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"YOU MUST WORK HARD":

CHANGES IN U.S. ADULTS' VALUES FOR CHILDREN 1986 – 2014*

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DEMOGRAPHY

ABSTRACT

Using data from the 1986 to 2014 General Social Survey (*N* = 23,116), we examine how adults' relative ranking of five qualities valued in children changed over the last quarter-century as U.S. society underwent notable demographic, economic, and cultural changes. Results show that preferences for self-direction ("to think for oneself"), the most preferred quality in 1986, declined slightly, whereas preferences for diligence ("to work hard"), the second most preferred quality in 1986, increased steadily. In 2014, the mean rankings for these two qualities were equal. Preferences for compassion ("to help others") increased slightly over time, whereas preferences for obedience ("to obey") declined steadily. Likability ("to be well-liked") remained the least preferred among the five qualities. These changes remain significant even after controlling for demographic and socioeconomic characteristics as well as value orientations. Extending research connecting occupation with socialization values, we show that although those with professional occupations prefer self-direction to other qualities, the decline in preferences for self-direction was particularly prevalent among this group, who are more likely to prefer working hard, compassion, or likability for children compared with the past. We argue that these patterns of changes may reflect the increasingly competitive occupational and financial climates as well as post-modern values in the advanced economy over the past three decades.

Sociologists have long investigated characteristics that adults recognize as desirable in children in order for them to be productive, moral citizens of the next generation (Alwin1984, 1989; Kohn 1977; Lenski 1961; Lynd and Lynd 1929). Such desirable characteristics for children reflect economic, social, and cultural characteristics in the society; and they vary across different historical time periods (Alwin 1989; Kohn 1977). Prior research has shown that there was a shift from obedience to self-direction in characteristics desired for children from the early 20th century to the mid-1980s in the United States (Alwin, 1984, 1989; Wright and Wright 1976). Major driving forces of this shift include the increase in education level and the decline in religion during the period (Alwin 1986, 1989), and may reflect the increasing ability to express central American values such as individualism (Inkeles 1984; Alwin 1996).

Since the mid-1980s, U.S. society has undergone notable changes in the demographic composition of its population, the workforce and economy, and in values such as secularism. For example, marriage and family structures have changed, with an increase in cohabitation and in the never-married population as well as an increase in childless adults (Cherlin, 2010). Immigrants, coming in larger numbers from Mexico, Asia, as well as Central and South America, may not share the same cultural values with the mainstream Anglo-European U.S. culture (Grieco 2010). In addition, the shift in the economy from manufacturing to service sectors, due in part to globalization and automation, has led to changes in occupational structures and the need for college degrees for well-paying jobs (Autor, Katz, and Kearney 2008). Meanwhile, U.S. adults have intensified the emphasis on the importance of the quality of life and subjective well-being of individuals, reflecting post-modern or post-materialist orientations in the advanced economy, and secularism has increased (Inglehart 1997). Given these demographic, economic, and cultural changes, it is likely that the qualities that adults value as important for

children may have changed in the past few decades. Trends in preferred qualities for children since the mid-1980s, however, have not been investigated.

Using data from 1986 to 2014 General Social Survey (GSS), we examine whether U.S. adults' relative ranking of five qualities of children—self-direction, diligence, compassion, obedience, and likability—changed during the 28-year period. We investigate whether and how shifts in demographic characteristics, socioeconomic (SES) characteristics, and value orientations among the U.S. adult population are related to changes in values for children across the three decades. We draw from research on value changes in the advanced economy (Alwin 1996; Inglehart 1997), research on variation in parenting values by social groups (Lareau 2003; Nomaguchi and House 2013), and social psychological research on recent changes in middle-class parenting (Milkie and Warner 2014; Nelson 2010; Villalobos 2014).

Values are a bridge between a position in the large social structure and the behavior of the individual and are thus important to examine as values change (Kohn 1977). In particular, socialization values shared among adults in the larger society provide considerable understanding about the parent-child relationship and changing family environments; in turn these are likely to be reflected in childrearing advice books and media, which have further influences on parenting practices (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Hays 1996). The present analysis contributes to literatures in multiple areas, including social structure and personality, value changes in post-modern society, and parenting.

BACKGROUND

Social Change and Adult Values for children

How should children be socialized? Public discussions include debates about how childhood has changed, whether the changing culture of childhood and practices of parenting are

better or worse than those of the past, and whether or not the way children are being socialized by parents, schools and society will, indeed, ready them for a relatively unknown future (Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie 2006; Milkie and Warner 2014; Villalobos 2014). What specific values are important to inculcate in children has been debated explicitly and frequently, and can provide a unique window into American culture.

The social structure and personality perspective (House 1981) contends that adults' socialization values for children—or the desirable characteristics to instill in children—are shaped by economic, social, cultural contexts of the larger social structure. A highly influential series of studies by Kohn and colleagues (Kohn 1977; Kohn and Schooler 1973) has shown that social class position, particularly occupational prestige, has strong influences on adult values for children through differential job conditions, with those in professional classes more commonly valuing self-direction and those in the working-classes, obedience. Another social factor that has been identified as having a strong influence on adults' values for children is religiosity (Alwin 1984; Lenski 1961; Starks and Robinson 2005). Other research has shown that changes in society, especially economic development, are closely related to a shift in value orientations (Bell 1973; Inglehart 1977; 1997). Alwin (1984; 1988; 1989) brought these lines of research together to examine changes in adult preferences for children over time. Reviewing qualitative work by the Lynds (1929), Alwin (1988) found a shift away from emphasis on obedience from the 1920s to the 1970s in Middletown, Indiana. Using data collected in Detroit, Michigan, Alwin (1984) found that from 1958 to 1983, preferences for self-direction increased while preferences for obedience declined, largely due to increasing levels of education and in religious factors, particularly a decline in preferences for obedience among Catholics. Alwin (1989) found the same patterns using the GSS from 1964 to 1984.

We extend earlier research on values to the current day in order to investigate potentially new patterns of change in desired traits for children in the United States since the mid-1980s. We examine changes in demographic characteristics, SES characteristics, and value orientations in U.S. adults since the mid-1980s as possible driving forces of changes in adults' values for children. Although research by Alwin (1984; 1988; 1989) and Kohn (Kohn 1977; Kohn and Schooler 1973) focused on two qualities, self-direction and obedience, other studies include at least three other behavioral qualities—diligence, compassion, and likability as commonly reported desired traits for children (Alwin 1989; 1996; Duvall 1946; Lynd and Lynd 1929; Kohn 1977). We include these other qualities in our analysis, in part because changes in the economy and cultural values since the mid-1980s indicate that other qualities, such as diligence and compassion, may have gained favor. In particular, the increase in uncertainty in job prospects for the middle-class, including those in the professional class (Nelson 2010), may have led to more emphasis on diligence. In addition, the increase in tolerance for diversity and minority groups reflected in many areas; for example, acceptance of same-sex marriage (Loftus 2001), suggests an increase in preferences for post-modern values that emphasize compassion or interdependence (Inglehart 1997). Below, we discuss how changes in demographic characteristics, SES characteristics, and cultural value orientations since the mid-1980s may be related to changes in desired traits for children.

Demographic Characteristics

Several demographic characteristics may be linked to changing values for children—although not always in the same direction. First, marriage and romantic partnerships have changed markedly since the mid-1980s (Cherlin 2010). Cohabitation has become the modal path to marriage with a majority of marriages preceded by cohabitation. With the increase in

cohabitation, the percentage of those who had never been married increased. Divorce rates declined slightly since 1980, but remain at a high level. Little research has examined how marital status is related to adults' values for children. Prior research has shown that cohabitors are less traditional compared to married counterparts in attitudes toward family-related issues (Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, and Waite 1995). Those who had never been married may be less likely to prefer obedience and more likely to prefer self-direction and compassion, compared to those who are married. Because of the increase in never married adults, adults in more recent years may be less likely to prefer obedience and more likely to prefer self-direction and compassion than adults in earlier years.

Fewer American adults have children today than in the mid-1980s. The proportion of adults without children among U.S. women aged 40 to 44 has increased from about 10 percent in the mid-1980s to 20 percent in 2006 (Livingston 2015). Since then, it declined to 15 percent in 2014, yet, remained higher than it was in the mid-1980s. Little research has examined how parents and non-parents differ in their values for children. Using the 1990 – 1993 World Values Survey (WVS), Xiao (2010) showed that parents with minor children were more likely than those with adult children to prefer autonomy to conformity. Although some studies on adult values for children focused only on parents (Alwin 1984; 1989; Park and Lau 2016), other studies examined adults including non-parents (Starks and Robinson 2005; Xiao 2010). Using the 1986 – 2002 GSS data, Starks and Robinson (2005) reported that patterns of changes in adult values for children, although they focused on the role of religion, were similar for parents versus non-parents. They did not examine whether parents and non-parents differ in their preferences and, if so, how the decline in adults who have children contributed to overall changes in adults' values for children since the mid-1980s.

Another change that has received little attention in this area of research is racial-ethnic compositions due to the recent increases in Latino and Asian immigrants (Grieco 2010). Parenting values vary by race-ethnicity and nativity. Asian and Hispanic immigrants are more likely than native-born counterparts to use "traditional" methods of parenting such as emphasizing obedience and diligence in children (Nomaguchi and House 2013). Suizzo (2007) found that ethnic-minority parents—Chinese Americans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans—are much more likely than European Americans to emphasize the importance of tradition and conformity. Starks and Robinson (2005) also showed that African Americans and Asian Americans are less likely than European Americans to prefer autonomy. Thus we expect the increase in share of other race in the population is related to an increase in preferences for obedience and diligence since the mid-1980s.

Another demographic change that may be linked to changing values is that the U.S. has been experiencing the aging of its population. Mortality at old ages declined since the mid-1980s, thanks to the development of new drugs to treat hypertension and other illness as well as the increasing emphasis on healthier life styles (Preston 1993). The life expectancy increased from 71.2 years old in 1986 to 76.4 years old in 2012 for men, from 78.2 years old in 1986 to 81.2 years old in 2012 (National Center for Health Statistics 2012; Xu, Kochanek, Murphy, and Arias 2014). With little change in birth rates (Martin et al. 2015), this means that the average age of the U.S. adult population has increased. How age is related to adult values for children is unclear. Older adults may prefer more "traditional" values, such as obedience, whereas younger adults may prefer more "contemporary" values, such as compassion. The retired elderly may not emphasize the idea of working hard compared to working-age adults. If so, the aging of the

population may contribute to increases in preferences for obedience, rather than compassion or diligence.

Finally, there was little change in gender composition in U.S. adult population since the mid-1980. Yet, gender is an important characteristic to include in the present analyses. Starks and Robinson (2005) found that women are more likely than men to prefer self-direction over obedience. Using the WVS, Xiao (2000) also found that women average a higher score than men in autonomy. These findings are consistent with other research findings that indicate that women are more likely than men to emphasize the importance of intrinsic rewards of jobs (Marini, Fan, Finley, and Beute 1996) and to be open to diversity (e.g., Loftus 2001).

Socioeconomic Status (SES) Characteristics and the New World of Work

Not only have Americans changed in terms of their education levels and distribution across different sectors of the labor market over recent decades, the economy and the perception of what the future holds for children is also fundamentally different (Milkie & Warner 2014). These changes are likely to be part of changes in what adults value for children.

A key and relatively big change among Americans is the increase in levels of education, with more people going to and graduating from college—from about 19 percent holding a Bachelor's degree in 1985 to 31 percent in 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016a, 2016b), as a response to economic globalization, the decline in manufacturing jobs, and the advancement of information technology (Autor, Katz, and Kearney 2008). A number of studies have shown that higher levels of education are linked to adults' preferences for self-direction over obedience (Alwin 1989; Kohn 1977; Lareau 2003; Park and Lau 2016; Suizzo 2007; Xiao 2000). Thus, the increase in college educated Americans, and the increased perceived importance of college to

become successful for today's youth, may have led to a decline in preferences for obedience and an increase in preferences for self-direction.

The shift from the manufacturing to the service sectors has led to changes in occupational structures. Blue-collar jobs have decreased, whereas jobs that require specialized skills—professional jobs—have increased (Autor, Katz, and Kearney 2008). Kohn and colleagues argued that occupations that involve freedom from close supervision, complex thought process, and non-routine tasks are related to adults' preferences for self-direction as values for children, whereas those occupations requiring close supervision and repetitive work are related to adults' preferences for obedience in children (Kohn 1977; Kohn and Schooler 1973). Their idea was supported by Wright and Wright (1976) using data from General Social Survey (GSS) from 1964 to 1973. The increase in professional occupations may have led to a further decline in preferences for obedience and an increase in preferences for self-direction.

Another change in the economy since the mid-1980s is changes in the nature of work (Heinz 2003). With fewer permanent employees and more contractors and temporary workers, there has been more competition and uncertainty, and an emphasis on survival in a global marketplace (e.g., through working hard). Thus, we expect that there is an overall increase in those who emphasize the importance of diligence in qualities seen to be important for children that may not be explained by changes in sociodemographic characteristics in the adult population. Further, such change may have been more prevalent among those with professional jobs. Qualitative evidence has suggested that those with professional jobs appear to feel the pressure to ensure their children's future by investing more in their children's education and future economic successes. Milkie and Warner (2014) argue that middle-class mothers increasingly work to "safeguard" children's futures in a world where social safety nets are few

and this may be through pushing children more to work hard at academic achievements in school and at developing their unique talents through extra-curricular activities (Lareau 2003). Thus, we expect that an increase in preferences for diligence over time may be stronger for adults with professional jobs than those who have non-professional jobs.

Other SES-related characteristics may be related to changes in adult values for children. One of them is employment status. As mentioned earlier, prior research has shown that work characteristics have strong influences on parenting values (Kohn 1977); yet, little research has examined whether employment per se is related to adult values for children. How the share of employed adults changed from the mid-1980s to 2014 is complex. The labor force participation among mothers increased slightly during this period (Cohany and Sok 2007). Yet, for both men and women, securing a stable full-time employment became more challenging (Autor, Katz, & Kearney, 2008). The increase in the share of the elderly means an increase in retired adults in the population. Family income is another indicator of social class that may be related to adult values for children, although Alwin (1984) found no association between family income and preferences for self-direction versus obedience in the model that controlled for education and occupation. The trends in family income appear to depend on education and occupational status (Autor, Katz, and Kearney 2008). Finally, we expect that adult values may vary in recession versus non-recession years. Among parents who raised their children during the Great Depression, Elder (1999) found that experiences of economic deprivation influenced adults' views and values regarding work, family, marriage, and children. For example, adults who experienced economic deprivation were more likely to emphasize the importance of job security than intrinsic rewards of jobs.

Value Orientations in the Advanced Economy

Views about what is most important for children in their lives will reflect the underlying fundamental ideologies of being American, for example: individualism, freedom, and the idea of a meritocracy—those who work hard will succeed. These may be more or less expressed depending on economic and social factors of the time (Inkeles 1984; Alwin 1996).

Scholars argue that industrialization and economic development led to increases in educational levels and standards of living, changes in gender roles and attitudes toward authority and altered sexual norms. Further, the rise of the service and knowledge sectors in the post-industrial, affluent society contributed to the shift in people's values toward the emphasis on quality of life, subjective well-being, self-expression, and tolerance toward diversity (Bell 1973; Inglehart 1997). While industrialization may emphasize rationality, efficiency, and competition, post-modern society, where more people are engaged in occupations that require them to deal with the well-being of other people, may emphasize quality of life, self-expression, and compassion. Other areas of research have shown that there has been an increase in emphasis on empathy (De Waal 2010; Segal 2011). A study by Pew Research Center (2010) found that more than half of Millennials participated in volunteering work during the previous year and "helping others in need" was ranked high as the "most important thing in their lives" by adults in that generation. Based on arguments reflecting a shift toward post-modern values in the advanced economy, we would expect to observe increases in preferences for self-direction and compassion, and decreases in preferences for obedience, likability, and diligence even after controlling for sociodemographic characteristics.

To measure changes in broad-based value orientations, prior research has used a variety of scales (e.g., Inglehart 1977; 1997). In the GSS, there are a couple of questions regarding attitudes toward gender, marriage and family, and sexual behavior that were asked each year.

Yet, these questions were asked only part of the respondents (spilt sample) and thus there are many missing values. We are able to use two questions linked to cultural orientations that were asked for all respondents each year: religious service attendance and political views. As mentioned earlier, religion played a key role in influencing changes in adults' values for children prior the mid-1980s (Alwin 1986, 1989) and through the early 2000s (Starks and Robinson 2005). There has been a debate over declining religious attendance since the 1980s. Some reported a decline in the proportion of Americans who attend religious services has been discussed (Pew Research Center 2015). Other studies show that although a rapid decline in religious service attendance was found until during the 1970s (Hout and Greeley 1987), there may be little change since then. Using data from GSS, Presser and Chaves (2007) found that religious service attendance declined from 1990 to 2006; yet the magnitude is very small—from 42 percent to 38 percent. Thus, it is unclear whether changes in religious factors will influence changes in adult preferences of traits desired for children.

With regard to people's political views, adults with more liberal views may rank more "contemporary" or non-traditional values such as self-direction and compassion higher as they tend to align with other aspects of contemporary values such as being tolerant with and inclusive of diverse groups of people (Loftus 2001). Since the mid-1980s, Americans have not necessarily shifted to become either more liberal or conservative, but there has been polarization in Americans' political views (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008). This polarization of increasing liberalism and conservativism may mean that any value changes offset each other.

THE PRESENT STUDY

In this paper, we examine changes in the values that adults hold for children across the most recent quarter century of American life, given key changes in demographics, the nature of

socio-economic status and the world of paid work, and value orientations. The classically studied values of self-direction and obedience are assessed, as are other important yet understudied values of diligence, compassion, and likeability. We pose the following two research questions: (1) Among five major qualities—self-direction, obedience, diligence, compassion, and likability—which values do Americans consider to be most important to instill in children in order to best prepare them for their future, and how did the ranking change over the past quarter-century? (2) Are these changes in the ranking of the most preferred quality for children explained once adjusting for changing demographics, SES, and cultural orientations of the population, such as race/ethnicity, education level, and church attendance? Although we do not have measures that allow us to directly and fully examine each of the arenas—especially the changing nature of work and changing broad-based value orientations—discussed above, the "year" variable, once we adjust for key demographic and other variables that have shifted over time, to some extent will reveal an increased propensity in U.S. society to value certain traits for children as they grow into a new world.

METHOD

Data

Data for this paper were drawn from 18 surveys of the General Social Survey (GSS) conducted in 1986, 1987[1], 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2014. No survey was conducted in 1992, and since 1994 the GSS has been fielded every other year. The questions regarding qualities respondents prefer in children were asked regardless of the respondents' parental status. The sample size for the

[1] We excluded oversample blacks.

present analysis was N = 23,116. This is smaller than the GSS sample as a whole (n = 40,660), because the GSS used split samples and only part of the total sample were asked these questions.

Dependent variables

Adults' values for children were measured by the following questions. "If you had to choose, which thing on this list would you pick as the most important for a child to learn to prepare him or her for life? To obey, to be well-liked or popular, to think for himself or herself, to work hard, to help others when they need help? Which comes next in importance? Which comes third? Which comes fourth?" Thus, respondents were asked to provide relative rankings of five traits: obedience, likability, self-direction, diligence, and compassion. We recoded it so that higher values mean higher rankings (i.e., 1 = *5th*, 2 = *4th*, 3 = *3rd*, 4 = *2nd*, and 5 = *most important*). Following Alwin (1989), we examined two types of variables: (a) the mean rankings for each trait; and (b) the percentage of respondents selecting a given trait as the most important trait to have.

Independent variables

The primary independent variable is *year* since 1986, which was measured as an interval variable ranging from 0 = *1986* to 28 = *2014*. To understand year changes, we include three sets of variables, including 1) demographic, such as, marital and parental status, race/ethnicity, age and gender; 2) socioeconomic (SES) and work related, including college degree, occupation, and employment status, and 3) value orientations, such as religious service attendance and political views.

Demographic variables. Marital status included four dummy variables, married (reference), widowed, divorced/separated, and never married. *Parental status* was a dichotomous variable where those living with children under age 18 were assigned 1s and others were

assigned 0s. *Race* included three dummy variables, including white (reference), black, and other race. *Age* was measured in years. *Gender* was a dichotomous variable where women were assigned 1s and men were assigned 0s.

SES. College degree was a dichotomous variable where those with a four-year college degree or higher degree were assigned 1s and others were assigned 0s. *Occupation* was measured in three categories based on the 1980 Census Occupation Code, including professionals (managerial and professional specialty occupations), non-professional white collar occupations (administrative, sales, and service occupations), and non-professional blue collar occupations (farming, forest, fishing, precision, production, craft, repair, operations, fabrications, and laborers). *Employment status* was measured as three dummy variables including nonemployed, employed part-time, and employed full-time (reference). *Family annual income* was a constructed variable by GSS that was adjusted for inflation. *Recession* year was a dichotomous variable where 1990, 1991, 2002, 2008, and 2010 (Wood 2011) were assigned 1s and other years were assigned 0s.

Value Orientations. Religious service attendance was an ordered variable ranging from 0 = never to 8 = several times a week. *Political view* was measured as an ordered variable ranging from 1 = extremely conservative to 7 = extremely liberal.

Analytic Plan

First, we describe trends in mean rankings for the five qualities and trends in the percentage of adults selecting each trait as most important from 1986 to 2014. Then we use ordinary-least-square (OLS) regression models to examine how demographic, SES, and value orientations are related to mean rankings for each trait and whether controlling for these characteristics change the effects of year on mean rankings of each trait. There are a small

percentage of missing cases for some variables in each year. We include these missing cases by using multiple imputation techniques suggested by Allison (2001). We performed PROC MI in SAS with five iterations for each year of survey and then combined the 18 imputed data sets into one pooled data set. Data are weighted to adjust for the sub-sampling of non-respondents and the number of adults in the household (Smith et al. 2013).

RESULTS

Table 1 presents means for explanatory variables for the total sample and by year. As expected, for demographic variables, we see more "never-married" respondents reflecting the increases in cohabitation and postponement of marriage. The percentage of respondents who are living with a child under 18 (those actively parenting) declined a great deal, from 43 percent to 27 percent. The percentage of "other race" adults increased a great deal over time from four percent in 1986 to 12 percent in 2014. The average age increased, from about 44 to 48 years. The former two changes may be linked to less support for traditional values, whereas the latter two categories might be linked to more support for traditional ideas.

In terms of our second set of variables linked to socio-economic statuses, there has been an increase in those with a college degree from 20 to 31 percent of US adults. The shares of those with professional or non-professional white-collar occupations increased, while the share of those with non-professional blue-collar occupations decreased. The levels of religious service attendance fluctuated a bit during the 28-year period, but decreased over time.

[Table 1 around here]

Figure 1 shows mean ratings for the five behavioral qualities from 1986 to 2014. In 1986, the mean ranking was highest for self-direction ("to think for oneself"), followed by diligence ("to work hard") and compassion ("to help others"), two of which were around the same levels.

The mean ranking for preference for obedience ("to obey") was the fourth highest, whereas the mean ranking for likability ('to be popular") was the lowest among the five qualities. Since 1986, preference for self-direction declined slightly. In 2014, the mean ranking for self-direction was 3.79, 5 percent lower than the mean ranking in 1986. In contrast, the mean ranking for diligence increased steadily (16%) from 3.28 in 1986 to 3.80 in 2014, becoming virtually identical to the mean ranking for self-direction in 2014. The mean ranking for compassion also increased slightly (8%) from 3.27 to 3.52. Preference for obedience declined 16 percent from 3.06 in 1986 to 2.58 in 2014. Likability was ranked the lowest across all years and declined slightly (6%) over time from 1.40 to 1.32.

[Figure 1 around here]

Changes in the percentage of adults who reported a given quality most important for children illustrates the pattern of shift in preferences over time quite clearly. Figure 2 shows that the percentage of adults who reported self-direction as the most important quality for children declined from 51.2 percent in 1986 to 42.8 percent in 2014. In contrast, the percentage of adults who reported diligence or "working hard" as the most important quality for children more than doubled from 11.2 percent to 25.8 percent. The percentage of adults who reported compassion as most important to prepare children for their future increased from 13.7 percent to 18.5 percent. The percentage of adults who reported obedience as most important declined steadily from 23.4 percent to 12.4 percent. A very small percentage of Americans reported likability as the most important quality for children in all years. In sum, although self-direction remains the top quality than U.S. adults selected as the most important quality for children, the percentage declined and the mean ranking is now tied with working hard. Indicating the rising importance of diligence,

the percentage of U.S. adults selecting diligence as the most important quality more than doubled in a relatively short period of time, from the mid-1980s to the mid-2010s.

[Figure 2 around here]

How are these changes in adult values for children related to changes in sociodemographic characteristics and value orientations? Table 2 presents results from OLS regression models predicting differences by year as well as by demographic, SES characteristics and value orientation in mean rankings for self-direction. Model 1 shows that the year variable was negatively related to the ranking for self-direction. Model 2 controlled for demographic characteristics. Compared to the currently married, the divorced were more likely to rank self-direction higher, whereas the widowed were less likely to do so. Blacks or other race were less likely than whites to ranking self-direction higher; and older adults were less likely to do so. Women were more likely than men to rank self-direction higher. It is likely that the increase in share of the divorced has contributed to an increase in preferences for self-direction, whereas the greater share of "other race" adults in more recent years has contributed to a decrease in preferences for this trait. Controlling for these demographic characteristics altogether, the year coefficients declined slightly. Model 3 included SES characteristics. As expected, college graduates were more likely than those without a college degree to prefer self-direction. Those with professional jobs or non-professional white collar jobs were more likely than those with non-professional blue-collar jobs to rank this trait higher. Those with a higher level of family income were also more likely to prefer this trait. After controlling for these SES characteristics, the absolute value of the year coefficients increased slightly, indicating a suppression effect: if it were not for the increases in adults with college degrees and adults with professional jobs, we would have seen even a greater decline in preferences for self-direction. Model 4 included two

indicators of value orientations. Religious service attendance was negatively related to preference for self-direction, whereas liberal political views were positively related to preference for self-direction. The year effect changed little. Model 5, which included all explanatory variables, shows that the decline in preferences for self-direction is not explained by changes in sociodemographic characteristics and value orientations that were measured in the present analysis. Indeed, it shows a suppression effect, indicating that the decline would have been greater had there not been changes demographic and socio-economic status changes in the population that favor valuing self-direction. Finally, as shown in Model 6, the interaction term of professional x year was significant, suggesting that the relative decline in the ranking for self-direction over time was greater for professionals than for blue-collar workers.

[Table 2 about here]

With regard to preferences for diligence (Table 3), the coefficient for year was positive, indicating that preferences for children's diligence or "working hard" increased over time (Model 1). In Model 2, adults of "other race" (largely Asian and Hispanic) ranked diligence higher than did whites. Older adults ranked diligence lower than younger adults. Women ranked this trait lower than did men. Including these characteristics in the model, the year coefficients changed little. It could be that the increase in the average age, which was negatively related to preferences for diligence, and the increase in the share of other race, which was positively related to preferences for diligence, might offset each other. In Model 3, those who were currently non-employed ranked diligence lower than did those employed fulltime, whereas those with higher family income were ranked this trait higher. Again, the positive association between year and preferences for diligence remained significant after controlling for these characteristics. Model 4 shows that including religious service attendance and liberal political views in the model did not

change the magnitude of the year effect. Including all these characteristics in the model (Model 5) did not explain much of the positive year effect on adults' preferences for diligence. The interaction terms between year and occupations were not significant (Model 6).

[Table 3 about here]

Results for compassion show an increase in preferences for instilling this quality in children over time (Model 1 in Table 4). The widowed ranked this trait higher than the married; whites and younger adults ranked this higher than their blacks and older adults counterparts. Women ranked this trait higher than did men. In terms of SES characteristics, college graduates were more likely than those without a college degree to rank this trait higher. Adults with professional jobs or non-professional white-collar jobs were more likely than those with blue-collar jobs to rank compassion higher. Those with higher-income were more likely than lower-income counterparts and those in recession years were more likely than adults in non-recession years to rank this trait higher. Those attending religious services more often ranked compassion higher. Again, the positive association between year and preferences for compassion remained significant after controlling for these characteristics. If anything, there may be a slight suppression effect, indicating that had there not been changes in certain demographic factors such as an increasingly aging population, SES factors such as family income increasing (adjusting for inflation), or in value orientations such as churchgoing declining, we would have seen an even higher mean rank for this value. The interaction between year and occupation was not significant.

[Table 4 about here]

Turning to obedience (Table 5), Model 1 shows that year is negatively related to the ranking for obedience. Models 2 and 3 show some demographic and socioeconomic

characteristics are related to preferences for obedience. Compared to those who were currently married, those who were divorced were less likely to rank obedience higher whereas those who were widowed were more likely to rank this trait lower. Parents ranked obedience higher than non-parents. Blacks and those of other races ranked obedience higher than did whites, and men ranked obedience higher than women. Those with a college degree, professionals and non-professional white collar workers, and those with higher income rank obedience lower, whereas those who were currently non-employed were more likely than those who were full-time employed to rank obedience higher. Model 4 shows that attendance in religious service was positively related to ranking obedience higher. When all these characteristics are controlled for, the coefficient for year declined from -0.010 (Model 1) to -0.006 (Model 5), suggesting that some of the decline in preferences for obedience is due to compositional, work and value changes among U.S. adults. The interactions between year and occupations were not significant

[Table 5 about here]

Finally, results indicate that the ranking for likability also declined in recent years (Model 1 in Table 6). Adults who were not currently married—widowed, divorced, or never married—were more likely to rank likability higher; and so were older adults. Those of other race were ranked likeability higher than did whites, and men ranked it higher than did women. Those in professional and white collar positions ranked likability lower. Those who were not employed and liberals ranked likeability higher, whereas religious services goers ranked likability lower. When these characteristics were controlled for, the coefficient for year changed little, suggesting that the decline in preferences for likability is not explained by changes in these characteristics. The interaction term between professionals and year was significant. This means that the decline in the ranking for likability over time was greater for blue-collar workers than professionals.

Because changes in the mean ranking for likability over time were very small (Figure 1), we are cautious about interpretations of this interaction finding.

Overall, for most of the desired qualities, including the demographic, SES, and value orientation variables into the models was illuminating, but did not generally explain the changes of an increased emphasis on hard work and compassion, a continued decrease in obedience and a newly revealed cultural turn from the primacy of the importance of thinking for oneself. Of course the models lack all potential explanatory variables, though we have included many. Indeed, we note some slight suppression effects, which suggests that had the demographic and other changes not occurred, change in values may have been more dramatic. The results indicate some significant shifts in terms of what adults think are important for children today, compared to a quarter-century ago. Some of these trends indicate a continuation of patterns that were noted by earlier scholars, and others we are highlighting in ways that have not received much research attention.

[Table 6 around here]

DISCUSSION

What do adults believe is important and ideal for children' preparation for life? Knowing what adults value for children and how this changes over time is a compelling window into American culture and society and to family dynamics. Prior research has shown that adults' values for children changed over time from obedience to self-direction in the early to the late-20th century in the United States, reflecting social changes such as the rise of higher education and the decline in religion (Alwin 1989). This paper extends this line of research to investigating changes in adults' values for children between the mid-1980s to the mid-2010s during the period

when the U.S. economic and social landscape changed markedly. In doing so, our findings suggest some important cultural shifts.

Our findings show four notable changes. First, self-direction remains the most preferred trait; yet the percentage of those who selected thinking for oneself as the most important trait compared to other four traits (as well as the mean ranking for this trait) declined; indeed its mean ranking among the five traits fell to the exact level as another key trait—working hard or diligence. Moreover, those with professional jobs seeing thinking for oneself as relatively less important than did the professionals in the past.

Second, preferences for diligence, not typically examined in classic studies of what Americans value in children, increased over the past quarter century. Fully one-quarter (25.8%) of American adults chose diligence as most important, whereas a mere 11 percent did in 1986. Whereas almost five times as many Americans in 1986 said that thinking for oneself was most important to children's futures as those who chose "working hard," today, the ratio is not even 2:1. Combined with the results on self-direction, a major shift has occurred.

Third, obedience is seen to be less and less important for children's futures, with a decline from 23 percent of adults choosing this value as the most important for preparing children in 1986 to only 12 percent today. This is true even accounting for changes in occupation, which Kohn (1977) famously linked to parenting values. Adults today may see that obedience is not necessarily the best ingredient for success in which employers and institutions offer a less clear and secure pathway to well-being. If authorities are less clear and compelling in their provisions of security, be it financial or spiritual, obedience may be a less sure pathway as well.

Finally, preferences for compassion increased modestly. Although changes in adults' views about the value of children helping others has not been studied extensively, the increasing percentage of middle- and high-schools in the U.S. which encourage or demand service to the community as a part of fulfilling requirements for graduation may be related to this change (Helms 2013).

The most prominent shift is the rise in the value of working hard over other traits since the 1980s. Although hard work— self-disciplined, high-achieving individual effort—is a staple of the American landscape (Cherlin 2014) and is fundamentally linked to ideals of a meritocracy, the idea that *children* should prioritize working hard to prepare for life may be relatively new. The increasing percentage of Americans who rate working hard as the most important way to prepare children for "life" may reflect an increasing perception of the need for individual efforts for paving one's way, presumably economically, in an era of neoliberalism. Though the question asks about what is important for children's lives in general, perhaps the perceived instability of institutions, particularly the workplace, combined with a continual push to Americans to rely on themselves and not on others or the state to help them out, might mean that the practicality of diligence in children's endeavors outshines other key qualities, at least relative to earlier decades. The neoliberal model has been noted in other research on mothers' efforts to push children to work hard academically and in developing talents for their futures (Lareau 2003) given more precarity (Milkie and Warner 2014). The "trickle down" of emphasizing hard work during childhood may reflect the idea that early preparation of one's "resume" will lead to the right high school program of study, the right college and a successful career in a world perceived to be uncertain.

The study has several limitations. First, there was a limited number of traits that respondents were asked about, and those that are potentially important or rising in importance in U.S. society are not necessarily included. For example, the value of the trait of leadership may have grown over time if asked, given its emphasis in recent years in some school and extracurricular programs. Second, respondents were unable to choose two values as having the same levels of importance. On the basis of postmodern theory, Ovadia (2003) argued that multiple values might increase in importance. Given this logic, if people were allowed to select more than one as “the most” important, different patterns would be observed over time. It also suggests that even as the relative ranking might change, overall, it is possible that more people believe that it takes more of several different qualities for children’s success. Third, we discuss changes in the larger landscape, one in which neoliberalism, globalization and other large scale changes may have altered what adults think children need to do in order to prepare for their futures; however omitted socio-demographic or other variables could account for some of what we attribute more closely to broader changes in the nature of work and to cultural orientations.

In all, the social and cultural backdrop for children’s ideal qualities has continued to change. What should children and their parents do as young people forge a future in a perhaps economically uncertain world in the 2010s and beyond? Compared to a quarter-century ago, working hard is viewed as relatively more important, and thinking for oneself relatively less important, although the mean ranking of thinking for oneself continues to be higher than that of the other three traits. Moreover, compassion is seen as the most important quality more often than it was in the past, surpassing obedience, which has had a long decline in America as a value for children to ready themselves for their adult lives. The economic landscape and larger cultural

orientations of U.S. society point to one in which more adults' view of children's preparation for the future as requiring hard work and compassion.

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Table 1. Weighted Means (Std.) for Explanatory Variables in the Analysis for Total Sample and by Year (N = 23,116)

	Total	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1993	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Marital Status																			
Married	0.57	0.64	0.61	0.60	0.61	0.61	0.63	0.62	0.61	0.57	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.60	0.55	0.56	0.51	0.52	0.53
Widowed	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.06	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.06
Divorced	0.13	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.12	0.10	0.13	0.13	0.15	0.14	0.14	0.16	0.13	0.15	0.14	0.15	0.16	0.15
Never married	0.23	0.18	0.20	0.21	0.22	0.20	0.20	0.19	0.19	0.21	0.23	0.25	0.23	0.22	0.26	0.25	0.28	0.27	0.26
Parents	0.38	0.43	0.42	0.41	0.43	0.38	0.42	0.41	0.40	0.40	0.38	0.42	0.30	0.31	0.38	0.36	0.33	0.34	0.27
Race																			
White	0.80	0.86	0.84	0.84	0.86	0.83	0.83	0.84	0.83	0.82	0.79	0.80	0.81	0.79	0.71	0.77	0.76	0.74	0.74
Black	0.13	0.11	0.12	0.11	0.09	0.12	0.13	0.10	0.12	0.12	0.14	0.13	0.13	0.10	0.14	0.13	0.15	0.14	0.13
Other race	0.07	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.10	0.15	0.10	0.10	0.12	0.12
Age	44.90	43.94	44.01	43.78	43.77	44.11	44.09	44.28	44.96	43.74	44.34	44.44	46.16	44.67	44.13	46.06	46.28	46.66	47.54
	(16.97)	(16.80)	(17.13)	(17.71)	(17.17)	(17.21)	(16.88)	(16.85)	(16.43)	(16.42)	(16.77)	(16.79)	(16.81)	(16.71)	(16.47)	(16.85)	(17.71)	(17.32)	(17.13)
Women	0.54	0.55	0.55	0.53	0.55	0.54	0.56	0.58	0.53	0.53	0.54	0.54	0.55	0.51	0.56	0.53	0.55	0.54	0.55
College	0.25	0.20	0.20	0.18	0.19	0.20	0.22	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.24	0.25	0.26	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.31	0.31
Occupation																			
Professional	0.31	0.28	0.29	0.25	0.26	0.23	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.31	0.32	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.35	0.33
White-collar	0.38	0.36	0.35	0.40	0.40	0.41	0.38	0.41	0.42	0.37	0.38	0.36	0.39	0.36	0.38	0.37	0.39	0.38	0.40
Blue-collar	0.31	0.36	0.36	0.35	0.34	0.36	0.34	0.31	0.31	0.32	0.30	0.30	0.27	0.30	0.30	0.31	0.30	0.27	0.27
Employment																			
Nonemployed	0.37	0.40	0.36	0.37	0.39	0.36	0.39	0.38	0.35	0.34	0.32	0.34	0.36	0.35	0.35	0.38	0.44	0.40	0.40
Part-time	0.13	0.11	0.14	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.15	0.14	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.12	0.12	0.14	0.12
Full-time	0.50	0.49	0.50	0.51	0.49	0.51	0.46	0.48	0.52	0.54	0.54	0.53	0.51	0.51	0.50	0.50	0.44	0.46	0.47
Family income	49.57	44.60	46.32	43.95	46.84	48.13	43.71	48.70	47.32	48.77	49.52	52.08	55.75	54.13	54.78	54.20	47.70	51.98	52.31
	(39.33)	(32.83)	(31.43)	(31.37)	(31.16)	(34.94)	(31.85)	(36.27)	(34.03)	(35.68)	(37.45)	(43.60)	(44.96)	(44.50)	(45.26)	(44.64)	(40.14)	(48.44)	(45.78)
Recession	0.24	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Religious service	3.72	4.06	4.01	3.92	3.85	3.93	4.10	3.85	3.87	3.69	3.69	3.59	3.70	3.84	3.54	3.50	3.50	3.52	3.35
	(2.72)	(2.73)	(2.56)	(2.65)	(2.68)	(2.62)	(2.59)	(2.79)	(2.67)	(2.62)	(2.78)	(2.73)	(2.67)	(2.70)	(2.76)	(2.72)	(2.77)	(2.81)	(2.83)
Liberal views	3.84	3.78	3.94	3.81	3.97	3.83	3.87	3.85	3.77	3.78	3.82	3.86	3.83	3.69	3.86	3.82	3.92	3.86	3.86
	(1.38)	(1.28)	(1.32)	(1.38)	(1.31)	(1.36)	(1.33)	(1.37)	(1.35)	(1.35)	(1.35)	(1.42)	(1.35)	(1.39)	(1.38)	(1.38)	(1.48)	(1.46)	(1.41)
N	22,152	732	1,452	977	1,000	871	982	1,031	1,978	1,895	1,880	1,863	899	868	995	1,351	1,349	1,323	1,670

Table 2. OLS Regression Coefficients Predicting Changes in Relative Rankings of Preferences for Self-Direction: 1986 – 2014 (N = 23,116)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	b	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*	
Year	-.008	.000	***	-.006	.001	***	-.010	.001	***	-.009	.001	***	-.010	.001	***	-.007	.002	***
Widowed				-.259	.037	***							-.121	.037	**	-.121	.037	**
Divorced/separated				.059	.026	*							.091	.026	***	.091	.026	***
Never married				-.032	.025								.012	.025		.013	.025	
Parents				-.020	.020								.014	.019		.015	.019	
Black				-.248	.026	***							-.123	.025	***	-.123	.025	***
Other race				-.569	.033	***							-.517	.032	***	-.518	.032	***
Age				-.002	.001	*							.001	.001		.001	.001	
Women				.216	.017	***							.221	.018	***	.222	.018	***
College degree							.286	.023	***				.310	.022	***	.311	.022	***
Professional							.352	.024	***				.283	.024	***	.344	.039	***
White collar							.239	.020	***				.162	.021	***	.207	.035	***
Nonemployed							-.029	.019					-.047	.020	*	-.047	.020	*
Part-time employed							.025	.026					.006	.026		.006	.026	
Family income							.002	.000	***				.002	.000	***	.003	.000	***
Recession							-.016	.020					-.021	.019		-.021	.019	
Church attendance										-.045	.003	***	-.055	.003	***	-.055	.003	***
Liberal political view										.068	.006	***	.065	.006	***	.066	.006	***
Year x professional																-.005	.002	*
Year x white collar																-.004	.002	
Intercept	4.010	.007	***	4.033	.040	***	3.671	.023	***	3.933	.033	***	3.543	.050	***	3.505	.053	***
R^2	.003	***		.027	***		.048	***		.020	***		.086	***		.087	***	

*p < .05; **p <.01; *** p <.001

Omitted reference groups are: married, white, non-professional blue-collar occupation, full-time employed, year x blue-collar occupation.

Table 3. OLS Regression Coefficients Predicting Changes in Relative Rankings of Preferences for Diligence: 1986 – 2014 (N = 23,116)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	b	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*	
Year	.014	.000	***	.015	.001	***	.014	.001	***	.014	.001	***	.013	.001	***	.012	.001	***
Widowed				-.029	.029								.023	.029		.023	.029	
Divorced/separated				-.037	.020								-.009	.020		-.009	.020	
Never married				-.007	.019								.027	.020		.027	.020	
Parents				-.023	.015								-.019	.015		-.019	.015	
Black				-.036	.020								.014	.020		.014	.020	
Other race				.084	.025	***							.116	.025	***	.117	.025	***
Age				-.005	.001	***							-.005	.001	***	-.005	.001	***
Women				-.092	.013	***							-.083	.014	***	-.083	.014	***
College degree							.032	.018					.028	.018		.028	.018	
Professional							-.012	.019					.044	.019	*	.035	.031	
White collar							.019	.016					.064	.017	***	.050	.028	
Nonemployed							-.100	.015	***				-.016	.016		-.016	.016	
Part-time employed							-.028	.020					-.006	.020		-.006	.020	
Family income							.001	.000	***				.001	.000	***	.001	.000	***
Recession							.020	.015					.024	.015		.024	.015	
Church attendance										-.026	.002	***	-.022	.003	***	-.022	.003	***
Liberal view										-.024	.005	***	-.029	.005	***	-.029	.005	***
Year x professional																.001	.002	
Year x white collar																.001	.002	
Intercept	3.383	.005	***	3.684	.031	***	3.348	.019	***	3.580	.026	***	3.721	.040	***	3.729	.043	***
R^2	.016	***		.028	***		.022	***		.021	***		.036	***		.037	***	

p* < .05; ***p* <.01; * *p* <.001

Omitted reference groups are: married, white, non-professional blue-collar occupation, full-time employed, year x blue-collar occupation.

Table 4. OLS Regression Coefficients Predicting Changes in Relative Rankings of Preferences for Compassion: 1986 – 2014 (N = 23,116)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	b	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*	
Year	.008	.000	***	.009	.001	***	.008	.001	***	.009	.001	***	.009	.001	***	.011	.001	***
Widowed				.079	.030	**							.068	.030	*	.068	.030	*
Divorced/separated				-.009	.020								-.013	.021		-.013	.021	
Never married				-.011	.020								-.022	.021		-.022	.021	
Parents				-.009	.016								-.009	.016		-.008	.016	
Black				-.337	.020	***							-.360	.021	***	-.360	.021	***
Other race				-.023	.026								-.035	.026		-.036	.026	
Age				-.005	.001	***							-.005	.001	***	-.005	.001	***
Women				.053	.014	***							.023	.015		.023	.015	
College degree							.065	.018	***				.042	.018	*	.042	.018	*
Professional							.068	.020	***				.062	.020	**	.094	.032	**
White collar							.044	.016	**				.035	.017	*	.056	.029	
Nonemployed							-.026	.015					.009	.016		.010	.016	
Part-time employed							.064	.021	**				.044	.021	*	.044	.021	*
Family income							-.001	.000	**				-.001	.000	***	-.001	.000	***
Recession							.033	.016	*				.033	.016	*	.033	.016	*
Church attendance										.011	.003	***	.018	.003	***	.018	.003	***
Liberal view										.023	.005	***	.024	.005	***	.024	.005	***
Year x professional																-.003	.002	
Year x white collar																-.002	.002	
Intercept	3.263	.005	***	3.475	.032	***	3.239	.019	***	3.130	.027	***	3.331	.041	***	3.312	.043	***
R^2	.005	***		.021	***		.008	***		.007	***		.026	***		.026	***	

p* < .05; ***p* <.01; * *p* <.001

Omitted reference groups are: married, white, non-professional blue-collar occupation, full-time employed, year x blue-collar occupation.

Table 5. OLS Regression Coefficients Predicting Changes in Relative Rankings of Preferences for Obedience: 1986 – 2014 (N = 23,116)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	b	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*	
Year	-.010	.000	***	-.012	.001	***	-.006	.001	***	-.008	.001	***	-.006	.001	***	-.008	.002	***
Widowed				.145	.039	***							-.023	.038		-.023	.038	
Divorced/separated				-.062	.026	*							-.091	.026	***	-.091	.026	***
Never married				-.020	.026								-.054	.026	*	-.054	.026	*
Parents				.064	.020	**							.018	.019		.018	.019	
Black				.611	.027	***							.445	.026	***	.445	.026	***
Other race				.319	.034	***							.250	.032	***	.251	.032	***
Age				.009	.001	***							.006	.001	***	.006	.001	***
Women				-.049	.018	**							-.049	.018	**	-.050	.018	**
College degree							-.410	.024	***				-.401	.023	***	-.401	.023	***
Professional							-.339	.025	***				-.354	.025	***	-.400	.039	***
White collar							-.209	.021	***				-.218	.021	***	-.254	.035	***
Nonemployed							.125	.019	***				.029	.020		.028	.020	
Part-time employed							-.069	.027	*				-.071	.026	**	-.071	.026	**
Family income							-.003	.000	***				-.003	.000	***	-.003	.000	***
Recession							-.040	.020	*				-.042	.020	*	-.042	.020	*
Church attendance										.082	.003	***	.081	.003	***	.081	.003	***
Liberal view										-.098	.006	***	-.096	.006	***	-.096	.006	***
Year x professional																.004	.002	
Year x white collar																.003	.002	
Intercept	2.930	.007	***	2.471	.041	***	3.281	.025	***	2.977	.034	***	3.122	.051	***	3.152	.054	***
R^2	.004	***		.041	***		.070	***		.049	***		.137	***		.137	***	

p* < .05; ***p* <.01; * *p* <.001

Omitted reference groups are: married, white, non-professional blue-collar occupation, full-time employed, year x blue-collar occupation.

Table 6. OLS Regression Coefficients Predicting Changes in Relative Rankings of Preferences for Likability: 1986 – 2014 (N = 23,116)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	b	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*		*b*	*SE*	
Year	-.005	.000	***	-.006	.001	***	-.005	.001	***	-.006	.001	***	-.007	.001	***	-.008	.001	***
Widowed				.063	.021	**							.053	.021	*	.053	.021	*
Divorced/separated				.050	.014	***							.022	.015		.022	.015	
Never married				.070	.014	***							.036	.014	*	.037	.014	*
Parents				-.012	.011								-.005	.011		-.005	.011	
Black				.010	.014								.024	.014		.024	.014	
Other race				.189	.018	***							.186	.018	***	.186	.018	***
Age				.003	.000	***							.003	.000	***	.003	.000	***
Women				-.127	.009	***							-.112	.010	***	-.113	.010	***
College degree							.027	.013	*				.021	.013		.020	.013	
Professional							-.069	.014	***				-.034	.014	*	-.072	.022	**
White collar							-.093	.011	***				-.043	.012	***	-.059	.020	**
Nonemployed							.030	.011	**				.026	.011	*	.025	.011	*
Part-time employed							.007	.015					.027	.015		.027	.015	
Family income							.000	.000					.000	.000		.000	.000	
Recession							.003	.011					.006	.011		.006	.011	
Church attendance										-.022	.002	***	-.022	.002	***	-.022	.002	***
Liberal view										.032	.004	***	.034	.004	***	.034	.004	***
Year x professional																.003	.001	*
Year x white collar																.001	.001	
Intercept	1.415	.004	***	1.336	.022	***	1.460	.013	***	1.380	.019	***	1.282	.029	***	1.301	.031	***
R^2	.004	***		.021	***		.021	***		.017	***		.035	***		.035	***	

p* < .05; ***p* <.01; * *p* <.001

Omitted reference groups are: married, white, non-professional blue-collar occupation, full-time employed, year x blue-collar occupation.

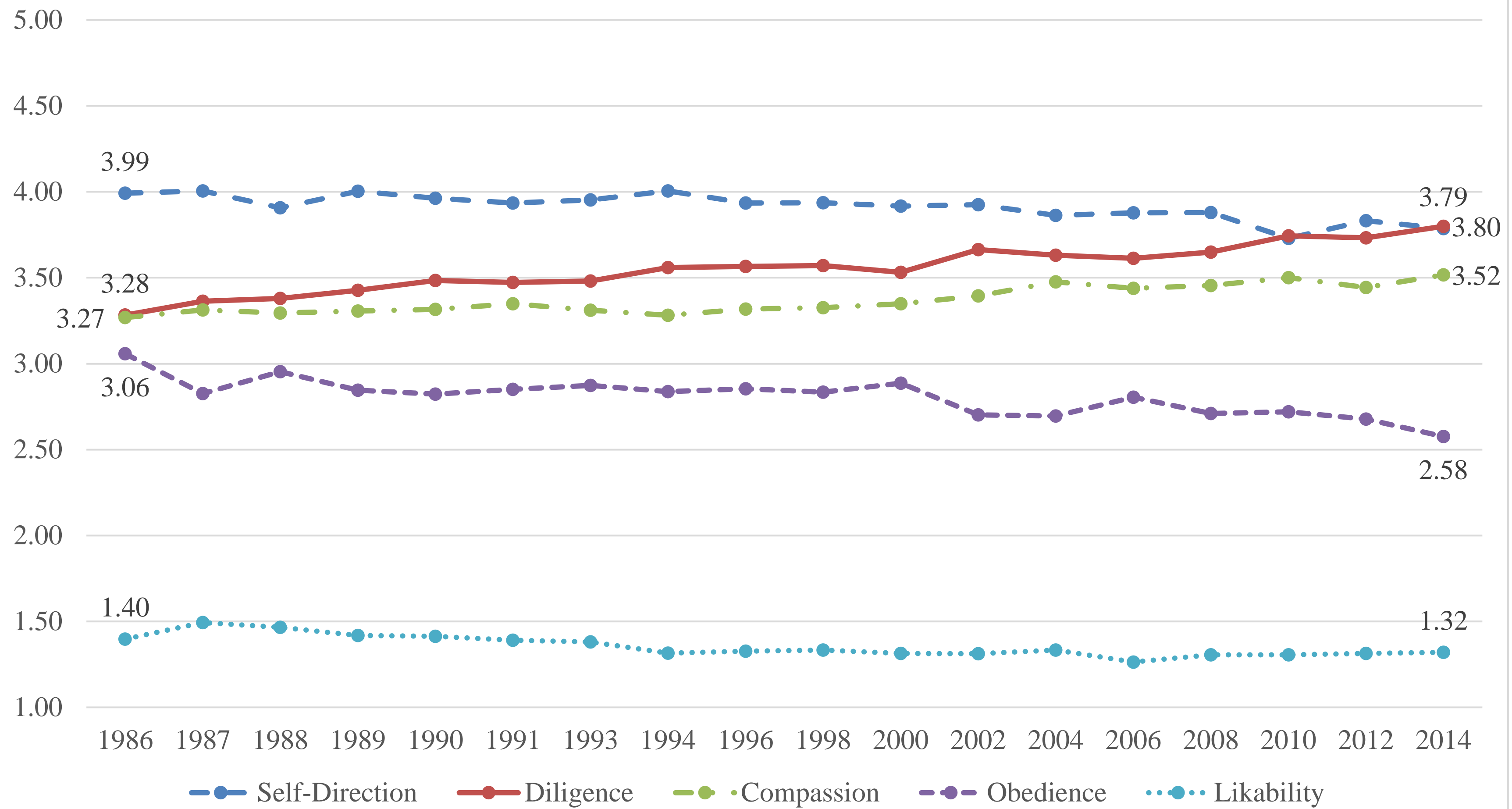

Figure 1. Mean Relative Ranking of Adult Preferences for Five Qualities for Children: 1986 - 2014
5.00
4.50
4.00
3.50
3.00
2.50
2.00
1.50
1.00
3.99
3.28
3.27
3.06
1.40
3.79
3.80
3.52
2.58
1.32
1986
1987
1988
1989
1990
1991
1993
1994
1996
1998
2000
2002
2004
2006
2008
2010
2012
2014
Self-Direction
Diligence
Compassion
Obedience
Likability

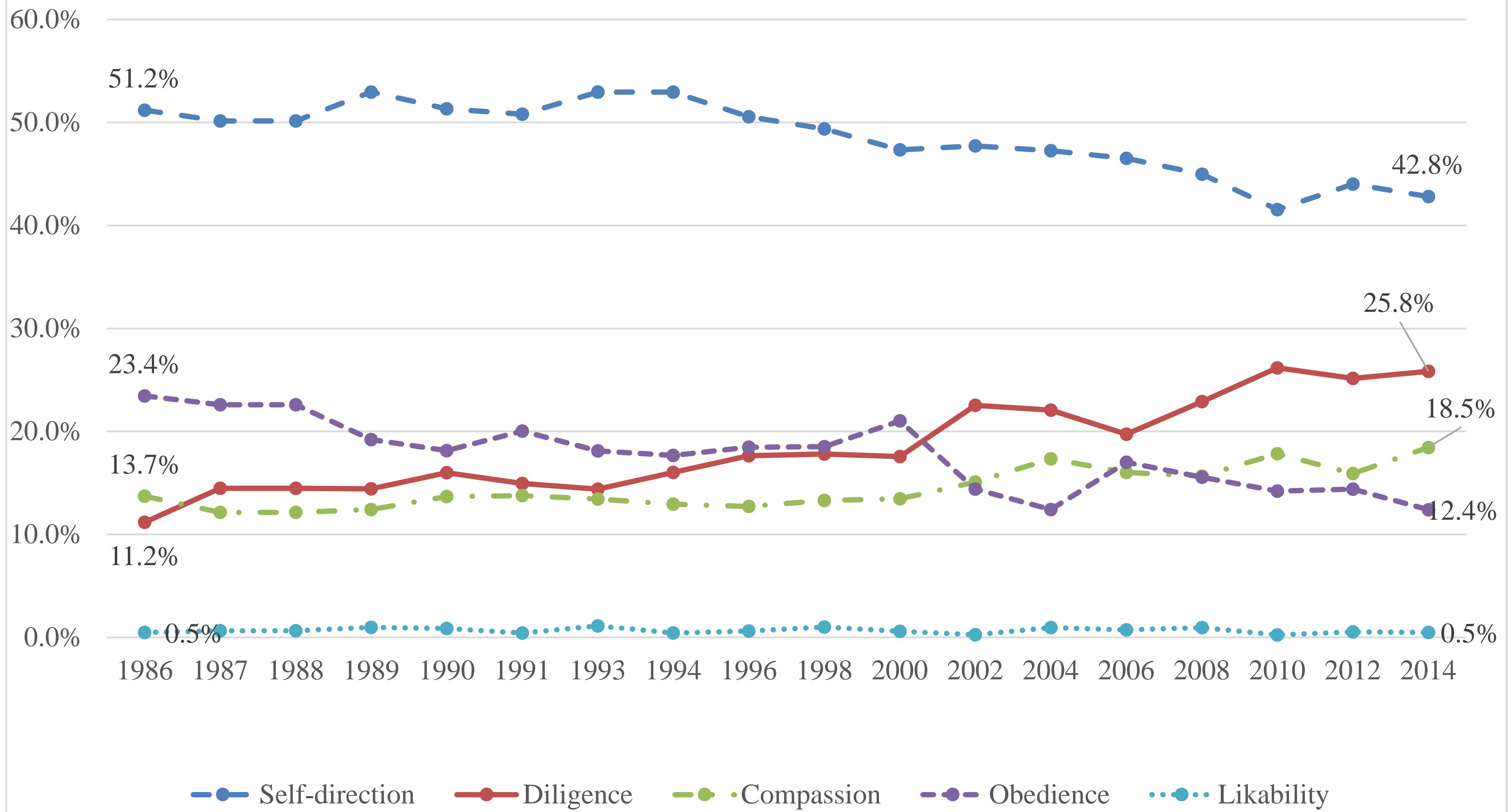
Figure 2. % Aduts Reporting a Given Trait as Most Important Quality for Children: 1986 - 2014
60.0%
50.0%
40.0%
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%
51.2%
42.8%
25.8%
23.4%
18.5%
13.7%
12.4%
11.2%
0.5%
0.5%
1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1993 1994 1996 1998 2000 2002 2004 2006 2008 2010 2012 2014
Self-direction
Diligence
Compassion
Obedience
Likability