (1992)

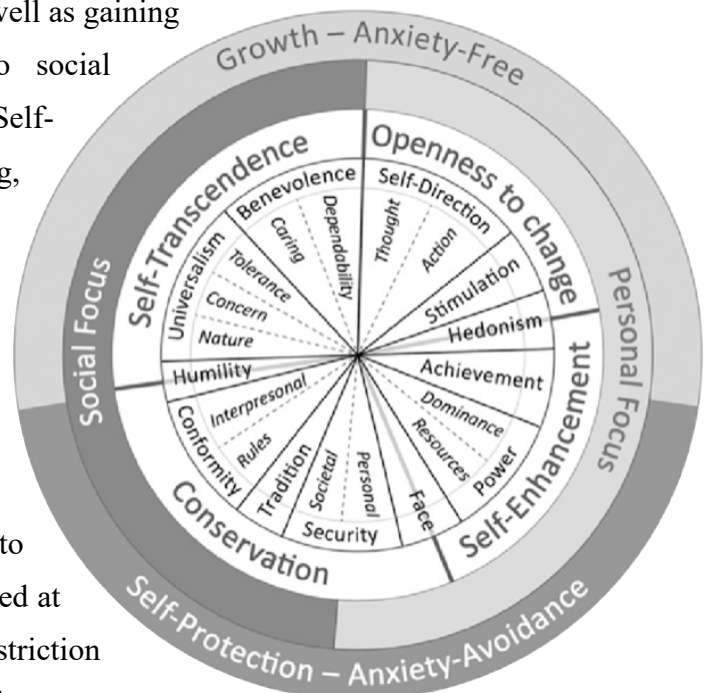


Figure 1. Circular Continuum Model (Schwartz et al., 2012).

postulates that two basic conflicts emerge. The first conflict arises between the higher order value conservation and openness to change. The second conflict exists between the higher order value self-transcendence and self-enhancement. In the centre, the 19 basic values can be found. They are organized according to their relationship to the other values.

1.2.2 Culture in a globalized world

According to Schwartz et al.'s research (1992; 2012), people from all around the world define the basic values in the same way. Based on value ratings Schwartz and Bardi (2001) stress, that people from different countries even have a similar notion about the importance of the different values, thus, correspond about what values are most or least crucial. However, research also indicates that societal structures have its influence on the individual emphasis on values (Cohen 2001; Gelfand et al. 2011; Inglehart 1997; Roccas & Sagiv, 2017; Thornhill & Fincher 2014). Consequently, cultural values, which are common concepts of what is evaluated as good, righteous, and desirable in a society can be identified (Williams, 1970). According to research, it is therefore possible to categorize different societies based on their cultural values (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Sagiv, 2011).

One of the most popular and widely used categorization of countries due to their cultural values is based on Hofstede's (1980; 2001) influential work on collectivism and individualism (Heinke & Louis, 2009). While individualistic values such as power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation and self-direction are most prominent in western countries, such as France or the USA, collectivistic values such as benevolence, tradition and conformity are classifying for Eastern (Asian) countries (Schwartz 1992; Hofstede 1980). Though the categorization of countries into individualistic and collectivistic is commonly made, more recent publications have criticised it frequently (Bhatia, 2018; Heinke & Louis, 2009; Lee, Beckert & Goodrich, 2010).

The division of countries in either one of the categories solely due to their geographical whereabouts has been questioned. Authors using such classifications disregard that globalisation has taken its turn in the past couple of years, where national borders have become less important and inhabitants of different countries are more connected to each other than ever, enabling an interplay of values (Lee et al. 2010). Cross-cultural research done by Oyserman, Coon and Kimmelmeier (2002) endorses such implications. Results show among others, that Asian and European Australian participants showed similar levels of individualism. Implicating that concepts of collectivism and individualism fail to make a consistent distinction between countries due to their location. Western and non-Western individuals may actually be less different than it is often captured within literature (Bhatia, 2018).

Bhatia (2018) even goes further and criticises not only the categorization of collectivism and individualism, but also calls the general concept of culture as bound to national boundaries into question. Due to globalisation, past known cultures have attained a mobility, brought on by transnational networks connecting different cultures and creating a disjunction of the traditional body of thought. Whereas information, values, and traditions are being derived from the local, the national as well as the international (Canclini, 1995). Therefore, Bhatia (2018) postulates a change of thinking within cultural psychology and promotes the concept of hybridization. Bhatia (2018) describes hybridization as a “sociocultural process in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects and practices” (p.16). With these former discrete structures, however, it is not referred to some initial pure form of culture. Rather, it is sought to illustrate the need to gain more insight at how hybridization comes into being and cultural heterogeneity is created (Canclini, 1995).

After all hybrid cultures can only develop, as culture is not some static concept, which is owned by an individual or group (Bhatia, 2018). Culture is dynamic, something that only comes into being when people talk about it to reinterpret the conditions of society. Cultural interpretations about identity therefore are shared through language and “culture is produced through the construction of stories about groups, their relationships, and their values and aspirations” (Bhatia, 2018, p.17). In turn, we become cultural beings, by sharing our stories with others and ultimately contribute to the formation of a heterogenic culture. Thus, by narrating, individuals become contributors in the formation or preservation of a culture. Also, they are influenced and shaped by narratives of the sociocultural environment (Freeman, 2014). Hearing other people’s stories creates a social imagination of the collective norms and expectations of the group one is situated in. Therefore, the own narrating process is coloured by the relation to the audience, the expectations that one decides to fulfil and the normative images that underlie these expectations (Taylor, 2004). Ultimately, exploring narratives takes us to the imaginary processes of creating an identity based on a set of values and helps to understand how cultural values can be subverted and created in exchange with others, resulting in hybrid cultures and identities.

1.3 Millennials born into a globalized world

As a result of globalisation, hybrid cultures as well as identities are formed (Arnett, 2002). Though globalisation is no new phenomenon, its current form is marked by its magnitude, rate and interconnectedness (Bhatia, 2018). Interconnectedness due to latest technologies as well as easy internet access, was especially influential for the millennial generation (born 1982-2002),

as they were the first who grew up with such digital access (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007; Valentine & Powers, 2013). The millennial generation has the technological ability and personal capacity to be part of a virtual worldwide community. It regards itself as an active constituent of this community up to a level, which has been unparalleled compared to the generations ahead. Therefore, Pendergast (2010) argues that “a global perspective is the demographic platform for building a profile” (p.9) of the millennial generation. Such a change in perspective can also be recorded by university activities. International projects have extremely increased in the past 20 years. Universities are offering increased study-abroad programs, where students are enabled to get in touch with other cultures. Also, an increased emphasis is laid on offering foreign language courses, imparting cross-cultural knowledge, as well as paving the way for international future perspectives (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Consequently, universities try fitting the need to complement the changes in societal and ecological structures. Changing societal structures become especially obvious if we observe the distribution of population. Already in 2002, about 34% of the millennials belonged to minority groups, thereby exceeding the average of 27% share of minorities in the whole American population (Morton, 2002). Within literature it is therefore argued, that the interplay of different societal viewpoints and values has developed a “global mix and match” culture (Morton, 2002, p.3). Which results in a change of values, attitudes and lifestyle, foremost in the young adult sector (Bhatia 2018, Heritage, Breen, Roberts, 2016).

According to research, values of the millennial generation differ substantially from older generations (e.g. Generation X, Baby Boomers) (Heritage et al., 2016). For example, results show that the millennial generation is more open to change, compared to older generations. Further, millennials appear to put greater emphasis on self-enhancement and freedom-related values, while achievement appears to be less valued than in earlier years (Heritage et al., 2015). Such differences described within literatures are manifold. Elam et al. (2007) therefore try to see the bigger picture and describe millennial students generally as confident and optimistic with regard to their future. Further, they emphasise that this generation might possess great potential for society. Within literature it is tried to categorise this generation. However, considering how different individuals imagine their future themselves, may be a crucial part to understand how ongoing changes may affect young adults to form an identity.

1.4 Aim of the current study

By imagining and telling a story about the future, people can make meaning of their life. Via studying these future narratives, it is possible to retrieve what kind of possible-self motivates a person and on what premises a person evaluates its present. Possible-selves are built upon an

individual's set of values. Though, these values do not come to the fore autonomously, they are rather embedded in a sociocultural context provided by the immediate surroundings. Therefore, analysing letters from the future is used as method to analyse values and possible influences of the sociocultural setting.

In order to get a grip on the concept of values the circular continuum model by Schwartz is introduced. For the current study, I therefore propose, to see narrative futuring not only as a possibility to get to the realm of personal values, but further, to see it as an opportunity to observe how an individual encounters possible conflicts between opposing values.

To observe the process of culture production via narrative futuring the group of international students was chosen for the current study. Today's student generation belongs to the millennial generation, born in a globalised world, who were the first to grow up with digital access. Research argues, that this generation differs substantially from earlier generations due to being exposed to an international context. Therefore, the current study aims to answer the following question:

Research question 1: What values can be found in international students' imaginations of a desired future?

2. Methods

2.1 Procedure

Participants of the study were selected based on convenience sampling. All the participants were taking part in the CuriousU Summer School in 2017. As a partaker of the summer school, all its members had the possibility to choose one of the 15 courses. Students who have elected the Health and Happiness course were offered a future imagination workshop. During the workshop they were familiarised with writing a future letter based on the methodology described in Sools, Mooren and Tromp's (2013) chapter in the handbook of positive psychology. In the beginning the participants were informed that the workshop would take about 1,5 hours. Following, the participants were introduced to write a future letter (see 2.3 Materials). For the writing process 30 minutes were scheduled. Afterwards the students had the possibility to share their thoughts experienced while writing the letter. Within the next part of the workshop the students were encouraged to read their individual letter out loud to the group. After that, there was room to exchange their impressions of sharing their future letter in front of others. In the end, a focus group discussion took place. There, the participants could discuss freely their experiences of the workshop and react upon letters written by the other participants. Further, they were invited to reflect upon possible cultural influences and differences when it comes to imagining one's future.

After the workshop, participants were debriefed about the aim of the research, i.e. compare cross-cultural future imaginations. It was chosen to debrief the participants in the end of the workshop, in order to ensure the writing of authentic letters. The participants were then given the choice whether they were willing to contribute a copy of their written future letters for the study. Further, they were informed that all their given information would be anonymized. Participants willing to take part in the research were handed out a written informed consent. Additionally, there was room for asking questions concerning the workshop as well as the research. After the workshop, the letters were anonymized by exchanging the names with pseudonyms.

2.2 Participants

In total 33 students volunteered to take part in the study. The participants came from 18 different countries (10 students from European countries, 18 from Asian countries, four students from South American countries) (see Appendix A). As there were no demographics provided, all further information about the participants had to be retrieved via the future letters itself. Some of the participants mentioned their first name in the letter. Based on the given name a gender could be assorted to some of the participants' future letter. Therefore, it could be concluded that

16 of the participants were women and 5 were men, for the 12 remaining participants it was not possible to designate a gender (see Appendix A). The age of the participants ranged approximately between 20 and 30 years. All of the participants were students, probably in their second or last year of their bachelor, as well as first year master's students.

2.3 Materials

To answer the research question future letters have been utilized according to Sools et al. (2013). Therefore, participants were instructed to write a personal letter about something that has not happened yet but might happen in the future. They were introduced to the concept of a letter from the future by imagining to enter a time machine. The time machine would enable one to travel into the future whereby they could decide how far they wanted to travel forward in time. Then, they were given the instruction to think of a place where they would want to be, for example, a specific room, the Netherlands, in a city, etc. Further, a set of positive wishes, changes and dreams should have become true in their life. Finally, they should describe retrospectively within their letter what brought them to this moment in their future or what helped them to realize their desired future. The participants then could choose whom the addressee should be whether their current self or somebody else, e.g. parents or friends.

2.4 Data-Analysis

To qualitatively analyse the letters and answer the research question step 1) and 2) were conducted. After reading and analysing the letters, I observed certain patterns how the different higher order values depicted within the letters. These patterns showed in some cases conflicting motivations which could be found within several letters. Therefore, two additional analysis steps (step 3) and 4)) were added.

1) Development of the coding scheme and coding

The coding scheme was developed in a top-down approach according to Schwartz's (2012) 19 basic values (see Appendix B). As a unit of analysis, I have chosen 1-3 sentences which together made up a theme. Most units of analysis were coded singly. Double coding was used, if the content of the units applied to more than one code or could not be broken down to a single value. For instance, values such as benevolence-caring and self-direction action were double coded as the unit of analysis related to having a job, where one has the freedom to determine one's own working day, which also had the advantage of being able to spend time with the family.

2) Identification and frequency of values

After coding each letter, I conducted a frequency analysis of the codes to get an overview of the distribution of each code. Then, the 19 basic values were assigned to their higher order values, self-enhancement, self-transcendence, openness to change or conservation and additionally to the more generic higher order values social- or personal focus, as well as growth-anxiety free or self-protection-anxiety avoidance. Consequently, I evaluated which higher order values were represented in each letter.

3) Typology of value patterns

After analysing which higher order values were represented in each letter, it came to the fore that some higher order values were in a conflicting or compatible relation to each other. Therefore, I analysed which patterns could be found based on the occurrence of the higher order values between the letters. Therefore, I sorted all the letters based on similar patterns and the appertaining conflicts. Overarching categories which represented the different patterns were created.

4) In-depth analysis of value conflicts

I have chosen to analyse each conflict based on one exemplary letter. The letters were analysed based on Murray and Sools (2014) storyline analysis. In order to grasp the different compartments of a story which together make up a meaningful whole, five elements and the breach of the story were identified and reviewed. Those five elements are summarized as the agent, setting, act or events, means or helpers and purpose. The agent refers to the protagonist of the story, as well as other important people which stand in relation to the protagonist. They are situated in a specific setting, what can be described in terms of its emotional or physical characteristics. The act describes the actions undertaken by the agent. Events describe something that happens to the agent, may it be positive or negative, without the agent's further ado. Means and helpers are factors which help the agent to reach a purpose. The purpose can be referred to as the desired goal of the story. Ultimately, the letters display a breach. The breach refers to an imbalance between elements, which the story logic tries to resolve.

3. Results

3.1 Identification and frequency of values

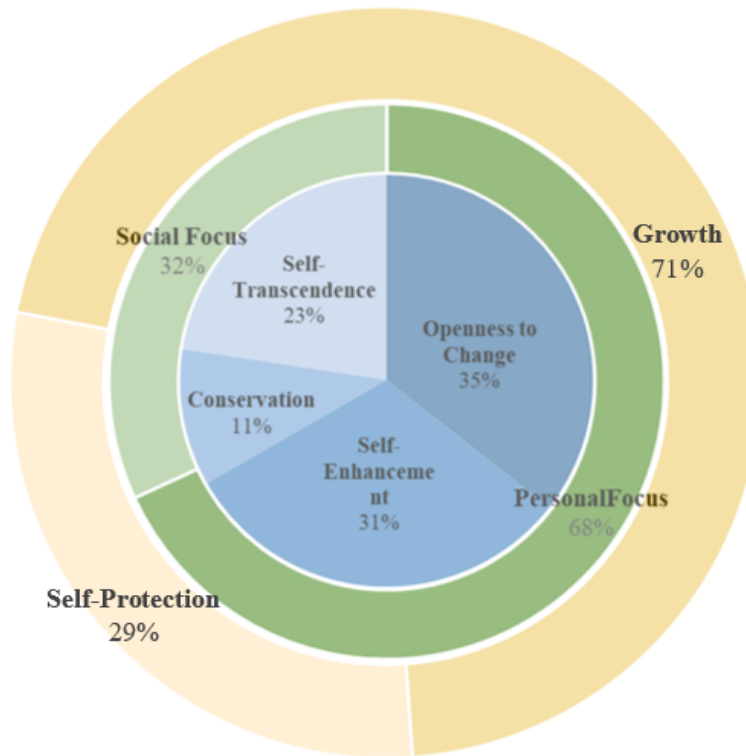


Figure 2. Overview of Values.

The 19 basic values could be assigned to the higher order values, openness to change, conservation, self-transcendence and self-enhancement (see Figure 1). Figure 2 represents the distribution and relative frequency of values within the current sample.

Being open to change was most frequently valued within the letters, in sum 63 times within 85% of the letters. Values such as having the freedom to think and act autonomously, appeared to be an often-shared ideal, just as novelty and excitement, which mark the higher order value. Being able to self-direct one's thoughts and action was mentioned as a value which brought new and fulfilling possibilities in the field of work and education. Also, freedom came to the fore in the sense of freeing oneself from anticipated social standards to pursue one's personal wishes.

Self-enhancement was imagined 55 times in a desired future by 85% of the participants. Within the sample, only one letter emphasised exercising control over people or resources, as well as maintaining one's public image and avoiding humiliation. Contrary, achievement was mentioned most frequently of all codes, in the sense of having success in university, increasing one's language repertoire, being happily married and having kids, taking over an important

function within an organisation or founding an own business. Further, investing in self-interest and being happy or feeling good, thus valuing hedonism, was either handed out as an advice from the possible self to the present self or was expressed due to the circumstances the possible self was situated in.

The higher order value self-transcendent was quoted 40 times in 70% of the letters. Though the category of self-transcendence includes in-group as well as out-group concern, transcending concerns about all people regardless of their group membership played a minor role. This becomes obvious as 30 out of 40 quotes from 16 out of 33 participants emphasized concern about the well-being of their in-group. For some participants the in-group consisted of family, friends or colleagues, while others imagined being a teacher and committing to the well-being of their students, but also being a trustworthy and reliable carer for their dogs was mentioned.

Conservational viewpoints, thus prioritizing to keep the status quo or traditional customs were least valued. In total, conservation was valued 19 times within 30% of the letters. Especially traditional values like returning back to the childhood home, being able to cook traditional food or religious traditions like getting married in church, were prominent. Further, being personally secure appeared to be important to some of the participants, such as having a safe home, stability and a daily routine.

More generally, 68% of the codes focussed on the personal, contrary to 32% of the quotes with a social focus. 32 participants focused in their letter on values which would profit the self and 25 mentioned values directed at benefitting others or the home country.

Further, all the participants and 71% of the codes related to growth and self-expansion. 30 of the participants' letters indicated a positive and optimistic outlook for the future, where one is free of fear. The participants indicated how they reached a point in their life, where they are happy, how far they have come and how they developed themselves, to become a better version of themselves. However, for three participants, growth and self-expansion values led not to a happy future. Rather, rapid climate changes and the evolved sustainable lifestyle as well as work-related success led to a constrained life in the future and a decreased well-being. One participant could not imagine his future self at all and remained describing the present self's struggles.

29% of the codes, mentioned by 28 participants, mirrored that the future success did not come by itself. Rather, the need to protect oneself, in the sense of avouching for oneself, was highlighted. Though most of the participants managed to create a desired state within their future imagination, it was mostly not a continuous condition. The way to reach such a desired 'end state' was evaluated as unpredictable. Most participants emphasized within their letters

that in the all through lived future, the circumstances were challenging and postulated to work hard in order to achieve a sought-after future.

3.2 Typology of value patterns

Within the sample four different patterns which mirror the relation between the higher order values could be found. The found patterns corresponded to the two basic conflicts of the higher order values self-enhancement versus self-transcendence and openness to change versus conservation. The conflicting motivations between conservational values and openness to change values depicted in two different manners. Therefore, two categories of letters arose, the traditional and the transformer. Also, the conflict between the two higher order values self-enhancement and self-transcendence was handled in two different ways. Accordingly, a third and fourth category came into picture, namely the achiever and the millennial.

Category 1 – The traditional

The first category contained four letters which are marked by their distinct conservational focus. The participants imagined a tranquil future with a stable personal environment.

“I’m going to tell you one story from my future and this story is about what I really wish. So, and I know that you will like it, because you share my feelings and you want the same thing to happen with you soon. So, it’s about coming back home. We arrived at home, in Russia, in our lovely south part of it.” (#26)

Also, meeting social standards appeared to be central, such as having children or being happily married.

“From this moment on, you, Ailsa become Mr.Li’s wife. No matter what happens, you two will stay together forever. That’s the most wonderful thing in the world.” (#19)

In the letters no remarks linked to openness to change values could be found. Therefore, the conflict between conservational and openness to change values did not explicitly come to the fore. Rather, it can be observed that conservational values were prioritized, leaving no place to be open for change. Besides, in all the letters a strong focus on self-transcendence came to the fore. Being close to family and friends or moving back to the home town to care for the parents was an often-mentioned goal.

“I come back to my native city and meet my dear parents (...) sit with my parents around the table at home and telling them about my trip (...) I help my parents because I really missed them.” (#26)

Ultimately, participants showed a strong social focus.

Category 2 – The transformer

Contrary to the first category, there were five letters, bridging the conflict between conservational and openness to change values. Though, both higher order values were not mentioned within the same situation. Some assigned the opposing values to different situations in time. For example, the present self is called for a more attentive behaviour in order to save the status quo, however the possible self also values progress and new technologies.

“I’m writing to you to make you aware of the actions you do. Later on you will see the consequences of it and definitely is not nice all of them. The weather has been changing dramatically, we do not have seasons, we need to have central places for farming and recreation. Now we have all a diet and we eat only what we need. We have artificial meat. I really miss the real one. We have cool thing. TV is not like the one you know, we have kind of projectors that show the movies on 3D with wonderful colours and cell phones are working in that sense too, today I bought one it’s amazing. Everything is connecting in this great thing, you can take a look of the world and it. It’s like 4D google maps. I know you will love it!”

(#31)

The conflict was also bridged by assorting contrasting values to different life domains. For example, within the field of work or sport activities being open to change was valued. Contrary to the private life, where a secure and stable home was sought after which corresponds to conservational values.

“Firstly, I worked with children but then decided to change my sphere and I found my own business. (...) Now I’m preparing to climb the Elbrus, as I always dream. (...) I know that you wonder about family. So, everything is good. (...) They are happy as the rest of the family. I have my own family and now my husband and I live in a cosy house with big windows and a lot of flowers. At weekends we go for a walk with our dog.” (#27)

Category 3 – The achiever

The third category consists of eight letters which all showed a high proportionally of self-enhancement statements. All the respondents wrote the letters to themselves, emphasizing the academical and work-related successes and achievements of their possible selves.

“It is at the end of my undergraduate college education. I finished my education in Beijing Normal University with a degree of environmental science and a minor degree in Psychology. In the meantime, I got the offer from the University of Sydney for a master’s program. (...) And I’m going to start a new academic journey.” (#20)

Similar to the first category, within these letters no expressions linked to self-transcendence were traceable. Therefore, the conflict between self-enhancement and self-transcendence can

in so far be observed, as the conflicting motivations appear to exclude self-transcendent aspirations.

Besides, all the letters showed a distinct focus on self-enhancement linked to openness to change. There was a strong tendency to encourage the present self to follow the own wishes and remarks that achievements in the future past were mainly owed to the courage to develop an own way of living and thinking. Respective of the individual letter these encouragements ranged from being self-compassionate to being strict.

“Don’t mind the others and just keep going, believe you are going to make it. Forgive yourself, be kind to you and respect your own ideas. Thanks to those mistakes from yesterday, you are going to be a better person tomorrow. Learn from them and be kind to yourself, don’t punish you too hard. You go girl!!” (#30)

Category 4 – The millennial

The fourth, and biggest category represents 16 letters. A distinct focus on the three higher order values self-enhancement, self-transcendence as well as openness to change was found. Participants of this category showed in different ways how the contrasting values self-transcendence and self-enhancement could be combined to make a narrative. Some of the participants with a distinct self-transcendence focus, appeared to aspire work-related success (basic value of self-enhancement) which were in a social field of work, e.g. being a teacher in high school, or more generically graduating with a master to start a career in order to help other people. Therefore, they found a way to live up to both contrasting values.

“Two years after graduation, now you are an English teacher in senior high school (...) They are all kind and warm students, but sometimes they may trouble you a lot. However, you really love them from the bottom of heart. (...) After class they may have problems in their life and ask you for help. You always try your best to make it for them. (...) You really enjoy your job although sometimes there is so much work for you that you cannot handle that, because there are a class of cute boys and girls growing up with your help.” (#16)

Others combined the two higher order values, as they imagined how their possible-selves would celebrate their achievements with their family and friends or have the means and possibilities thanks to work-related advancements to enjoy life with members of the in-group.

“Today it was such an amazing day. It was the university’s ceremony for the people who graduated and I was one of them. It’s finally time and I’m so happy about that. (...) All my family was there, even my aunt came from Thessaloniki with my twin cousins. I haven’t seen them for a while, so it was really nice that we gather all together (...) It was so nice that in that special day I got to be with people who love me, so we can all share the joy of my success.” (#3)

3.3 In-depth analysis of value conflicts

Schwartz (1992) defined two basic conflicts between the higher order values. These conflicts could be retrieved within the current study. It became obvious that a strong focus on conservational or self-enhancing values excluded any motivations to behave according to self-transcending or openness to change values. Some participants also created a future imagination where they handled these assumed conflicts with no apparent difficulties. Some participants bridged the conflict as they appointed different stages and appertaining values to their course of life. Other participants assigned contrasting values to different spheres of life. Thus, contrasting values were not sought after within the same moment and therefore could be resolved. However, some participants also mastered to incorporate contrasting values within one situation. As they imagined that self-enhancement within the field of work or education could be combined with their willingness to behave according to self-transcendence values (see Category 4).

However, it depicted that not only the two basic conflicts defined by Schwartz (1992) were retrievable. Rather, other conflicts emerged within the narratives which were not foreseen by the circular continuum model. Therefore, it was chosen for an in-depth analysis of two letters. The first letter depicts an explicit conflict between the higher order values as foreseen by Schwartz (1992). Contrary, the second letter represents different higher order values, which are assumed to be contrasting and should cause a conflict. However, the author of the letter manages to combine two conflicting values. Rather, a conflict is represented between higher order values which is not anticipated based on the theory.

Conflict 1 – The traditional (#7 Italy)

	June 2037	1
Dear Mum,		2
I'm writing to you from the little house on the Alps grandpa used to have when I was a		3
child. I finally bought it last week and I'm going to spend the whole summer over here.		4
The village has changed a lot from the last time I saw it.		5
They build a lot of modern houses; it is a little disappointing, even if it still feels in		6
harmony, and peaceful. And after all you still wake up every morning at ringing the		7
belltown, smelling the wooden walls and that fresh air we all used to love so much.		8
Unfortunately, I cannot see the shepherds and their sheeps and the dogs anymore. The		9
grass fields are visibly reduced indeed.		10
So, I think I'm gonna go up to the river, this afternoon to spend some time alone in the		11
wilderness, listening to the sounds of the water clashing against the rocks, and falling		12

down, down in the waterfall. As you probably know, the last few years have been so	13
busy and so full, that after being everywhere, it is so good to live – at least for a while	14
– nowhere.	15
	16
With love,	17
Antonio	

The agent of the story is Antonio who is writing to his mother. According to how he starts the letter ‘dear mum’ and how he closes the letter ‘with love’, it appears that he shares a close and trusted relationship to his mother. Further, Antonio and his mother both share similar feelings regarding the house in the alps as they “all used to love so much” the surrounding. It appears that Antonio values family life and being benevolent. Further, Antonio gives no further explicit information about his values. Still it comes to the fore, that Antonio appreciates the traditional. He visited the old home his grandpa “used to have”. In order to get the little house back in family-property again, it takes the author more than 20 years to be “finally” able to buy it. He appreciated the traditional village and may have wished to preserve the village as it was, which indicates values such as universalism and preservation of nature (l.5-9). Moreover, the protagonist can be distinguished as someone valuing security and stability in the personal environment. Which becomes visible within the last paragraph (l.13-14). Antonio describes that he can finally stand still. Contrary to previous years, where he may have invested in self-enhancement or academical success, his future self seeks to enjoy the peace and quiet.

The agent decides to go back to the village, where his grandfather used to own a house. He manages to buy the house, as it was not family property anymore. Further, he seeks to enjoy a whole summer in the village. In the last paragraph, he describes his plans about going to the waterfall, where he wants to spend some time alone. Different than the years before, Antonio’s future self chooses the silence and tranquil environment. Up to this point the agent in the letter has the control over his actions. However, it appears that various events happened which altered his surroundings. The little village has changed more than he had anticipated, a lot of modern houses were built, grass fields decreased, shepherds, sheep and dogs are nowhere to be found. Still, he emphasizes that these events could not change his experienced atmosphere of harmony and peacefulness.

The familiar emotional atmosphere linked to the house appears as an important part within the letter. The protagonist seeks to escape his life of the previous years. Therefore, the little house in the alps turns out as an important means. His memories of this place make the location to a place of refuge to flee his busy and stressful life. Though the protagonist distances

himself from these years ahead, nevertheless, they also may have provided the means to buy the house and to take a break for a whole summer.

Within the letter Antonio has made up a detailed image of his future 20 years ahead. He creates a vivid image of the “little house on the Alps”, by addressing visual, auditory and olfactory senses as well as an emotional environment. On the one side he describes the changed physical surroundings of the house, how the village has changed due to the construction of a lot of new “modern houses”, how the shepherds, sheep, dogs and grass fields had to give place to the modernization of the village. On the other side he continues with describing the remaining sensory perceptions he used to know such as the ringing of “the belltown, smelling the wooden walls and that fresh air”. Although he is disappointed about the latest changes in the village, the former emotional environment remains as it still feels in “harmony and peaceful”.

The scenery changes within the second paragraph. Antonio creates a new vivid image. Again, he describes different senses such as the visual, as well as the auditory. His future self decides to go “up to the river, this afternoon to spend some time alone in the wilderness, listening to the sounds of the water clashing against the rocks, and falling down, down in the waterfall.”. The scenery is melancholic almost meditative, where Antonio listens to the calming sound of water. The roughness of nature is described, as he is going in the “wilderness”, instead of a forest or a field, where the water “clashes” against rocks, and the great height of the waterfall is described. At least in the wilderness, farer away from the village, everything is still like it used to be, just as time has been standing still.

For Antonio the desired goal within his future imagination is returning to a place where he feels at home and to let time stand still. This desired end state contrasts to the prior years. Though, Antonio does not specify why exactly he wants to escape the current state, implicitly it appears as if these years left no time for what he truly values. Therefore, purpose of the letter appears to serve as a motivation to get through the subsequent years. With the intention to help his present-self visualise that the current situation is finite and buying the house will be a reward for his endeavours. This will give him the freedom to finally have enough time to enjoy doing nothing, in the sense of not having to achieve something, at least for one summer.

On the one side, Antonio remembers the ‘perfect’ village of his childhood, to which he returns after 20 years. There, he spent time together with his family and in unison with nature. Herewith, his strong aspiration for conservation and self-transcendence comes to the fore. On the other side Ricardo distances himself from prior years in his past future, where there was little time to spend on family or taking a break. It appears as if he had the obligation to live up to different expectations, such as possibly work or achieving success in general. This would indicate a behaviour according to self-enhancement or openness to change values. Though

values such as self-enhancement or openness to change are not explicitly mentioned, the protagonist conveys he engaged in a lifestyle in the past future, which did not meet what he desires. The protagonist appears to be torn between different behaviours. On the one side he may have felt obligated to fulfil different expectations (work-, success-related), which also provided him with the means to return to his place of refuge. On the other side he may truly value being together with his family and being at a place that feels like home. Ultimately, the future self of the author anticipates that he will engage in this “busy” lifestyle for about 20 years. Only thereafter he will decelerate his life and return to a place which is known to him. The conflict is balanced by appointing different time periods in order to go after them

In his letter he imagines that his possible self can finally make the time to return to his place of refuge. But now the breach within the story comes to the fore. Unfortunately, he must realize that time, not even in this village, stood still. The village has changed. He invested his means to get the house in family property again, but nevertheless the physical surrounding differentiates to what he memorized and not even his family is there.

Conflict 2 – The millennial (#9 Germany)

Dear Anna,	1
the time in South Africa is over now. The three years flew by. I am sad to leave our new	2
friends here, such as Elizabeth and her family, but I also look forward to go back to	3
Europe and be closely by my friends and family, over there it is amazing that I got the	4
Marie Curie scholarship. It was quite a lot of work to write it, next to the hard work for	5
my project. But it all paid out! I was so happy when I received the e-mail with the good	6
news and Frank and me celebrated it with a dinner in Joburg in this fancy restaurant	7
nearby Rosebanks.	8
Now the luggage is packed and our lovely apartment is empty. We gave away all our	9
furniture and everything that would not fit into the 4 bags, to friends and to the	10
orphanage in Orange Farm township. Last week, Elizabeth and Angelique organized a	11
goodbye party and everyone was there, they even invited Franks colleagues. Yesterday,	12
I went one more time through Emerald, next to the park, and saw 2 ostriches and a	13
whole family of roan antelopes, and of course a couple of mongooses, as well as the	14
pack of wolves at the zoo. I gave my bike to the guard, as promised. Our flight leaves	15
in two hours, Goodbye Africa, we will be back. I feel both sad and happy at the same	16
time, but the anticipation and excitement wins. So, enjoy the 2,5 years ahead of you and	17
all the beauty the African continent has to offer. I can tell you that many adventures lie	18
ahead of you and that the times with all the visitors will be great.	19

	20
Take care, everything will be fine!	21
Yours future self	22

The agent of the story is Anna, who is writing to herself. Although Anna does not explicitly describe herself, the reader gets an impression about what she values. Anna embodies herself as someone who cares about her family and friends, valuing benevolence (see l. 2-4; l.11-12). She describes herself as hardworking in order to achieve getting a scholarship, valuing achievement (see l. 2-4). Further, Anna personates herself as someone who is keen on experiencing new things, thus valuing stimulation (see l. 16-18). Also, her friend Frank is introduced, who may be Anna's boyfriend. Through the frequent and apparent inconsistent change from the first person "I" to the plural form "we" it is anticipated that such a "we" refers to Frank and Anna, rather than Anna's present and future self. Therefore, together with Anna Frank moved to South Africa and also goes back to Germany together with Anna. Moreover, is he there to celebrate Anna's successes. Through the frequent use of "we" it appears that Frank is very close to Anna, who shares a lot of things with her, may it be experiences, friends or materialistic goods.

In the course of the letter, Anna describes her various actions. She moved to South Africa (which already happened in the past of the present self) and decides to move back to Germany in favour of a scholarship. Anna invested a lot of effort and hard work for her scholarship. As a result, her efforts pay out and she receives the scholarship. Other actions are described such as celebrating her success and donating or gifting most of her possessions. As a result of her farewell her friends organise a party for her. In the end of the letter she describes how she takes a walk and as a positive consequence gets to see a lot of different animals. It becomes obvious how all of Anna's actions are of a positive nature. Anna has an optimistic point of view. In her imagination all her endurances result in positive consequences (e.g. her application results in her getting the scholarship, her farewell results in a party, a walk results in seeing a lot of animals).

In order to create such a desired state Anna mentions different means or helpers. In the beginning Elizabeth and her family are introduced. Though they made Anna's time in South Africa worthwhile, they also hinder her to leave South Africa easily. Frank appears as an important support, with whom she experienced different life transitions. Also, South Africa itself can be seen as a helper providing worthwhile experiences and adventures, which made her time something special. Moreover, the agent mentions people who come to visit, which

made the time even more enjoyable. On the other side, her friends and family in Europe as well as the scholarship appear as means for her to move back.

The setting of the letter is South Africa, a place near Rosebanks and Emerald, in a neighbourhood where one can find fancy restaurants. Anna lived in a lovely apartment, where there is a park with animals and a Zoo. Apart from the physical description of the setting, Anna describes it as beautiful, where a lot of things are possible.

The purpose of the letter may be to stimulate the present self to enjoy and make the best of her time in South Africa. Hereby, time appears to be a precious possession as the “three years flew by”. Getting the scholarship and being close to her family and friends in Europe comes to the fore as a desired goal. The intention behind the letter, therefore, may be to write a farewell letter and come to closure with her ending time in South Africa

Anna’s excerpt of her desired future is placed in a setting where different values collide. On the one side, Anna describes her time in South Africa as a wonderful time in her life. On the other side she also wants to return to Europe. A breach arises, as self-transcendent values (e.g. being close to her family and friends) and self-enhancement values (e.g. achieving success, by taking the scholarship) collide with her aspiration of being open to change (e.g. being adventurous and experiencing something new which she links to her time in South Africa). Further, we can see that the traditionally opposing values, self-enhancement and self-transcendence exist simultaneously. While self-transcending and self-enhancing values form a conflict with being open to change values, which is not assumed based on the circular continuum theory. Despite her struggle, Anna does not back off from making a decision. Ultimately, she decides to move back to Europe, along her wish for self-enhancement and also self-transcendence. Further, Anna does not ultimately expel one of the values which cause such inner struggles. Rather, she appears to decide which values are most important given a specific situation. Anna decides for her present self to engage in openness to change values, however she is also aware that the corresponding behaviour is finite and bound to a specific situation. She decides for herself that after her study she will engage in behaviour linked to different values. By appointing different times to satisfy these different values, Anna tries to overcome this challenge. Therefore, she stimulates the present self to live up to the desire to experience something new. So that her possible self can concentrate on different endeavours, thus, to be close to her family and investing in her personal career.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to explore what international students value within their imaginations of a desired future. The future narratives contained the value expression which correspond with

the values promoted by Schwartz' (1992) theory. The participants valued being open to change most frequently within the letters of the future, followed by self-enhancement and self-transcendence. Conservational values were valued least. Moreover, a personal focus was more prominent than a social focus. To grow personally and to self-expanse was also prioritized over protecting oneself and avoiding anxiety. After examining the students' values, it also appeared that certain patterns throughout the letters could be found. Within these patterns, the two basic conflicts foreseen by Schwartz' theory appear. Though, these conflicts appear within the narratives most of the participants appear to be in control of different manners to handle these conflicts. Moreover, other conflicts between higher order values come to the fore, which are not assumed based on the theory. As a first conclusion, I interpret these results as supporting to findings within literature regarding values of the millennial generation. As a second conclusion, I want to highlight, that findings of the current study only correspond partially to Schwartz' (1992) theory.

Discussion Students' values

Conservational values were least mentioned within the letters, which is in line with Heritage et al. (2016) findings, who argue that conservational values are little prominent within the millennial generation. Those who mentioned conservational values, aspired conventional aspects such as getting settled, having a family, a stable working routine, in a safe and secure environment. According to Pendergast (2010) valuing a good work-life balance is often prioritized within the millennial generation, which may be due to the fact that the generation was raised by a generation which was intensively engaged to be successful in work often at the expense of the family life. For some this may be a model they do not want to follow themselves. Further, they argue valuing security and a stable environment, appears to be no coincidence. According to Pendergast et al. (2010) and Bardi et al. (2009) mention that besides being the first digital natives, Millennials were also the first born into the "age of terrorism". Both, series of terrorist attacks, paired with the development to be digitally connected to a large number of people as well as prompt news of such events, can result in being subjectively confronted with an omnipresent uncontrollable threat. Although, this line of argument, might sound reasonable, only a small share of the students put emphasis on the need to be secure and safe, but not in the sense of possible terrorism.

Second least mentioned values were connected to being self-transcendent. Though benevolence played an important role for most of the students, universalism was merely mentioned. Contrary to Schwartz and Bardi (2001) whose findings indicate that consistently throughout different cultures, benevolence and universalism were most appreciated of all values

and therefore self-transcendence the prioritized higher order value. Moreover, Schwartz and Bardi (2001) conducted their research within samples of students of different nations, similar to the current study. However, Schwartz (2005) added that values are subject of change in order to adapt to new living conditions. In line with this Bardi et al. (2009) discovered a decrease in the importance of benevolence and universalism in samples of university students after their first year in university. Further, they found out that these values are negatively correlated to changes in individualistic values such as achievement or self-direction.

Given the case that achievement was the most prominent value within the sample, this might be a reason for the small aspiration of self-transcendent values in general. As Bardi et al. (2009) argue, self-transcendent behaviour such as protecting the environment or concerns about equality for all requires practical thoughts about giving up convenient behaviour to act according to these values. Such a process would ultimately necessitate to withhold self-enhancement values in favour of a focus on self-transcendence. Within the sample it became obvious that the participants rather sought to concentrate on behaviour which would bring them success. Instead of stereotyping the millennial generation as egoistic, Elam et al. (2007) and Pendergast et al. (2010) highlight to consider the nurture and educational system this generation was brought up in. They emphasise, that this generation grew up with high expectations placed on them by their parents and in school. During their childhood and teenage years, a lot of emphasis was laid on the urgency of education in order to become successful in the later life. Consequently, school days became busier, as children should not only enhance within the areas of school, but also in different extra-curricular fields. This notion can also be seen within the current study. Participants not only mentioned to increase within the academic area, but also wanted to enhance their language repertoire, have an important function or even founding an own business. Therefore, Elam et al. (2007) and Pendergast et al. (2010) conclude with characterizing this generation as pressured and hardworking. Similar to studies of Schwartz and Bardi (2001) other values belonging to self-enhancement such as power or face played little to no role.

Values connected to being open to change appeared to be most important for students. Similarly, to achievement, having the freedom to decide for themselves with paths to follow and which actions to take was considered as crucial. While Elam et al. (2007) interpose, that having accomplished primary and extra-curricular may had its downsides to leave little room to develop critical thinking or self-reflection. However, a great share of students recognized for themselves the need to critically reflect on what they evaluate as right and worthy for their personal future, independent of the expectations of others. Though, participants appear to value self-directed behaviour, this does not guarantee that they indeed engage in such a behaviour.

Mentioning self-direction as a value could also indicate, it may be something they would wish for themselves in the future, as it is not taken for granted in their current situation.

Discussion Value Conflicts

In the current study, participants thought of desired future imaginations. Within these future narratives conflicting values (e.g. self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence and conversation vs. openness to change) were found to co-exist and behaved upon. Though, Schwartz (1992) does not rule out that conflicting values can co-exist within an individual. Nevertheless, he suggests that conflicting values cannot be behaved upon simultaneously. It may be discussed why the current findings do not support Schwartz's assumption. Firstly, it is crucial to keep the different study designs in mind. Contrary to Schwartz questionnaire design, the current study employed a qualitative design, asking explicitly for the imagination of a desired future. Therefore, some of the participants may have imagined a desired state which offers the circumstances to adapt behaviour which satisfies opposing value. Whether or not the future will grant such circumstances is impossible to answer. Moreover, Bardi et al. (2008) argue, that values with opposing motivations may lead to an unpleasant internal conflict due to challenges in judgement or decision-making processes. Therefore, a decrease of importance of one of the values to avert such challenges may be the consequence. As the participants were asked to think of a desired future, it is likely that the imaginary process did not involve the anticipation of possible challenges in a decision-making process.

Secondly, other participants also managed to bridge the conflict as they often did not apply conflicting values in the exact same situation (e.g. work life and private life) or appointed different periods in life for each value. This shows us that the participants imagined that they could differentiate their values in the future based on the given situation. If this is also the case for their actual current behaviour cannot be answered on behalf of this study. The participants merely showed the imaginary capacity to do so. Still, it raises the question if values are as stable over time and situations as research suggests or if an individual encompasses the capacity to shift the order of value priority in a given situation (Roccas & Sagiv, 2017; Schwartz, 1992). Though, Bardi et al. (2009) acknowledge that values can be subject to change during childhood and adolescence in order to live up to opportunities in their environment. They also add that the actual circumstances and processes for a change in values received little attention in research (Bardi et al., 2009). To analyse in how far these imaginary processes are in concordance with a factual change of value prioritisation across time and situations, further research is needed.

Besides the two basic conflicts, it also appeared that values with assumed compatible motivations manifested as conflicts within the narratives (e.g. openness to change and self-

enhancement). This finding stands in contrast to Schwartz (1992) theory. Though, the motivation linked to the values may not be contrasting itself. The imagined integration of values in behaviour appeared to be conditioned by the anticipated living situation. If we take the example of the second letter (The millennial) it comes to the fore, that the participant experienced a conflict between the higher order values self-transcendence and self-enhancement vs. being open to change. She could not integrate the assumingly compatible values simultaneously as they were bound to a specific location. The letter is exemplary for the sample. Moreover, it may reflect the experienced great pool of possibilities within the future of millennials, which might affect such conflicts. An experienced great pool of possibilities may be a result of growing up in a globalised world where interconnectedness has reached a peak compared to the generations ahead (Elam et al., 2007; Valentine & Powers, 2013). Millennials were prepared and educated to interact globally, in form of increased English skills or cross-cultural knowledge (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Therefore, a variety of possibilities to choose more freely where to study, work or live on an international level has emerged. However, this freedom may also have its downsides, namely being required to choose. For example, valuing being open for change may lead to living abroad, resulting in living farer away from family and friends, something that would be valued in the sense of self-transcendence. Meeting the needs to satisfy all different values may therefore pose new problems, which may not have emerged as one would be living in the same country for instance. Therefore, conflicts between values might emerge which were not anticipated. As the circular continuum model is a theoretical concept, integrating the individual living conditions may be difficult. The millennial generation and the generations thereafter may enjoy new freedoms and flexibilities to integrate their values via different manners than Schwartz's theory may have assumed.

4.1 Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

While a lot of research focusses on similarities and differences of the different cohorts, cultural diversity is often neglected within these samples (Bhatia, 2018). Contrary this study integrates the future aspirations of students with different cultural backgrounds to get a more comprehensive picture of a diverse millennial generation. Further, the study employs an explorative approach, by qualitatively examining students' values. Therefore, values of the subgroup are not simply overgeneralized. Rather, different tendencies and individual manners of implementing such values are highlighted. This may meet the needs to consider the divers cultural backgrounds, life scripts and nationalities. Summing up a whole generation simply by its birth years, may have its advantages such as making it overseeable and judgable. On the

downside, overgeneralisations may also have its negative consequences on the generation itself as expectations and stereotypes may be put on them, resulting in social pressure or very opposingly the will to escape such social conventions, as it was presented in the letter of the traditional. Also, the United Nations (2005, p.2) calls for caution:” There is a simple but often ignored fact: young people today are different from any of the previous generations of youth. It is essential to ensure that youth interventions are relevant and valid for the current young generation in society and not mired in the realities of times past.”.

Limitations

Participants of the study were sampled based on convenience sampling. Which also has its limitations on the found results. All participants took part in the summer school in Twente. In order to take part a participation fee was required (by comparison the participation fee for 2019 amounts to 875€) and travel expenses such as flight tickets were not included (University of Twente, 2018). Unfortunately, there was no socio-demographic information, besides the nationality, available from the participants. Still it can be anticipated that a higher socio-economic background was required to yield all the expenses. This estimate is in line with Altbach and Knight (2007), who investigated that most of international students receive no financial subsidy programs and therefore have to rely on self-funded means. In so far, this has its implications for the results. A high focus on self-enhancement values such as achievement or openness to change values whose coherent behaviour could foremost made salient due to the financial possibilities. Therefore, this study’s findings have to be considered for a limited and specific subgroup of the millennials, namely those who have the monetary assets to be internationally and academically educated. Overgeneralizing the current results for the whole millennial generation may be inadequate, rather the study seeks to understand values of this specific group.

Further, due to the methodological procedure, it is anticipated that a social desirability bias might emerge. Also, Schwartz (1992) calls into question if people really report their individual values, or if they rather bring normatively approved principles of their social surrounding to the fore. In the current study, students were asked to read their letter out loud in front of the audience, which may influence participants to adapt to their socio-cultural environment. Such a social desirability can help to analyse social norms and grants the opportunity to examine the formation of culture. However, within the current study there was little possibility to grasp the difference between mentioned values influenced by the group or personal value priorities.

Moreover, the instrument of the study may weaken its external validity. Though, values are considered as implicit positive guiding principles, which are evaluated as right and worthy by an individual. Adopting an instrument which asks for desired future narratives, may be a promising approach which coincides the nature of values. However, it may also limit the generalizability of the study. The current results showed, that assumed opposing values appear to pose little apparent conflicts for the participants. If this would also be the case if the chosen instrument was a different one is debatable.

Future research

The current study indicates, that Schwartz's (1992) theory is less corresponding to the results as expected. Participants showed that they expected differing value prioritisations due to different situations and stages in life. Further, the assumed conflicts appeared to cause merely problems or were sidestepped via different manners. On behalf of the study, it is not possible to foresee if the individually expectations about a change of values in the future may actually become true. If future research should support the present findings that conflicts between values may differentiate from Schwartz's theory, future research could analyse if the expected changes of value priorities have its influence on future behaviour. Therefore, Schwartz's theory could be scrutinized in order to fit the changes in society.

Final Remarks

The sample of millennial students has represented itself as a multi-faceted group, with a variety of values and aspirations. Overgeneralizing this group based on appointing only few characteristics, may not satisfy the wish to understand this generation. The current study, therefore aimed at exploratively analysing international students by the use of narrative futuring. As a result, it came to the fore, that Schwartz's value theory did not suffice to explain all different value conflicts. Also, a variety of manners appeared how value conflicts were imagined to be handled in the future. As an individual is influenced by culture, while also contributing to it, former theories need to be scrutinized in order to grasp possible changes of value implementations.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Students' demographics

Country	Participants	Gender
Bulgaria	1	1 woman
China	11	5 nondescripts 3 women 3 men
Colombia	2	2 women
Czechia	1	1 nondescript
Germany	2	2 women
Greece	2	1 nondescript 1 woman
India	1	1 nondescript
Indonesia	1	1 nondescript
Italy	1	1 man
Japan	1	1 woman
Mexico	2	2 women
The Netherlands	1	1 woman
Russia	2	1 nondescript 1 woman
Saudi-Arabia	1	1 man
Singapore	1	1 nondescript
Sweden	1	1 woman
Taiwan	1	1 nondescript
Turkey	1	1 woman

Appendix B

List of Basic and Higher Order Values (Schwartz, 2012)

Higher order values	Value	Conceptual definitions in terms of motivational goals
Openness to Change	Self-direction - thought	Freedom to cultivate one's own ideas and abilities
	Self-direction – action	Freedom to determine one's own actions
	Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and change
	Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification
Self-Enhancement	Achievement	Success according to social standards
	Power- Dominance	Power through exercising control over people
	Power – Resources	Power through control of material and social resources
Conservation	Face	Maintaining one's public image and avoiding humiliation
	Security – personal	Safety in one's immediate environment
	Security – Societal	Safety and stability in the wider context
	Tradition	Maintaining and preserving cultural, family or religious traditions
	Conformity – rules	Compliance with rules, laws, and formal obligations
	Conformity – interpersonal	Avoidance of upsetting or harming other people
Self-Transcendence	Humility	Recognizing one's insignificance in the larger scheme of things
	Universalism – nature	Preservation of the natural environment
	Universalism – concern	Commitment to equality, justice and protection for all people
	Universalism – tolerance	Acceptance and understanding of those who are different from oneself
	Benevolence – caring	Devotion to the welfare of in-group members
	Benevolence –dependability	Being a reliable and trustworthy member of the in-group