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*“Breaking the Stigma of CNM relationships by understanding
intergenerational value differences”*

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**Breaking the Stigma of CNM relationships by understanding
Intergenerational value differences.**

Abstract

Consensual nonmonogamy (CNM) is a term to describe a relationship model where one has consensual sexual encounters or additional partners while being in a dyad. People in CNM relationships face a great amount of social stigma that has severe consequences on their lives. To gain a better understanding of the issue, this paper tests the theory that stigma partly results from different value systems between generations. It is hypothesized that older generations value more security in relationships whereas younger generations gravitate more toward self-expression.

Data was gathered with participants from four different generations. A convenience sample of (N=236), GenZ (N=173), Millennials (N=24), GenX (N=18), and Baby Boomers (17) granted data for 15 relationship values on a 5point Likert scale. GenZ scored highest on the total scale and as well as on the security as well as expression subscales. Because of this, the hypothesis that younger generations score higher on the self-expression values was accepted. Also, the hypothesis that older generations score higher on the security values was rejected.

Based on the results, the theory of the split between security and expression value systems causing stigma cannot be substantiated. Nevertheless, because of the significant difference found it still may be the case that an intergenerational difference is a factor regarding stigma. It is recommended to do more research regarding the causes of the stigma of CNM with other value systems and variables.

In present times alternatives to the traditional monogamous relationship model are discussed widely in the western world. A BBC article describes that especially newer generations are questioning the validity of classic marriage and monogamy (Klein, 2022). Some believe that non-monogamy and the wish to have multiple partners or sexual encounters additionally to a deeper bond is the future of human relationships (Klein, 2022). As a consequence of the growing interest in the topic, the American Psychological Association has increased its research efforts in 2021 on CNM (Consensual Non-Monogamous) relationships (Richard & Schechinger, 2019).

CNM is any romantic relationship wherein people form consensually non-exclusive romantic or sexual partnerships (Mogilski et al., 2020). Examples of CNM relationships are polyamory, swinging, and open relationships. Polyamory is a consensual romantic relationship with three or more people that live together in triads or quads. (Matsick et al., 2014). Furthermore, people who “swing” engage in extradyadic sex usually in social settings like parties (Matsick et al., 2014). In brief, having an open relationship is where one seeks alternative non-romantic sexual encounters while having a primary partner (Matsick et al., 2014).

The amount of people who had experience with CNM relationships is considerable and diverse. Rubin et al., (2014) report in their study that currently, 4-5% of the American population have CNM relationships. A study later conducted found that over 21% of the participant reported having been engaged in a CNM relationship in the past (Hauptert et al., 2017). Interestingly, there were no significant differences in demographics like social economic status, education, or ethnicity.

According to the literature, there seems to be no significant difference in the perceived benefits between monogamous and CNM relationships. Reported advantages of CMN are an increased need fulfillment, a greater variety of nonsexual activities, and personal growth (Moors et al., 2017). On the one hand, it is to note that the reports are from people who are currently in a CNM relationship therefore a certain bias is expected. On the other hand, there is research that compared CNM with monogamous participants that reported across the board similar relationship quality and psychological wellbeing (Matsick et al., 2014). In accordance with that, a study that investigated specifically need fulfillment concludes that polyamory is a valid alternative to traditional relationships (Mitchel et al., 2014). Moreover, regarding sexual health, people in CNM relationships are less likely to transmit a sexual disease and more likely to use a

condom when having intercourse with a new partner (Conley et al., 2012). In conclusion, the research suggests that CNM overall is a safe and valid alternative to monogamy.

Nevertheless, stigma and prejudice against people who practice CNM is widespread. 26-43% of people in polyamorous relationships have experienced stigma in their life (Balzarini & Muise, 2020). Furthermore, CNM is often negatively portrayed by various media sources as psychologically damaging, immature, and selfish (Conley et al., 2013). In general, many believe that monogamy is morally superior because they assume it produces better relationship satisfaction, better sexual health, fewer feelings of jealousy, and benefits for children (Grunt-Mejer & Campbell, 2016; Matsick et al., 2014). Additionally, people that hold negative beliefs about CNM also tend to attribute unrelated negative qualities to people in CNM relationships. In a study some people thought that people that engage in CNM are less likely to floss their teeth, walk their dog or pay taxes on time (Matsick et al., 2014; Grunt-Mejer & Campbell, 2016).

Those perceptions are negatively impacting the lives of people in CNM relationships. People that are stigmatized report negative effects on self-esteem (Bourguignon et al., 2006). Moreover, experiencing discrimination fueled by stigma increases people's vulnerability to psychological and emotional disorders (Pinel, 2004). Also, stigmatization may impact people's physical health. In a study people self-reported health problems and symptoms from facing discrimination (Pinel & Bosson, 2013). Furthermore, people that are stigmatized face more barriers when trying to get help (Levine et al., 2018). Affected persons specifically in CNM relationships report misdiagnosis from caretakers and practitioners due to their relationship choice (Levine et al., 2018). In some cases, caretakers have tried to convince their clients forcefully to consider monogamy (Levine et al., 2018). In brief, misinformed stigma and resulting discrimination negatively affect people's emotional and physical health.

According to many scholars, the root of stigma is a lack of understanding. The APA names on their website the two main causes of stigmatization are not understanding and fear based on a multitude of studies on stigmatization (Borenstein, 2020). A study on preconceptions discovered that no contact with persons from one's outgroups is a strong predictor of discrimination. (Utsey et al., 2008). Multiple studies proved that people that suffer a mental illness are severely stigmatized (Vigo, 2016). Interestingly, the stigmatization is significantly reduced when people learn more about the condition (Byrne, 2000; Thornicroft et al., 2016). In brief, the aforementioned research suggests that lack of understanding and misinformation is a

cause of stigma.

Understanding the values of someone else is an effective tool to reduce stigmatization in interpersonal relationships. Values are described as the key to understanding other people's motives and behaviors (Wan et al., 2007). Authors, as well as leaders, describe that a social structure can only work if people share common values (Posner & Munson, 1979). In accordance with this, a study concluded being exposed to the value system of others can effectively combat misinformed perceptions of others. Furthermore, it strengthens intergroup cohesion and reduces social distance as well as discrimination (Norman et al., 2008); Wan et al., 2007).

Different generations might have different value-systems. The WVS (World Value Survey) collects the values of 100 countries since 1938 regarding family, religion, gender equality, education, poverty, etc. (Inglehart et al., 2014). According to the gathered data people from an older generation hold more traditional values like strong family bonds and financial security (Inglehardt, et al., 2014). People from newer generations have more self-expression values, like gender equality and tolerance. (Inglehardt, et al., 2014).

Older generations may see CNM as a threat to their value system. Biologist W.H Murdy suggests that holding certain beliefs and values regarding societal topics for example sexuality is in relationship to the direct survival necessities of the environment one grows up in (Murdy, 1975). In his view and that the researchers from WVS, for older generations that grew up in times or countries in which basic human needs like security and food are not guaranteed, it is a survival disadvantage for an individual to care more about sexual freedom than security (Murdy, 1975; Inglehardt et al., 2014).

In accordance with that theory, are the present differences in attitudes towards CNM. 63% of Millennials say that relationships should be monogamous in comparison to baby boomers 85% (Hawkings & Heather, 2019). Furthermore, baby boomers are less likely to ever have been in a CNM relationship with only 5-10% in contrast to 21% of Millennials (Hauptert et al., 2017; Hawkings & Heather, 2019). Unfortunately, there is no peer-reviewed research published that provides data on GenZ the newest generation. Nevertheless, some correlating research suggests GenZ has attitudes that are favorable for relationships with multiple partners. Arbit (2020) asked 500 members of GenZ about relationships and only one out of ten reported they are “committed to being committed”. Furthermore, the results of a survey done on over 1.300 Americans on their ideal relationships model suggest that the younger a generation is the more they prefer a non-

monogamous relationship (Vigo, 2016). In addition to that, the CNMS (Consensual-Non-Monogamy Attitude Scale), suggests that the acceptance of CNM relationships is steadily increasing in younger generations (Cohen & Wilson, 2017). In brief, research indicates that younger generations are more open and accepting of CNM.

We know from the research of the WVS that people change their value systems over time. However, we can only assume that the same counts for values regarding romantic relationships. Neither, the WVS nor EVS (European Value Study) did record what people value in their relationships. Because of this, research into the correlation between relationship values and discrimination is limited. Henceforth, the possibility exists that generations fundamentally misunderstand another's motives regarding romantic relationships and consequently stigmatize choices they don't agree with for example CNM. Furthermore, data on intergenerational relationship values can be used to advance further research on the causes of stigma.

Through the collection and analysis of the data, we intend to contribute to the still small body of research regarding CNM and enable people to inform themselves about another generation's value system. Furthermore, we aim to gain a better understanding of the causes of stigma and how to reduce it. As a result, we hope that the CNM community gets better access to treatment, higher quality counseling, and increased mental health as well as physical well-being.

Therefore, this paper will first gather relationship values first and then test the theory that older generations have a different value system regarding romantic relationships than newer generations. So, the question is asked. "What are the population's relationship values and how do they differ across generations?" Based on the research from the WVS we expect a fundamental split in value systems that causes misunderstanding and stigmatization. We hypothesize that older generations (Baby Boomers and GenX) will have higher scores than the younger generations (GenZ and Millennials) on values that are associated with physical security and relationship security. Whereas the younger generations will score higher on values that are associated with self-expression than the older generations.

Methods

Design

On 24.03.2022 the BMS Ethics Committee approved the methods of the study. The data collection of the study took place at the end of March 2022. 3 Students from the University of Twente doing research for their thesis designed and distributed a questionnaire online. In the questionnaire, there was one distinct scale solely for this paper. The design chosen for this study was quantitative research. Furthermore, the two main methods used for gathering participants were snowball and convenience sampling. Respondents were reached via social media channels and e-mail. Furthermore, the questionnaire was published at Sona Utwente, a portal for finding research participants in the university.

Participants

302 people responded to the survey. After excluding participants that did not give consent to the conditions of the study or did not answer the full scale 236 responses were left seen as usable data. The participants were divided into 4 different generations according to the categories of the Beresford Research Website. 147 participants identified as female (62,3%), 75 identified as male (31,8%), 12 participants identified as non-binary (5,1%) and 2 preferred not to say (0,8%). The mean age of the participants was ($M = 28,18$, $SD = 13,92$). 173 (73,3%) participants wherein the gen-z age range from age 17-24. 24 (10,2%) were millennials from age 25-41. 18 (7,6%) gen X from age 42-57 and 17 (7,2%) baby boomers 58-67.

Materials

The instrument to gather the data had two components. First, the online questionnaire that was created by the three researchers with the website Qualtrics.com. Secondly, the 15 relationship values that were assessed with a Likert scale. In the Qualtrics questionnaire, the participants were invited to give consent to the study and fill in their demographics including their age, nationality, education, gender and sexual orientation. Part of the Questionnaire was a Scale with 15 Relationship values that participants were asked to answer the question “How important are these values in a romantic relationship to you?” It was possible to rate on a 5-point

Likert scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 very important. The 15 values are taken from a research study that measured relationship and marriage stability (Kus Ambrož et al., 2021). The researcher in this study measured 25 virtues and 18 values with also a 5-point Likert scale. Their scale had a high internal consistency of (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$). Furthermore, sample tests with 16 or 4 items ($\alpha = 0.98$ and 0.94 , respectively) had also high internal consistency. Because of this, specifically for this research, a scale was created by selecting the 15 final values from the original 33. The internal consistency of the 15-item scale was acceptable with a Cronbach's alpha of ($\alpha = .72$). To answer the hypothesis the choices on which values to include were based on the categories between security and self-expression values of the World Value Survey. The values, family safety, peace, religion, national security, loyalty, and reliability were categorized as security relationship values. Love, harmony, friendship, freedom, pleasure, comfort, excitement, tolerance, honesty were categorized as self-expression values. With the 5-point Likert scale the maximal reachable score for the *ExpressionValues* scale is 45 whereas participants can maximal score 30 on the *SecurityValues* scale. High scores on *SecurityValues* indicate that participants value security in their relationships whereas high scores on *ExpressionValues* indicate emphasize on self-expression *in their relationships*. The *SecurityValues* scale had a poor Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .50$). The *ExpressionValues* scale had and acceptable Cronbach's alpha of ($\alpha = .67$).

Procedure

From the end of March to the 10.05.2022 Participants were able to fill in the survey. On the first page of the questionnaire participants get informed on the details of the study and are able to agree or not agree. After that, they indicated demographic like age, education, gender, and sexual orientation. Following, are in randomized order the questions from all three researchers including how much they value the 15 selected values on the 1-5 scale.

Data analysis

After excluding the unusable data, a Variable 'generation' was created that distinguished the participants into the 4 different age groups. First, an unianova regression analysis was performed on the whole scale with the generations as the independent variable. Furthermore, the

subscale *ExpressionValues*, the subscale *SecurityValues* and the 15 distinct values served as the dependent variables. Including all scales and variables, 17 regression analyses were performed times 4 with each of the generations as dependent variables. This was done so every generation can serve as reference group once and therefore can be compared to one another. With that, specific differences between the generations can be determined. To gain more insight into the differences between the generations, parameter estimates were included. The output was analyzed based on the F-Value and p-Value that indicate that there were significant or insignificant differences between the groups. Furthermore, in the parameter estimates it was looked at how each of the generations is different from another. A 95% confidence interval is used to assess significance. Therefore, the cutoff is an alpha of $p < .05$.

Results

Mean and Generational Differences

The participant's scores on most values are reasonably high with a mean of > 4 on 11 of 15 values. The lowest scoring values were *Religion* that with a mean of ($M = 1,82, SD = 1.04$) and *National Security* with a mean of three ($M = 3,04, SD = 1.14$).

Running the linear model on the whole scale of the 15 values combined shows that participants from GenZ have the highest overall mean ($M = 62.90, SD = 4.95$).

With that, GenZ significantly differs from all other Generations ($R^2 = .07, F(3, 232) = 6,392, p < .001$). Millennials score significantly lower than GenZ ($B = -2.60, p = .010$), but do not significantly differ from GenX and the Baby Boomers. GenX scores also significantly lower than GenZ ($B = -3.05, p = .011$), but is not significantly different than the Millennials and Baby Boomers). The lowest scoring generations overall are the Baby Boomers with ($M = 58.88, SD = 5.17$). This Generation also scores significantly different to GenZ ($B = -4.02, p = .002$) but not to the Millennials and GenX.

The F-Test for the complete scale is significant with ($R^2 = .07, F(3, 232) = 6,392, p < .001$). Looking at the F-test of the values distinctly, the generations differ in eight of the 15 values significantly from each other (Appendix, Table2). There are significant differences in mean scores on *Harmony, Friendship, Freedom, National Security, Comfort, Excitement,*

Reliability, and Honesty. Regarding the other 7 values, the generations do not differ significantly from one another (Appendix, Table2).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of the four Generations on the Scales and distinct Values

Scales and Values	All Participants		GenZ		Millenials		GenX		Baby Boomers	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Scales										
Full Scale	62.05	5.23	62.90	4.95	60.08	4.99	59.85	5.94	58.88	5.17
Security Expression	27.55	2.85	27.97	2.70	26.56	2.83	26.55	3.24	25.88	2.89
	39.80	3.31	40.58	2.85	38.72	3.38	37.25	3.4	36.41	3.60
Values										
Love (E)	4.71	0.57	4.74	0.59	4.72	0.46	4.70	0.57	4.41	0.51
FamilySafety(S)	3.98	0.92	3.94	0.94	3.84	0.85	4.25	0.97	4.24	0.66
Harmony (E)	4.46	0.70	4.51	0.65	4.48	0.82	4.40	0.68	3.94	0.83
Friendship (E)	4.60	0.59	4.67	0.53	4.40	0.76	4.50	0.76	4.35	0.70
Freedom (E)	4.41	0.72	4.50	0.69	4.24	0.78	4.10	0.85	4.12	0.78
Peace (S)	4.42	0.70	4.47	0.67	4.32	0.80	4.20	0.83	4.29	0.67
Religion (S)	1.82	1.04	1.82	1.07	1.80	0.82	1.80	0.95	1.94	1.14
Pleasure (E)	4.17	0.74	4.17	0.78	4.20	0.64	4.00	0.72	4.24	0.44
Nat.Security(S)	3.04	1.13	3.01	1.08	2.64	1.12	3.40	1.35	3.53	1.18
Comfort (E)	4.27	0.83	4.49	0.66	4.08	0.90	3.20	0.83	3.47	0.80
Excitement (E)	3.99	0.73	4.14	0.68	3.76	0.72	3.35	0.74	3.53	0.51
Tolerance (E)	4.48	0.70	4.52	0.68	4.28	0.89	4.50	0.60	4.29	0.68
Loyalty (S)	4.55	0.69	4.58	0.68	4.40	0.86	4.50	0.68	4.47	0.51
Reliability (S)	4.44	0.69	4.50	0.67	4.36	0.75	4.45	0.68	4.00	0.79
Honesty (E)	4.72	0.58	4.83	0.42	4.56	0.58	4.50	0.76	4.06	1.08

Note. This Table depicts the mean scores and standard deviations of all participants and the four distinct generations on the main scale, the two subscales and the single values from which the scale is made.

Specific note. The (S) classifies the Variable as being part of the security scale. The (E) indicates that the variable as part of the expression scale.

Security (Hypothesis 1)

The F-test of the variable *SecurityValues* suggests significant differences between the generations with ($R^2 = .06$, $F(3, 232) = 5.321$, $p = .001$). Against the Hypothesis, GenZ scores highest in Security values with ($M = 27.97$, $SD = 2.71$). Second highest are Millennials with ($M = 26.55$, $SD = 2.82$) and a significant difference to GenZ of ($B = -1.42$, $p = .018$). Third highest are GenX with ($M = 26.45$, $SD = 3.23$) and a significant difference to GenZ with ($B = -1.42$, $p = .031$). The lowest scoring generation are the Baby Boomers with ($M = 25.88$, $SD = 2.89$) they differ significantly from GenZ with ($B = -2.09$, $p = .003$). Millennials, GenX and Baby Boomers do not significantly differ in relation to each other.

Expression (Hypothesis 2)

The F-test suggest significant differences between the generations regarding *SelfExpression* Values with ($R^2 = .05$, $F(3, 232) = 16.76$, $p < .001$). On the nine-item scale GenZ scores the highest with ($M = 40.58$, $SD = 2.86$). All other generations score significantly lower than GenZ. Millennials ($B = -1.86$, $p = .004$), GenX ($B = -3.33$, $p < .001$) and Baby Boomers ($B = -4.169$, $p < .001$). GenZ ($B = 1.86$, $SE = 0.64$, $p = .004$) and the Baby Boomers ($B = -2.30$, $SE = 0.95$, $p = .016$) significantly differ in their score on *ExpressionValues* in relation the Millennials GenX is only significantly different from GenZ ($B = -1.62$, $SE = 0.72$, $p = .026$).

Values

Love

The F-test results from the value *Love* suggest no significant differences between generations, ($R^2 = .02$, $F(3, 232) = 1.746$, $p = .158$). ($R^2 = .05$, $F(3, 232) = 16.76$, $p < .001$). Only

GenZ has significant differences from the *Baby Boomers*. *GenZ* has a mean value of ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.43$) whereas the *Baby Boomers* have ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.44$) resulting in a significant difference of ($B = -0.33$, $p = .023$)

Family Safety

The F-test for the value *Family Safety* suggests no significant differences between the generations ($R^2 = .01$, $F(3,232) = 1.318$, $p = .269$).

Harmony

Harmony has a significant F-test result of ($R^2 = .04$, $F(3,232) = 3.616$, $p = .014$) between the generations.

GenZ ($B = 0.57$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = .001$), *Millennials* ($B = 0.54$, $SE = 0.22$, $p = .013$) and *GenX* ($B = 0.459$, $SE = 0.227$, $p = .044$) value *Harmony* significantly higher in relation to the *Baby Boomers* ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.17$). *GenZ*, *Millennials* and *GenX* have no significant differences in between another regarding that value.

Friendship

The F-test for *Friendship* is significant with a ($R^2 = .03$, $F(3,232) = 2.926$, $p = .035$) between the generations.

GenZ scores highest on *Friendship* in relationships with ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.44$). In relation to *GenZ*, *Millennials* ($B = -0.267$, $SE = 0.125$, $p = .034$) and *Baby Boomers* ($B = -0.314$, $SE = 0.149$, $p = .036$) that score significantly lower. *GenX* is not significantly different from the other Generations.

Freedom

The F-test suggest significant differences between the generations, ($R^2 = .04$, $F(3,232) = 3.683$, $p = .013$). *GenZ* scores highest in *Freedom* with ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.54$).

In relation to *GenZ*, *GenX* and *Baby Boomers* score bot significantly lower with *GenX* ($B = -0.40$, $SE = 0.167$, $p = .017$), *Baby Boomers* ($B = -0.38$, $SE = 0.179$, $p = .034$). The *Millennials* are not significantly different to other generations.

Peace

The F-test suggests no significant differences between the generations ($R^2 = .00$, $F(3,232) = 0.082$, $p = .970$). All generations score the lowest on *Religion* with a general mean ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 1.04$).

Pleasure

The F-test on the variable shows no significant differences between the generations with ($R^2 = .00$, $F(3,232) = 0.404$, $p = .750$).

National Security

The F-test for *National Security* is significant with ($R^2 = .03$, $F(3,232) = 2.854$, $p = .038$). Baby Boomers score highest on that value with ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.18$) closely followed by GenX with ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.35$). The Millennials are significantly lower to the boomers ($B = -0.89$, $SE = 1.08$, $p = .012$) and GenX ($B = -0.760$, $SE = 1.08$, $p = .025$). GenZ is not significantly different from the other Generations and GenX and Baby Boomers are not significantly different in relation to one another.

Comfort

The highest differences between the generations are found in this variable. The F-test of this variable is ($R^2 = .26$, $F(3,232) = 28,267$, $p < .001$).

GenZ values *Comfort* the most with a ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.054$). Millennials score significantly lower with ($B = -0.414$, $SE = 0.153$, $p = .007$), also Baby Boomers with ($B = -1.02$, $SE = 0.17$, $p < .001$). The highest differences is between GenZ and GenX whereas GenX scores significantly lower in comfort with ($B = -1.29$, $SE = 0.169$, $p < .001$).

Only Baby Boomers and GenX have no significant differences in their scores (Appendix, Table2).

Excitement

The F-test suggests significant differences between the generations regarding *Excitement* with ($R^2 = .13$, $F(3,232) = 12.117$, $p < .001$).

The highest scoring Generation is again GenZ with ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.052$).

All three other Generations are again scoring significantly lower Millennials ($B = -0.38$, $SD = 0.146$, $p = .010$), GenX ($B = -0.79$, $SE = 0.16$, $p < .001$) and Baby Boomers ($B = -0.61$, $SE = 0.173$, $p < .001$). Millennials are also significantly different from all three Generations ($R^2 = .13$, $F(3,232) = 12.117$, $p < .001$).

Tolerance

According to the F-test ($R^2 = .01$, $F(3,232) = 1.289$, $p = .279$) the generations are not significantly different from another.

Loyalty

With an F-test of ($R^2 = .00$, $F(3,232) = 0.609$, $p = .610$) the generations are not significantly different from another.

Reliability

The F-test suggests that the generations are significantly different in Reliability ($R^2 = .07$, $F(3,232) = 6.392$, $p < .001$).

The highest scoring generations are GenZ with ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.52$).

In relation only the Baby Boomers score significantly lower with ($B = -0.50$, $SE = 0.175$, $p = .005$). Furthermore, GenX scores significantly higher than the Baby Boomers with ($B = 0.45$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = .490$). Millennials are not significantly different to all other Generations (Appendix, Table2).

Honesty

The F-Test suggest shows significant differences between the generations ($R^2 = .03$, $F(3,232) = 2.859$, $p = .038$). GenZ scores highest with ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.04$).

Millenials with ($B = -0.273$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .019$), GenX with ($B = -0.33$, $SE = 0.128$, $p = .010$)

And Baby Boomers ($B = -0.775$, $SE = 0.14$, $p < .001$) score all significantly lower than GenZ.

Furthermore, Baby Boomer Score significantly lower than GenX and Millenials (Appendix, Table2). Only the Millenials and GenX are not scoring significantly different on how they value Honesty (Appendix, Table2).

Discussion

In accordance with the findings of the WorldValueSurvey (WVS) and the study on attitudes between generations from Hawkings, & Heather (2019) the results suggest that overall, the generations differ in values. The biggest difference was found between GenZ and the Baby Boomers. This was expected as it correlates with the theory established in the WVS that there is a continuous change in values across time, meaning that the further the generations are apart the stronger the predicted differences (Ingelhardt, et al., 2014).

On the contrary are the findings on the security and expression Subscales. The findings of the WVS point towards a clear direction of how values change (Ingelhardt, et al., 2014). Over time, they suggest that people develop from holding traditional values to more self-expressive values. In accordance, the results of this paper found that the younger a generation is, the higher they score on the *SelfExpression* scale. However, it was also found that the younger a generation is the higher the score on the *SecurityValue* subscale, which was created based on the traditional/security value category from the WVS. Because of this, Hypothesis 2 that younger Generations favor self-expression values more than older generations can be presumptively accepted. Moreover, Hypothesis 1 which stated that older generations favor Security values more than younger generations can be presumably rejected.

Another notable discovery of this paper is that when zooming into the distinct values of the scale only eight of the 15 variables had significant differences. It was expected that there may be some values in which the generations do not differ significantly like for example honesty. A study suggests that Honesty is fundamental for every Human relationship Romantic or not and therefore universally intuited as valuable (LaFollett & Graham, 1986). Indeed, Honesty was also the highest-scoring value of all 15, and no significant differences were found.

Not expected was, that seven values including religion, tolerance, and loyalty will not differ. For example, in the WVS the clear trend that religion gets less and less valued by people is observable (Ingelhardt, et al., 2014). It is the case that the young generations score the lowest on Religion. However, the difference between the other generations is practically non-existent. Similarly, the findings on tolerance were surprising. Young generations had a more positive attitude than older generations toward CNM on the Consensual Nonmonogamy Attitude Scale (Cohen & Wilson, 2017.) Furthermore, other studies suggest that today's youth is more tolerant than ever (Twenge, 2017). Nevertheless, this paper found no significant difference in tolerance across generations

Explanation of findings

The Two most surprising and noteworthy results of this study are that Millenials and GenX do not differ significantly and that GenZ scores the highest overall including the Security subscale.

It may be that there is just not enough time between the generations for significant change to occur. A video from the WVS shows the change in values from 1981 to 2015

(Worldvaluesurvey, 2015). It shows that the countries Germany and the Netherlands which are the countries from which almost all participants stem do not move much from traditional to secular values (Worldvaluesurvey, 2015).

However, this does not account for the fact that Millennials are significantly different from GenZ and also only one generation apart. A possible explanation is that during the period of generations X and the Millennials not as impactful things happened that facilitated change in values. An example of an event that shaped a generation's values significantly was the second world war (Mackay, 1997). The war was very close to the Baby Boomers still and GenX and Millennials grew up in a more peaceful and stable environment (Mackay, 1997) GenX and Millennials both witnessed rapid technological advances (McCrindle, & Wolfinger 2009). GenZ on the other hand grew up in a society with modern tech and internalized it as an extension of themselves (Vaterlaus et al., 2018). Accessibility to communication devices, an abundance of entertainment everywhere, and social media drastically changed the way how people relate to one another (Vaterlaus et al., 2018).

This still does not account for the high score of GenZ on the Security subscale. One possible explanation for the results is that the current times resurface the need for more security generally and also in relationships. With global challenges like the climate crisis, a pandemic, and war in Europe young generations might see their future in danger and their need for security is higher than it was for previous generations. Australian adolescents were surveyed and over 60% reported either increasing, moderate, or high worry about the future impact of climate change (Sciberras, & Fernando, 2022). Moreover, the stress report of the American Association for Psychology reported that GenZ is the most stressed-out generation currently without the inclusion of Covid-19 and the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict (American Psychological Association 2020). This may explain why GenZ scores as high or higher than other generations on National Security, Peace, or Reliability.

A general explanation for the deviance of results is that the values on the scale are not clearly defined and leave room for interpretation. A study that investigated to what extent people interpret items on a questionnaire found that there is a high variance in viewpoints between the participants (Block, 1998). To combat this the WVS uses only face-to-face interviews to collect the responses of participants. Due to time constraints, this was not possible in the study.

To illustrate, it was expected that newer generations will score higher intolerance than older generations because in the environment they grew up tolerating multiple ways of living, sexual orientations, etc. Like in the study from Block (1998) The concept of tolerance might be interpreted differently across generations. GenZ may be more tolerant of the sexual choices of their partner whereas the Baby Boomers value tolerance of certain character traits. Another example of this may be the value of loyalty. Against the assumption that GenZ is more favorable towards CNM, they scored highest in the security value Loyalty. It might be the case that GenZ defines Loyalty emotionally whereas Baby Boomers define Loyalty sexually. This may have impacted the expected differentiation of security and Expression variables.

Implications

The point was made that Stigma, occurs because there is a fundamental difference between the generation's value systems, paired with a lack of understanding between the generations of these differences. Even though, there are differences between the generations overall, the hypothesis that the conflict between the security and expression values system is an underlying factor for stigma is questionable. This is because there was no clear trend that young generations favor expression values whereas older generations favor security values. This either means that there are different value systems at work or, the results occurred due to the limitations of the study.

The most remarkable deviance of expectation was that the findings of this study do not correlate with the research of the WVS. The WVS collects data from generations in multiple cultures with a big team of researchers. It is therefore very surprising that the findings of this study are not cohesive with that. the WVS is an observational and highly credible process. Therefore, it is more likely that the implications are a fault in the study or what people value in relationships does not evolve in the same way as the other values observed in the WVS.

Lastly, because GenZ scores highest overall it challenges the common idea that self-exploration is of a higher priority than romantic relationships for GenZ (Klein, 2022).

Limitations

The reasons for some of the contradictory findings may be found in the instrument and sampling of this research. The first important to note limitation is that the sample sizes of the Millennials (24), GenX (18), and Baby Boomers (17) do not meet the requirements for precise

results. Furthermore, due to time restraints, the main method of sampling was convenience sampling with mostly students and friends and relatives of those students. The sampling bias may skew the results due to similar socioeconomic backgrounds, political views, shared household values, etc. Also as previously mentioned as an explanation the room for interpretation of the items limits the conclusions we can draw from the results.

In regards to the hypotheses, as already mentioned the internal consistency of the *SecurityValues* scale was are under ($\alpha = .70$) and therefore insufficient to draw solid conclusions. Both of the scales were created by assembling virtues and values from a researched scale with excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .94$) into the Security and Selfexpression value categories from the WVS. A possible reason why the scale did not reach the desired ($\alpha = .70$) is that there were simply not enough items on the scales. The mistake was only realized after already collecting all of the responses.

Future Directions

It is of great interest to collect the attitudes of the participants towards CNM and correlate these findings with their choices of values. Through, that we might get more clarity on what values predict a more with a negative attitude towards CNM. Also, a repetition at a later point in time could give further insight and clarity into how much the context of the pandemic and War might have influenced the results. Asking individuals about their Values in a face-to-face interviews is recommended as it combats multiple interpretations of the values.

Another great research opportunity can be realized by reaching out to the team working on the WVS. With the inclusion of relationship values in their global research a lot of new insight can be gained into how living conditions, culture, and societal development are reflected in relationship values across the generations. With that, explanations can be extended and grounded on why social stigma occurs and how it can be combated. Lastly, despite that, It might still be the case that value systems for play a role in regard even though the results of this study suggest no difference in regards to the security and expression value categories. Therefore, it's important to further inquire about the causes of stigma apart from relationship values. Furthermore, to further contribute, to the still small body that deals with CNM, it may be valuable to gather more data on relationship status, religious or spiritual affiliations, and cultural beliefs and values of people. All these variables need to be correlated with already existing demographics like attitude towards CNM, socioeconomic status and background, sexual

orientation, etc. to grant us a bigger picture of the causes and factors involved in the stigmatization of CNM

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was first and foremost to gather data on relationship values across multiple generations. It was done so to gain a better understanding of the causes of Stigma regarding CNM. Furthermore, a goal was to give people access to understanding differences between value systems and enable deeper research into the relationship between generations, values, and CNM. To accomplish this the main question asked was: “What are the population's relationship values and how do they differ across generations?” Hypothesis 1: ‘Older generations favor more security relationship values’ was rejected and Hypothesis 2: ‘Younger generations favor more self-expression relationship values’ was accepted.

Overall, there is a significant difference between the generations. Furthermore, millennials and GenX do not differ significantly from one another, and GenZ scores highest overall. Additionally, GenZ scored the highest on the Expression and Security subscales. The results challenge the possibility that security vs self-expression value systems apply to relationships and that they are a cause for underlying stigma. Furthermore, the question was opened up if relationship values develop in the same manner as other value systems.

Those contributions have to be seen in context with the limitation of the study largely by sampling, instrument, and method. With the limitations of this study in mind, it might be of interest to repeat the collection of data with more items in the subscales, other sample methods, and bigger sample sizes.

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Appendix

Scales	GenZ (Ref)	Millenials			GenX			BabyBoomers		
	b	b	SE	p	b	SE	p	b	SE	p
Whole Scale	62.90	-2.60	1.08	.010	3.05	1.19	.011	-4.02	1.28	.002
Security	27.97	-1.41	0.59	.018	-1.42	0.65	.031	-2.09	0.70	.003
Expression	34.92	-1.40	0.65	.033	-1.62	0.72	.026	-1.92	0.79	.014
Values										
Love (E)	4.47	-0.21	0.12	.860	-0.41	0.13	.758	-0.33	0.14	.023
Fam. Safety (S)	3.94	-0.10	0.19	.600	0.30	0.21	.155	0.29	0.23	.208
Harmony (E)	4.51	-0.31	0.147	.830	-0.11	0.16	.492	-0.57	0.17	.001
Friendship (E)	4.66	-0.26	0.12	.034	-0.16	0.13	.229	-0.34	0.14	.036
Freedom (E)	4.50	-0.26	0.15	.086	-0.40	0.16	.017	-0.38	0.17	.034
Peace (S)	4.47	-0.15	0.15	.317	-0.27	0.16	.105	-0.17	0.17	.324
Religion (S)	1.86	-0.01	0.22	.943	-0.01	0.24	.948	0.12	0.26	.639

Pleasure (E)	4.17	0.28	0.15	.862	-0.17	0.17	.326	0.06	0.18	.739
Nat.Security (S)	3.01	-0.37	0.24	.123	0.38 9	0.26	.144	0.51	0.28	.071
Comfort (E)	4.49	-0.41	0.15	.007	-1.29	0.16	<.001	-1.02	0.18	<.001
Excitement (E)	4.13	0.05	0.14	.010	-0.78	0.16	<.001	-0.60	0.17	<.001
Tolerance (E)	4.52	-0.24	0.15	.108	-0.02	0.16	.890	-0.29	0.17	.202
Loyalty (S)	4.58	-0.18	0.14	.225	-0.80	0.16	.624	-0.11	0.17	.534
Reliability (S)	4.50	-0.14	0.14	.343	-0.50	0.16	.759	-0.50	0.17	.005
Honesty (E)	4.83	-0.27	0.11	.019	-0.33	0.12	.010	-0.77	0.13	<.001

Table 2. Note. Difference in scores on scales and distinct values with GenZ as reference.
Note. This table shows the differences in scores, their standard error and significance in relation to the mean of GenZ.

Specific note. (E)=Expression Value, (S)= Security Value