

VALUES

I. The Metamorphosis of my Values

1 I have a very vivid memory of the first time I stole something from a store. It was eight years ago
2 when my friend Jodi and I went to Kings Plaza on a shopping excursion. We went to C.V.S. to
3 check out the new shade of lipsticks and hair products (we were on the eternal quest for the perfect
4 lipstick and the magic potion for shiny hair). I saw a few shades of orange that I really liked and
5 ripped off the safety seals, a task I had mastered through my years of bargain shopping. A feeling
6 came over me, a combination of wanting all of the lipsticks, that I deserved to have them all, that my
7 twenty dollars allowance just wasn't going to do the trick.

8 In a matter of seconds with my heart pounding a mile a minute, I was checking the mirror to see
9 if anyone was watching me, and it happened. Before I knew it I was shoving eight lipsticks up my
10 sleeve and then grasping my sleeve with my sweaty fingers to assure that nothing would fall out.
11 After I made my very calm and cool exit from C.V.S. I ran out of the mall and waited for Jodi. I
12 never felt so high in my life. I got over on all those stupid people in the store and I got what I
13 deserved, my lovely shades of orange lipsticks

14 It was only a matter of time before I was stealing every day, stealing for other people, and then
15 finally stealing for the mere pleasure of stealing. I began stealing things from people's houses, using
16 the rationale that they weren't even going to notice it was gone. When I went out to eat, I stole the
17 menus (something I thought would make a nice decor on my bedroom walls). I was stealing
18 anything I could get my hands on.

19 One day I was going to put my lipstick on, and I could not even decide which one to put on
20 because I had so many. I kept all my precious shades in a big red tub on my dresser (extremely
21 inconspicuous) and I had to dump the whole tub out and look through every color to make a choice
22 in the morning. This became a very long and tedious chore, and suddenly I was tired of it. I started
23 throwing the sticks in the garbage until I was left with one. I think that day was the first moment of
24 clarity I had in a long time. I would love to say that was the end of my stealing, but it wasn't.

25 As time went on, I began getting caught which put a hinge in my concept of how smart I was and
26 how stupid everyone else was. Each time I got caught I felt a little worse but I didn't stop stealing.
27 Usually the consequences were nothing more than slaps on the wrist and a little fear that went
28 through me. At this time in my life, fear didn't really affect me; it was like I was untouchable,
29 nothing bad could happen to me.

30 One day I went stealing in the Village (the street vendors were known as easy targets to steal from
31 (and I took a few rings from a stand. Nothing bad happened but that feeling that I was smarter than
32 everyone didn't come over me. I didn't feel high, in fact I felt kind of bored. At that time in my life
33 nothing seemed to be working to make me feel high and I was worried. On the train ride home I was
34 very depressed and thoughts of suicide were overwhelming me. This is when the metamorphosis
35 of my personal values occurred; a voice came into my head and said something very simple. The
36 voice said, "Nothing changes if nothing changes." This made sense to me, and that was the last time
37 I stole anything from anybody.

38 Today I try to do the right thing because it's the right thing, not for any glory or praise, but for my
39 good feeling inside and the voice that tells me I'm a different girl than I was on that train ride home.
40 Sometimes I still have the urge to take something that doesn't belong to me, but it's usually a fleeting
41 thought that doesn't turn into an action. Each time I refrain from giving into that urge I feel like a
stronger human being. (745 words)

II. The Values of Russian Americans

1 The people's values are influenced by many things: religion, family, education, and, the most,
2 the place where they live. The society determines the fundamental values for every person such as

1 optimism, individualism, nationalism and importance of freedom in America. Different societies
2 create different individuals with different values and different ways of life which make all these
3 individuals be different but have certain traits in common.

4 A Russian is unique in his pessimism, his manner of course always complaining about his life,
5 his job, his family and, of course, his country which cannot provide for him the life that he deserves.
6 It would be strange for a Russian to say that he is doing OK because it is not acceptable in a society
7 of the unlucky for somebody to be happy and not to be afraid to show his happiness. That is why
8 Russians never smile—they are afraid of smiling, like of doing something unusual, strange, some
9 kind of taboo.

10 Russian is also a collectivist, which gets one used to have everything open to the people (his
11 family secrets, his college grades, or his problems). It would be very unusual for a Russian to say
12 something like "It is none of your business!" because everything is everybody's business in Russia,
13 and it is very common to discuss some family problems with the colleagues during the lunch time
14 or even during the work time, so that everybody stops working or just pretends to be working and
15 concentrates on that person's problems.

16 Russian students study together, taking the process of study as something they have to do
17 together, helping each other in any ways by lending books, notes and thoughts during the exams.
18 And somebody who is trying to be alone and not to share his work with others is usually hated and
19 despised because it is not fair, according to Russian morality, to keep something from your friends
20 even if this something is your own work.

21 Another trait of a Russian is that he is an intellectual, using to read a lot, go to theater from time
22 to time, listen to the music of his and foreign countries like America, France or England, watch
23 movies which make think and see something which is maybe not clear to everybody (these are
24 philosophic films which are sometimes as much difficult to understand as, for example, books of
25 Thoreau).

26 And this never-smiling intellectual Russian who got used to live in collective society comes to
27 America with its optimistic individuals loving money and their country so much that the majority
28 of them never watch European films or listen to songs on the language different than English and
29 greeting each other by the question that has the answer known in advance: "Fine, thank you." The
30 Russian comes to America not for a month to see how beautiful the country is, not for a year to learn
31 the language or to meet with the relatives, but for the rest of his life to LIVE in this country. He
32 comes to America and begins to learn its life—read the books about how to dress like Americas, how
33 to speak like Americans, how to smile like Americans—how to become an American. I believe that
34 an American would go crazy before he learns how to be a Russian, but the Russian is a strange
35 person in his wish to become somebody who he never really would be—a simple optimistic
36 American. He starts to speak in a weird language consisting of mixed Russian and English words
37 like "no, anyway, no problem" until he learns how to speak a good English and then refuses to speak
38 his own. And he smiles just like the regular American does, stretching his lips in a usual "How are
39 you? but he doesn't smile in his heart because he is Russian.

The Russian America smiles but he doesn't smile. . . he is Russian. (651 words)

III.

1 The Tangu of New Guinea play a game called *taketak*. The equipment consists of two sets of
2 coconut stakes that look like bowling pins and a toplike object made from a dried fruit. Surprisingly
3 (to us), the object of the game is not for one team to knock over as many stakes as possible but,
4 rather, for both teams to knock over the same number of steaks. To Americans, who value
5 competition so highly, such a game seems senseless and absurd. But to the Tangu, who value
6 uniformity within the group, this game makes perfect sense. These "savages" (as many Europeans
7 think of them) are bothered by the idea of one group winning and the other losing, because according
8 to their belief this situation causes ill will. For example, when Europeans brought soccer to New

1 Guinea , the Tangu (to avoid win-lose situations) changed the rules so that the object was for the two
2 teams to score the same number of goals. Sometimes their games went on for days!

3 Personal values are general ideas that people share about what is good or bad, desirable or
4 undesirable; values also provide the framework for people"s behavior and color their way of life.
5 Thus Americans, valuing competition, have winners and losers not only in sports but also in politics,
6 in business, in the classroom, and in their social lives. For example, if there is no clear winner in
7 a political election, a runoff is held.

8 Even living in America for only two years, I can clearly identify a distinctively American set of
9 core values: competition, achievement and success, work, efficiency and practicality, progress,
10 material comfort, equality, freedom, conformity, science and rationality, patriotism, democracy,
11 individuality, and racial and ethnic group superiority.

12 Sometimes values reinforce one another. For example, Americans value material comfort, so it
13 makes sense that they would also value hard work (to succeed) and the financial success which
14 enables them to buy that comfort. The nation"s values, however, are not necessarily compatible.
15 In seeming contradictions, Americans value both conformity and individuality, both racial harmony
16 and racial separation. People manage to live with these contradictions primarily by applying only
17 one set of values in a particular situation. For example, most Americans today accept and approve
18 of racial equality in the workplace. Yet relatively few extend the value of racial equality to their
19 family lives; they would not approve of a member of their own family marrying a person of another
20 race or adopting a child of another race.

21 Like another aspect of culture, values change as social events and circumstances change. For
22 instance, not a long time ago I saw an advertisement, which appeared in newspapers and on
23 billboards in the 1930s; that ad reproduced contemporary romantic values. The body postures in the
24 ad suggested that men should be sexually aggressive and women should be passive, yet capable of
25 being seduced by male charm. In the 1990s, an age of woman's emancipation, the role of women
26 has changed as has the male-female relationship; the image of the macho male has given a priority
27 to the image of the androgynous male, a man who is more sensitive, more in touch with his emotions
28 and more closely related to women.

29 In every society personal values are reinforced by social institutions; defining people's behaviors
30 and status/role relations, social institutions provide people with their basic needs. One of the most
31 important functions social institutions serve is to reproduce new members, form their identities, and
32 teach them the customs, beliefs, and values shared by those who live in their world. This task falls
33 mainly upon the institution of family. The traditional American family consists of parents and
34 children. The parents' role is to produce the children, nurture and provide for them, introduce to
35 intimate, personal relationships, and give their first experience of being treated as distinct
36 individuals. Parents also serve as a first reference group, the first group whose norms and values
37 children adopt as their own and refer to in evaluating behavior.

38 Another primary need is to mobilize scarce resources in order to produce and distribute the goods
39 and services that people want. This need is largely met by economic institutions. The need that
40 involves protecting people from external threats, such as military invasions, and from internal
41 threats, such as crime, in the American society is the province of the political institutions. People
42 also have to be taught about certain statuses and roles, especially those that have to do with being
43 a citizen or a worker. This is a primary function of American educational institutions. Equally
44 important, religious institutions are involved in motivating people to perform their social roles by
45 giving life meaning and purpose.

46 Finally, a group of people can be regarded as a nation not only by their inhabiting a common
47 territory, but also by their having a shared set of beliefs, customs, and values. This set of beliefs and
48 values makes the Tangu who value conformity within the group so different from Americans who
49 value competition and winning so highly. (839 words)

IV. CHOOSING A MATE

Choice is not one of the terms I would use to describe my marriage. This is not to say that I was forced into marrying my husband. It is just that I associate the word choice with some sort of selection. To choose is to select from among many, or at least, between two. It is to pick out one's favorite: one's favorite pickle from the pickles in the jar, one's favorite dress, one's favorite man... But my husband was not picked out. I knew none other; I experienced no one else.

When people discuss arranged marriages, they usually refer to them as part of history, gone with the crinolines and hand-kissing. I don't usually volunteer the fact that my marriage was officially arranged—in New York, in the nineties. I keep silent because trying to explain my community's marrying rituals to those who are accustomed to modern love is useless. The cultural gap is so great that I usually find no common grounds to hang on to. When it comes to love and marriage, Hasidic ideologies and values seem to be in a 180 degree angle from the modern world's view.

I was two weeks older than seventeen years when I was engaged to be married. Before I met my husband, I had never spoken to "boys." My own brother was only four years old, and my male cousins were even younger. I went to an all-girls school. We discussed boys all the time, of course, but boys were truly as abstract and esoteric as martians. We had never actually talked to or touched one. Most of our information came from the "Romance" section in the public library.

One evening, while I was doing my homework, my father came into the room. He told me that a matchmaker had called and offered a *shiduch* (an arranged date). "Do you want to get married, Ruthie?" he asked.

Of course I wanted to get married. I also wanted to fly to the moon and to be in a Hollywood motion picture. I was seventeen. I wanted adventure; I wanted fun. A boy would definitely be an adventure.

And there would be whipped cream too: presents, a white gown, I, the center of attraction, blossoming with youth, astonishing with beauty. I definitely wanted to get married. I would have no more curfew. I would buy cases and cases of orange soda. I would watch T.V. anytime, any channel that I wanted. I would eat chocolates on the living room couch. I would be independent...

The "boy," whose name I couldn't remember, nor was yet to know, was studying in Israel. He would have to come to New York to meet me. But meeting me would be a final step. Before that, for three weeks, my parents were busy investigating his background, his academic grades, his habits, his friends, his family's history, his health... I even knew the names of his teachers in elementary school, but I still had not seen him.

There was an "executive conference" between both sets of parents to discuss who would pay for what, and who would support us, and for how long. Then there was an "exam" that I had to pass—meeting his parents. Finally, the future bridegroom arrived.

When I saw my husband, Michael, for the first time, I thought, "So this is the face I will see very day for the rest of my life, this is the father of my children." But we still did not speak. Then we were left alone in the room. When we spoke, it was no different than one would expect. We were perfect strangers. I told him a few jokes; he smiled. We had some cake. I could have said that I didn't like him, but how would I know? He was a stranger. I could have said that I needed more time, but my mother was already cutting up cake for the party. I was not forced, but my grandparents were already on the plane, coming to congratulate us.

I met my husband, Michael, on Saturday evening. Sunday, at noon, we were engaged to be married. I received a diamond ring, we smiled a lot to each other. I was in seventh heaven, but I didn't know him at all.

My story is not unique. Tens of thousands of boys and girls in the Hasidic communities are married that way every day. Did I expect love and passion? I don't remember. Did I doubt that he was the "one"? maybe, for one hour. Am I happy? Yes, we are both happy. We fell in love exactly five weeks

1 after we were married. We went through the initial euphoria, the same first fight, the same delicious
2 reconciliation—but we were already married. We grew together. We practiced everything on each
3 other. Eleven years have passed, and I am the only woman Michael has ever touched. I was always
4 the only one.

5 My parents chose for me. I will probably choose for my children. Of the 32 girls in my class,
6 100% married by arrangement. Two are divorced. The rest, still married, would probably fit any
7 standard statistics of happy or miserable marriages.

8 Intellectually, arranged marriages are a prescription for failure. Emotionally, arranged marriages
9 are unfair, and anti love and romance. In spite of all, magically, our couples find enough happiness
10 to stick together. They learn to love and desire, to bond and connect. They have candlelight dinners
11 and secret silly jokes. They give cards to each other and buy flowers for Sabbath. They go on
12 romantic vacations. They love, they lust, they fight, they leave. Their marriages are as strong and as
13 weak as "love" marriages are. Love comes in different ways, yet people love the same all over the
14 world, and against all odds. (964 words)

V. Values

1 Few if any of us, can actually give the full meaning of Values without generalizing. "Values" is
2 such a broad topic that I can't seem to narrow it down to one particular meaning. Values are things
3 that a person cherishes; for example, there may be things like family heirlooms that are handed down
4 from past generations that a person wouldn't give up because it's a part of them.

5 Needs give rise to values. If we feel the need to belong to a group, we learn to value commitment,
6 sacrifice, and sharing. And we then respond to arguments that promise to protect our values. It is
7 hardly surprising that values, the principles by which we judge what is good or bad, beautiful or ugly,
8 worthwhile or undesirable should exercise a profound influence on our behavior. Values, like needs
9 are arranged in a hierarchy; that is, some are more clearly important than others to the people who
10 hold them. Moreover, the arrangement may shift over time as a result of new experiences. One
11 should also be aware of not only changes over time but also different or competing value systems
12 that reflect a multitude of subcultures in this country.

13 All of us belong to more than one group, and the values of the several groups may be in conflict;
14 differences in age, sex, race, ethnic background, social environment, religion, even in the
15 personalities and characters of its members define the groups we belong to. Such terms as "honor,"
16 "loyalty," "justice," "patriotism," "duty," "responsibility," "equality," "freedom," and "courage" will
17 be interpreted differently by different groups. If one group to which a person belongs, say, peers the
18 same age and class, is generally uninterested in and even scornful of religion, that person may
19 nevertheless hold to the values of his/her family and continue to place a high value on religious
20 belief.

21 Values, are also traits that a person develops as he/she gets older; it can be beneficial in his/her
22 choices of goals. For example, if a person applies for a high level accounting position in a small firm,
23 the following qualifications are necessary: be very good with numbers, have a Bachelor's degree,
24 good communication, and at least two years experience. These requirements can be considered the
25 values of the firm, with some additional requirements such as, having a positive attitude toward your
26 work environment, dress code and business ethics.

27 Values, can also be considered a sacred belief to a person; like not having sex before marriage.
28 A person can place a deep value on his/her virginity; that is holding out for that special person for
29 whom he/she cares. This type of value would be considered a moral value.

30 Values can be learned from your parents. For example, the importance that they place on your
31 education, the type of friends you associate with and the way in which you carry yourself in public.
32 The reason for this being, it reflects on them and also they know from experience that these values

1 are a necessary part of your learning.

2 To me, trying to define values is like trying to define "life," or "love." Values are what make a
3 person special, and without them a person can be without a purpose in life. Once you have acquired
4 certain traits and disciplines it makes you a special person and no one can ever take that away from
5 you. Values extend to different cultures, races, religions and countries. The importance placed on
6 their values are so strong, that it does not matter where they go it goes with them. Values have
7 different meanings to different people and respect should be given to their belief no matter how
8 minute it may seem to you. (614 words)