

# VALUE CHANGE IN GERMANY

## A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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### 1. INTRODUCTION: DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

The study of value change is a very promising area of research since data on value change may specify preconditions and consequences of other areas of social, economic, and technological change. The study of value change is based upon questions whether and in which direction people's thinking, feeling, and behavior have undergone change. This relates to questions concerning the effects of value change upon the individual and his/her behavior, e.g., political participation, work attitudes, consumer behavior, involvement in family or leisure time activities, etc. Value change also relates to questions dealing with effects upon groups, e.g., intra- and intergroup conflicts, minority group influences, etc. Finally, value change relates to questions concerning change or stability on one or several segments of the society, e.g., institutions in politics, economy, science, and education.

Value orientations are conceived here as generalized beliefs with high affective meaning which organize a person's thinking, feeling, and behavior. Value orientations structure how the individual relates to society, and how problems are defined and dealt with. Accordingly, the subjective experience of self – environment relations becomes part of the individual's value orientations, its development and change. Value orientations are usually organized in a subjectively more or less coherent system including beliefs of varying importance and behavioral relevance. In the case of a highly integrated value system, changes in a certain personally important value orientation may induce changes in related beliefs and behavior. Such changes are based upon certain changes in the individual's experience of the social environment and its re-interpretation in terms of widely shared beliefs, or social values.

*Social values* must not necessarily be identical to *individual value orientations*. However, they are usually a part of the individual's experience. In turn, individual behavior and value orientations affect social values and their change. Thus, value change is partly a consequence and partly a precondition of individual changes on the one hand, and changes in social conditions on the other. Value change should thus be studied from

several perspectives: the individual level, the micro-level of interpersonal interactions, the meso-level of intermediate institutions, such as the family and school, and also the macro-level of social and economic institutions. The interrelations between these levels within a complex system of interdependent processes make the analysis of value change quite complicated.

This can be demonstrated when studying the difficulty to measure value orientations by taking into account the information from aggregate and individual data. Let us imagine a group of people, all of whom cherish the value of independence highly. Let us further assume that half of the group highly values modern technology, and the other half of the group does not. One part of the group argues that its independence grows from technology. The other half argues that technology induces dependency. Statistically, the correlation between the value of independence and technology over the whole group will be close to zero, since the group is split with respect to one value while simultaneously sharing another value. This example may illustrate several problems of empirical research on value orientation:

- Usually a person holds more than one value.
- Usually, the values are interrelated in a certain psychologically systematic (consistent) way with some values having high priority and other values being less important. The organization of values within one person may be thought of as a system which is ordered, e.g., in a hierarchical way, and is closely related to central individual beliefs such as the self concept.
- The relation between two or more values is defined by individual "explanations," or naive theories of the individual person which in turn are derived from basic beliefs and values. Accordingly, two seemingly different values may not at all be experienced as contradictory for one person, but may be incompatible for another person. Individual differences in values can account for different ways of organizing the value system and the relation between single values. Value change thus may not occur as long as processes of stabilizing the value system are operating.
- The value system of a group does not necessarily coincide with the value system of its individual members.
- Knowledge of a person's value orientation or a group's values is not sufficient in predicting value change or actual behavior. The subjective meaning of a certain value in the individual value system and its relation to the social context are also relevant factors.

Furthermore, it is not easy to detect value change on the basis of present empirical studies due to *methodological* reasons.

*Validity.* Most studies on social values and value change do not measure individual value orientations directly. Rather, they report data on certain individual attitudes, preferences or intentions which, at the most, only allow indirect conclusions to be drawn about selected and isolated value orientations. The importance of such social values for the individual, the position of such values in the individual value system, and its behavioral relevance for the individual remain unclear.

*Global measures of social values.* Data on value change are usually interpreted as changes in individual belief systems. However, individuals usually are asked prestructured questions and only answer "yes" or "no" (or "strongly agree," "partly agree," "partly disagree," "strongly disagree") to a statement like "Men should go out and work" or "Women should stay at home." The percentage of "yes" and "no" answers (or the degree of agreement/disagreement) is then calculated for the whole population (or its segments) to indicate whether more or less traditional values concerning gender roles exist. The *variance of values between individuals* is thus ignored.

*Global measures of value change.* Usually, the same (or similar) questions, asked at different points of time, are used to indicate possible value changes by calculating the difference between the two scores (e.g., percentages). However, usually the same people are not questioned. This is only the case in a panel study. Instead, a representative sample of people is questioned at different periods of time (time series studies). The mean difference of these answers is then used to measure value change. Besides confounding effects of time period, age and cohort, it usually remains unclear, whether the indicators used at different measurement periods and in different socio-cultural contexts are equivalent. For example, the wording of the questions can have different meanings at the two measurement periods (Trommsdorff 1989a).

Furthermore, data on value change usually imply that individual beliefs have been measured. However, the grouping of individual opinions and beliefs into one score is nothing more than the statistical aggregation of individual responses. The value orientation of a certain individual person cannot, in fact, be determined from such mean scores or percentages. There may be great differences between individuals and social groups with respect to such value change. Such variance is usually not indicated. The unit of analysis for such studies are aggregates and not individuals. This must be taken into account when interpreting value changes. Further, it is often difficult to determine whether data on so-called value change are an artifact or a social phenomenon. These critical methodological remarks should be kept in mind in the following sections.

The present study cannot solve the complex methodological problems,

but will rather focus on relatively crude data on value change in Germany. To a certain degree, these may illustrate some general trends in changes of German value orientations and related societal change. In the first part, value orientations and value change from the last three decades including two generations are roughly discussed. Next, we will look more specifically at certain subgroups, in this case, adolescents' value change. Then we will focus on value orientations in the two regions of Germany in terms of an intra-cultural comparison. Finally, we will turn to inter-cultural comparisons of values and value changes by comparing Germany and Japan.

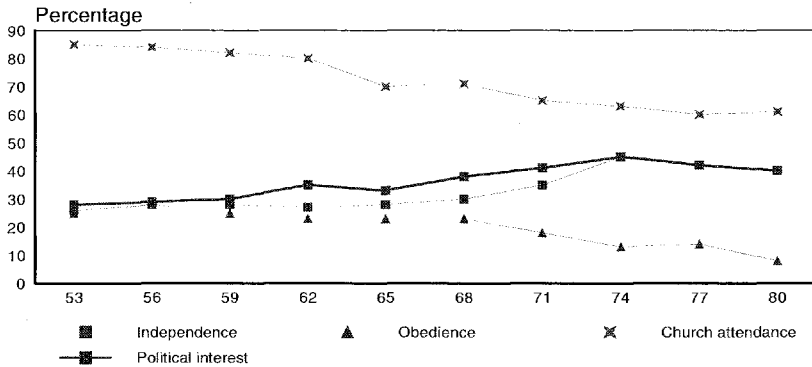
## 2. VALUE CHANGE IN GERMANY IN THE LAST THREE DECADES

### 2.1 *General Patterns of Change*

In the following, mainly data from representative studies on beliefs and opinions of the German (until 1990 the *West* German) population will be used. These are time series studies carried out with different people at different periods of time. First, data from public opinion polls of global value changes in Germany are discussed.

The empirical data from the time series studies on value change in Germany since the fifties can be summarized as follows. Values of *individuality* have increased. This can be seen by (a) the decreasing importance of socialization goals such as obedience, orderliness, deference, frugality, and diligence and (b) the increasing importance of independence and free will (see Klages 1984; Meulemann 1983). Furthermore, values of political participation (interest in politics; discussing politics and joining a political party) (Noelle-Neumann 1976: 64) have increased over the past decades (see Figure 1).

Also a trend of secularization can be observed in decreasing alignment to traditional church affiliation: church membership, church attendance, and the participation in rituals such as the Holy Communion have decreased (Institut für Demoskopie 1981: Table 91, 92 and 93; Meulemann 1987). This may indicate declining trust in traditional institutions and morality.



**Figure 1: Value change in Germany**

Note: Percentage of affirmative answers

Source: Meulemann 1983; Klages 1984

An increasing tendency to join new quasi-religious movements and the enormous rise of para-religious orientation are documented by the increasing number of people who are active in sects and psycho-cultures. Fifty percent of the German people are interested in this area, including occultism (Schmidtchen 1987). The groups of the educated and young people are particularly interested in sects and the psycho-market.

Other institutions such as the family have lost their unconditional acceptance. This can be observed in the increased acceptance of divorce and pragmatic discountenance of the institution of marriage (Institut für Demoskopie 1981: Table 6). At the same time, values of equality have increased, as can be seen by the changing roles of husband and wife in the family, reducing the power distance between the two. While in 1954 less than 50% of the people believed that husband and wife should have equal rights, 74% supported this belief in 1978. This is an increase of more than 25 percentage points within 20 years (Kmieciak 1976).

With respect to work values, interesting changes can be observed. Until about the end of the sixties work values increased and then decreased until the beginning of the eighties, when they started to gain considerable support in all age groups (see Figure 2).

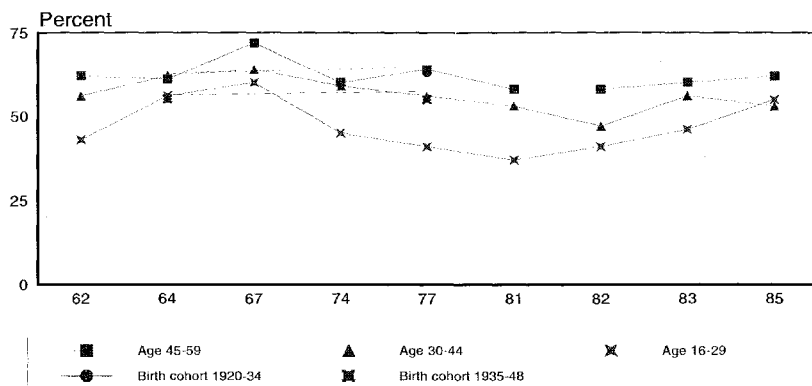


Figure 2: Development of work-satisfaction by age (working population)

Source: Pawlowsky 1986 (cited from: Pawlowsky and Strümpel 1986)

Most of the value change shown above occurred in the late sixties and early seventies. Before and after this change, a period of relative constancy can be observed.

## 2.2 Discussion

At first glance, these changes may be conceived of in the following manner. Since World War II, Germany has re-established itself economically and has successfully institutionalized a democracy. During more than thirty years of political stability and economic growth, people turned away from Protestant ethics and searched for other issues in order to find meaning in their life. The worldwide student unrest in the late sixties has also created a deep concern for "new" values of self-fulfillment in Germany. Work values and the belief in traditional institutions, like the church and family, have been decreasing while at the same time values of independence, social responsibility for the environment, and political participation have been increasing for the population as a whole. These value changes can be observed on the basis of various indicators and direct and indirect measures of values. The question is how to adequately interpret these changes.

Value change in Western industrialized countries, including Germany, has been interpreted differently. Inglehart (1977) has postulated a shift from "materialistic" to "post-materialistic" values. He believes that a "silent revolution" started in the sixties, after the postwar generation had been socialized in growing affluence. This affluence allowed the youth to turn away from the materialistic values of their parents and focus upon

post-materialistic values such as individuality, self-fulfillment, ecological improvement, and political participation.

Inglehart's basic theoretical assumptions on the direction and kind of value change follow two lines of reasoning: (a) Maslow's motivation theory: after the basic needs for security and material well-being are fulfilled, further needs arise which are oriented toward creativity, individuality, and self-fulfillment (hypothesis of motivation hierarchy). (b) Furthermore, Inglehart assumes that socialization experiences in childhood determine the further development of value orientations for the remaining span of life. This means that, if children have suffered from the lack of material goods which are required to fulfill their basic needs (e.g., during the war period), their value orientation will turn out to be materialistic. In contrast, children who have grown up in affluence (as is the case of the postwar generation) will adopt post-materialistic value orientations, e.g., needs for self-fulfillment and political participation (socialization hypothesis).

Inglehart (1977; 1990) finds support for his silent revolution thesis in very few questionnaire items from public opinion polls in several European countries and in the U.S.A. However, the post-materialism thesis is strongly disputed and disconfirmed by several authors. Deth (1983) demonstrates that materialistic and post-materialistic value priorities can be very unstable. His panel analyses – the comparison of value preferences of the same individuals at different periods of time – demonstrate remarkable instabilities. Also, the re-analyses of the data used by Inglehart by Böltken and Jagodzinski (1984) show that considerable value change occurs even in age groups which experienced their "normative" years in the same historical period. They demonstrate that the war generation is not less post-materialistic than the postwar generation. The authors compare cohorts and not merely age groups (as Inglehart had done).

Also in contrast to Inglehart, Noelle-Neumann (1978) postulated an increase in hedonism, in egoistic individualism, and a decrease in social responsibility particularly at work. This is mostly in line with Klages (1984) and his co-workers who refute the materialistic-post-materialistic discussion and follow a different theoretical argument in describing value changes. They start from the empirical observation that a great percentage of the German population cannot be categorized by the two poles of either the materialistic or the post-materialistic type. The authors argue that the instruments used by Inglehart give rise to a biased thesis about a polarized value orientation. In the studies on materialistic/post-materialistic values, subjects are usually asked to rank-order the items, thus they are obliged to give highest priority to one item. Instead, Klages (1984) asks his subjects to give the same scaling point to different items in a list of values. He

starts from the assumption that our era is characterized by a pluralistic value orientation, where people do not follow hierarchically structured value systems but rather are oriented toward different values at the same time. Klages (1984) observes a decreasing orientation toward the values of the Protestant ethic as he analyses more than one dominant value orientation in the German population ("conformity" or "nonconformity"; "value-synthesis"; "loss of values"). He regards this as an indicator for a pluralistic value system.

Obviously, similar empirical data on value changes are interpreted by different social scientists in very contradictory ways. As another example, see the controversy between Reuband (1985) and Pawlowsky and Strümpel (1986). This is partly an effect of insufficient methods and the resulting difficulty in assessing the validity of data. The same data can be considered as measuring very different qualities of value change.

One party believes that the "new" (post-materialistic and individualistic) values imply a better chance for individual self-fulfillment. In contrast, the other party believes in a loss of basic values and a deterioration of fundamental orientations such as the Protestant ethic which is necessary for a society's survival.

Similarly, the declining work orientation can be seen not only as the derogation of work morale but rather as a change toward more flexible work attitudes. Obedience is no longer necessary since creative problem-solving is required. This in turn demands communicative and participatory interaction and leadership. Also, the former psychological distance between work and leisure time is no longer valid since behavioral patterns such as individuality and creativity are now required in both areas.

Another interpretation lies at hand when one observes the strong shifts in work-satisfaction that are closely related to the political and economic situation in Germany (see Figure 2). With the Christian Democratic Party's take-over of the government during a period of economic decline, an increase in work satisfaction could be observed. Thus, economic constraints and expectations of economic improvement seem to be factors in increasing work orientation. However, it is problematic to interpret such data as "value change."

With respect to the possible consequences for a society, the observed value changes toward an increase in individuality are also interpreted controversially. On the one hand, one may argue that an increase in autonomy and individuality indicates an increase in individual responsibility, an increase in effort to invest in education and professional skills, and the raised expectations towards one's job and leisure time with respect to self-enhancement *and* the improvement of society. On the other hand, an increase in individual autonomy could also mean a decrease of social



responsibility and growing egoistic behavior. This may be observed, for example, by changing public behavior to "maximize income from public sources. If one receives a great deal and other people pay, one is in an optimal situation" (Schmidtchen 1987: 130). Similarly, increased individual autonomy could lead to decreased acceptance of external political control and an increased preference for non-institutionalized activities. Empirical data (indicators for post-materialistic values) support this hypothesis (Inglehart 1989). Also, the rising tendency of illegal activities, including violence, (rising during the eighties from 19% to 29% for adolescents; Schmidtchen 1983; 1987) may be seen as an indicator for decreasing acceptance of social norms. Such problems of legitimacy may result from rising self-confidence in individualistic values and moral indifference toward deviant behavior (of self and others), which could in turn be induced by the value of tolerance and self-assertion.

Consequently, Schmidtchen (1987) argues that modern societies face, among other problems, a dilemma of control (a relationship between external and internal control) which accompanies the increase in individuality. Thinking about the dialectic meaning of individuality, the question arises of which values may contribute to an integration of a pluralistic society that is undergoing continuous differentiation and change.

It is futile to discuss such controversies without achieving a better methodological basis of data. Value changes could just reflect changes in age-related attitudes and socio-economic conditions, especially when attitudes rather than values are measured. Multiple methods (e.g., intensive interviews or observations) are needed in order to gain further information for testing alternative interpretations. Also, studies on value change should include combined cross-sectional and longitudinal data covering value change over the entire course of life as well as in certain periods and cohort effects.

Although interpretations of value change differ, most authors agree on the same assumption, namely, that economic affluence in the sixties is the main reason for value changes. Post-materialistic, hedonistic, or pluralistic value changes are considered a result of economic growth. Here lies one problem in the theoretical challenge in explaining value change, since economic prosperity itself is a part and result of certain social and psychological factors such as division of labor, preference of achievement, and self control values. This notion is related to Durkheim's (1988) classic study on the division of labor and Weber's (1986) theory of the sociology of religion. Here we confront questions concerning the origins of social and economic change in industrialized societies.

### 3. VALUE CHANGE IN ADOLESCENTS

#### *3.1 Value Change or Unstable Reactions to Socio-Economic Change*

One step toward a more differentiated look at value change is the study of value change in relevant sub-samples of the population.

The study of values among adolescents is especially interesting since knowledge about adolescents' values may predict the behavior of youth and its effects on possible changes in society. From the point of view of personality development, the development of values is closely related to the development of self identity, the setting of goals, and planning for the future.

Changes in the political values of youth have been a focus of value studies since the Second World War. First, Schelsky's (1963) thesis of the "sceptical generation" was widely discussed. He interpreted data on adolescents' retreat from the public sphere into private life because of their disappointment in and distrust of National Socialism, a still prevailing tendency toward authoritarian thinking, and the related belief that politics should be handled by the power elite. In the sixties, a different picture of the youth emerged due to the student unrest. Not apathy but active, non-conventional, and radical political involvement were the characteristic hallmarks of the new generation. Inglehart (1977; 1989) explained this new phenomenon of a "Silent Revolution" in post-industrialized societies by the rise of post-materialistic values. Tenbruck (1962), on the other hand, interpreted such change as "radicalization" of the youth due to the desegregation of adolescents from adult life and the formation of a "youth culture" in contrast to the adult world. However, since usually only answers to specific questions are studied in measuring values, only speculations about the possible subjective meaning of the verbal responses is possible. It is also necessary to consider the context in which the respondent answered the questions.

In the beginning of the eighties a peak of dissatisfaction can be observed which then leads into a trend of increased work satisfaction (Pawlowski and Strümpel 1986; see figure 2). This "value change" could be seen at a time when a shift of ruling political parties (from the Social Democratic to the Christian Democratic Party) and economic conditions occurred. Work satisfaction thus reflects not only the evaluation of the present work, but also of the job market and one's own chances. This change in work values was highest for young adults. Job satisfaction is obviously influenced by age, by socialization conditions in the given economic and political situation, and interactions between the aforementioned factors. This result may show that so-called "value change" of work values in

adolescents is an overgeneralized phenomenon. We should rather call these tendencies *reactions to short-time periodical economic events*.

### 3.2 Time Series Studies

In the following, we will discuss some extensive time series studies on changing values of adolescents in order to get a better picture of a specific segment of the population. Allerbeck and Hoag (1985) report data from a representative sample of German adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age who were interviewed in 1962 and 1983. The two-decade interval is roughly equivalent to one generation (the first generation being born in the mid-forties, and the second generation being born in the mid-sixties).

*Family.* German adolescents' reported affective *relation to their parents* has somewhat diminished during the last two decades, especially with respect to the father. Here, gender differences are observable. Girls differentiate more between mothers and fathers by reporting a more positive relationship to their mothers. In general, the data do not reflect a generational conflict or an increased gap between generations. As for the perceived *socialization style* and authority of parents, adolescents report a decreasing tendency of parents demanding obedience and an increasing tendency of *laissez faire* as an educational goal. This change in perceived parental discipline is in line with the general value change towards a more individualistic orientation.

*Youth culture.* An increased preference for youth culture can be seen by an increased tendency of adolescents to become a member of a peer group (in 1962 16.2%, in 1983 56.9%). This increased importance of peer relations does not necessarily indicate a broadening gap between generations nor a deterioration of the parent-child relationship. In addition, the fact that adolescents have opposite-sex friends today, more than what was the case in the sixties, may indicate a change of sexual ethics but not necessarily decreased importance of the intra-family relationship.

*Work values.* The assumption that adolescents' work values are decreasing cannot easily be supported by empirical data. If one were to only compare the data for the male youth, one might get the impression of decreasing work values. However, for girls work has considerably increased in importance. This is partly due to changes in the opportunities and the expectations as a result of the higher education of girls ("some work is necessary for a happy life": 48% in 1962 and 56% in 1983; Allerbeck and Hoag 1985: 70; Table 4-1). Also, one should remember that in the eighties, work values have been rising considerably (see 2.1.1; Pawlowski and Strümpel 1986). This rise in work satisfaction may also indicate rising expectations of better chances in the job market.

*Education.* The expansion of higher education is well known. During the past two decades drastic changes occurred. In 1962 only 14% of the adolescents as compared to 40% in 1983 wished to graduate from high school (*Abitur*) and thus have the chance to enter a university (Allerbeck and Hoag 1985: 73). Gender differences with respect to education also changed during these decades. More girls than boys graduated from high school and thus had the opportunity to enter a university.

The value of and increased access to higher education obviously correlate. However, this is not related to satisfaction with the educational system. When satisfaction with school is considered, youth in 1962 were much more satisfied than in 1983 (75% vs. 43%) (Allerbeck and Hoag 1985: 79; Table 4-3). The decreased satisfaction with school may have several reasons, such as changes in school organization and curriculum, devaluation of traditional institutions, parents' higher expectations for their children's success in school, and related stress experienced by adolescents. However, it is customary to be critical of institutions, especially in a stage in which the development of autonomous judgement is expected.

*Attitudes toward the future: family and life style.* Indeed, adolescents' acceptance of traditional institutions such as the family has changed to some degree. In 1962, 79% of boys, and 91% of girls planned to marry. In 1983, this figure decreased to 69% for boys and 76% for girls (see Allerbeck and Hoag 1985: 94; Table 5-1). Also, attitudes towards premarital sexual relations have changed. In 1962 and 1983 the question was posed whether it is important for a woman to be married when she has a child. The percentage of affirmative answers decreased considerably during these two decades. However, there are again observable sex differences. Females answer less traditionally than males (Allerbeck and Hoag 1985: 98; Table 5-2). Only a small minority of adolescents preferred a traditional life style in 1983: They wanted to live together only in the case of marriage. More than 80% wanted to live together before marriage. With respect to children, fewer adolescents wanted to have children in 1983 as compared to 1962 (103-104).

*Political participation.* An increased knowledge and interest in politics can be observed for German adolescents. Politics were rarely discussed in families in 1962: 22,9% reported that they never talked about politics in their family as compared to 13,2% in 1983. Also, in 1962 only half of the youth knew which political party their fathers would choose as compared to nearly two thirds in 1983 (Allerbeck and Hoag 1985: 134). Obviously, more communication concerning political issues is taking place in families. When the political affiliation of adolescents is considered, the picture is not so clear. Although the Green Party is mostly preferred by younger age groups, the majority of younger age groups does not vote

for the Green Party. The general political activity has increased considerably, especially with respect to the kind of activity chosen.

*Summary and Discussion.* In general, adolescents in the eighties, as compared to the early sixties, experience less restrictions from their parents, they enjoy more individual choice and higher education. However, the developmental task of adolescents to achieve autonomy has not necessarily become easier. An increase in options may be an irritating experience, especially when criteria for an experience in decision-making are lacking. Prolonged education and dealing with abstract issues that have no real consequences for the pupil, reduce the chances of assuming responsibility and experiencing one's own ability and efficacy. Such experience is reduced to the context of the family, peers, and school. The social world of the adolescent is thus quite narrow – very much in contrast to what the media conveys about adolescents.

Considering possible consequences one may ask whether the loosening of bonds to the "real" world of adults and a decreasing readiness to assume responsibility may be expected. This may even be intensified by the media-made upgrading of youth values and youth culture. Indicators of these changes become obvious by the increased rejection of traditional institutions (like family and school) by the youth. On the other hand, adolescents today show much more political interest and participation than twenty years ago. Possibly, this may be an indicator for adolescents' value change toward more autonomy.

#### 4. CHANGING VALUES IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

In order to be better able to interpret whether observed changes in verbal responses indicate some underlying value change, comparative studies are necessary. The study of value change in one nation can easily lead to biased interpretations since an anchor is missing that normally relates observed changes to comparable phenomena in other parts of the world. Especially when general theoretical assumptions (e.g., on the effects of economic conditions on changes from "materialistic" to "post-materialistic" values) are used to interpret the data, the universality of such theoretical notions has to be clarified by comparative studies (Trommsdorff 1989a).

Before we focus on international comparative studies, let us first consider some very recent studies on value orientations of people in East and West Germany. Both populations are German but have developed in very different political and socio-economic systems during the past forty years. Therefore, the comparison of values between the two Germanies allows access to data from a large quasi-natural experiment, first, with respect to

the effects of 40 years of different socialization, and second, with respect to the present ongoing processes of transformation.

#### 4.1 Values in East and West Germany

##### 4.1.1 Global Comparison between the Two Populations

Directly after the first free elections in the former GDR in December 1990, the first representative public opinion poll was held by ZUMA (Zentrum für Umfragen, Methoden und Analysen, Mannheim) in the five new Federal German states in order to compare East and West German values (Mohler 1991). People from East Germany chose materialistic values to a higher degree than people from West Germany. The question was what should be most important in politics: "attainment of peace and order" or "reduction of increasing prices" (62% vs. 44%). In addition, East Germans preferred less the answer "more participation of people on political decision-making" than West Germans. Furthermore, one can observe different attitudes toward the political system of the Federal Republic in the two regions of Germany. In 1990, East Germans in contrast to West Germans were more proud of the German economy than of democracy. In general, the answers of the West German people in the sixties seem very similar to the pattern of values held by the East Germans today.

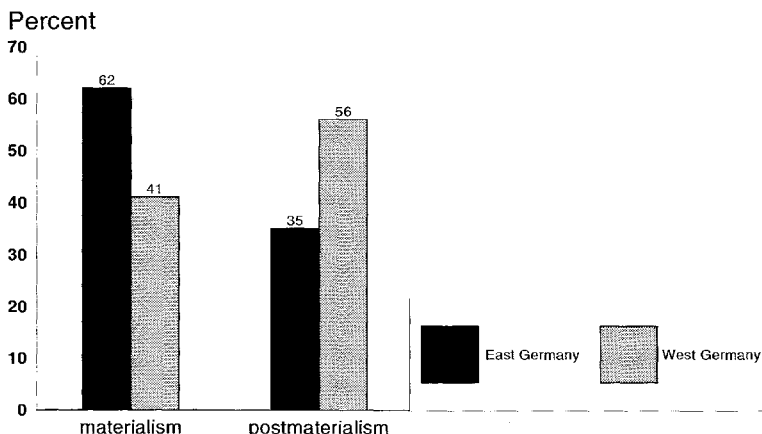


Figure 3: Comparison of values in East and West Germany:  
Materialism – Post-materialism

Note: N = 1.028 East Germans (Dec. 1990)  
3.000 West Germans (May 1990)

The "materialistic" attitude of the East Germans seems to coincide with Inglehart's thesis that socialization in a period of economic insecurity is the basis of materialistic values, which in turn may change into post-materialism after a certain period of affluence. The question is what will happen when the primarily materialistic values held by East Germans are not fulfilled. Will this give rise to dissatisfaction and political instability or to resignation and apathy in the reunited Germany? According to Inglehart's theory, one may assume a rise in post-materialism in East Germany in the coming decades only after the present younger generation has experienced sufficient material well-being and affluence.

#### 4.1.2 Comparison of Adolescents in the Two Germanies

This picture is to be differentiated when comparing not only global populations but selected subgroups. A recent representative study on *adolescents* in the two Germanies in 1990 can give us more information about possible differences and similarities (Arbeitsgruppe Schüler in Deutschland 1990).

This study shows that pupils between 13 and 18 share the *same values*: To have good friends; to succeed in one's job; to have a family; to be independent. With respect to life planning, both groups seek higher education, and prefer jobs in the tertiary sector (service industry) instead of industrial work. Both groups of adolescents prefer the same youth-focused media, they are equally interested in peer interactions, they share the same values of socialization, and they both feel equally socialized in a liberal way by their parents.

Both groups favor more individualistic and progressive values than their parents and they prefer a more alternative non-conventional life style. The majority of both groups (80%–90%) do not want to follow the advice of their parents with respect to choice of friends, lifestyle, and leisure time. Also with respect to political, school-related, and job-related questions, about 50%–65% of the students would rather follow their own judgement than their parents'.

Obviously, life style and value preference of East German adolescents has changed considerably since the mid-seventies. East German youth adapted to the values of their peers in the West, who have experienced this value change since the mid-sixties. While East German adolescents' value change has occurred as a very "silent revolution," in the West it has been accompanied by unconventional behavior, protest, and strong mass media support. In the East various youth studies were not allowed to be published, and the media strictly ignored the adolescents' value change.

With respect to political participation some *differences* for adolescents in both Germanies are evident. The East German youth wants to be politi-

cally more active and informed. They actively participated in the peaceful demonstration during the dramatic show-down with the East German government. Still now they are more critical than West German youth and they sympathize more with democratic grass root activities, feminist groups, and peace movements. Also, when their political consciousness is considered, they identify more with Germany and Europe than their Western peers. Finally, with respect to interpersonal relations between the youth of both Germanies, these preferences are asymmetrical. East German youth would like to interact with peers from the West more than the West German youth would like to with their Eastern peers. A psychological border between East and West Germany still seems to exist.

*Summary.* Considering the population as a whole, West Germans prefer less materialistic values than East Germans. This finding of more East German materialism may only be a reflection of present conditions. An age effect cannot be used as a test of Inglehart's thesis. Values of East German youth seem more post-materialistic than their parents' values. They even prefer more political activity than West German youth. However, with respect to lifestyle, East and West German adolescents follow very similar value orientations, indicating the same tendency of post-materialistic values in spite of their different socialization experience in very different political climates and under very different economic conditions. It is possible that this is due to the influence of Western mass media and lifestyles, which were especially visible to the East Germans in the seventies.

According to these results, other factors beside economic conditions enter the socialization process and influence the value orientation of people. Therefore, it is necessary to study value change by comparing people from different cultural contexts who experience relatively similar economic conditions. In the following, we therefore will focus on aspects of value change in highly industrialized societies with different cultural contexts.

## *4.2 Value Change in Highly Industrialized Societies*

### *4.2.1 Materialistic and Post-materialistic Values:*

#### *A Comparison of Japan and Other Highly Industrialized Societies*

In order to test the thesis of increasing post-materialistic values in highly modernized affluent societies, Inglehart (1989) has studied value changes in several European countries, in the U.S.A., and in Japan. According to his own interpretation of the data, he regards his thesis as supported. However, a closer look at the data (Inglehart 1989) not only shows con-



siderable differences between the various countries, but also serious methodological difficulties in defining the concept of post-materialism. The method used by Inglehart (1989) was to report which two of eight items were preferred most. The highest support was gained in all countries for an item which supposedly measured materialism: "stable economy" (74% in Germany, 52% in the U.S.A., 59% in Japan). "Fighting against crime" was the second most important item in Germany (47%) and in the U.S.A. (42%), but rather unimportant in Japan (20%). This result indicates that items which do not reflect problems for people, cannot validly be used to measure such broad concepts as post-materialism. In Japan (as in the case of Switzerland) crime is not a problem. Therefore this question has only low priority in these countries, while at the same time materialistic or post-materialistic orientations can be held with respect to other issues.

A typical materialistic item is the question whether children should be taught the importance of money. While only 5% of the population in the U.S. A. support this opinion, in Japan 45% agree. Time period studies on preference of this item show some decline from 63% in 1953 to 43% in 1983 in Japan (Hayashi and Suzuki 1990). Does this decline in Japan indicate fewer materialistic values? Or should the concept of materialistic vs. post-materialistic value orientation be measured differently in Japan than in the West? Again, we confront the problem of ascertaining functional equivalence of indicators, not only when comparing people at different historical periods, but also when comparing people from different cultural contexts.

Some of the traditional Japanese values reflect what Inglehart has defined as post-materialistic values, especially the preference for a harmonious friendly society. With respect to interpersonal relations, Japanese select this answer as second in importance, while this item ranks fifth in Germany. This traditional Japanese value incorporates what is considered to be a post-materialistic value in the West. Traditional Japanese values also include values of frugality, loyalty, the work ethic, and harmonized social relations at the work place (e.g., see items from the *Study of Japanese National Character*; Hayashi and Suzuki 1990). Some of these values have changed and others have remained stable. Most of these values are more preferred in Japan than in the West (Trommsdorff 1984; 1986; Trommsdorff, Suzuki and Sasaki 1990), indicating a generally higher and more stable preference for group-oriented values. This stability can still be observed in spite of some change toward individualism in Japan.

These studies of value change, which follow a cross-cultural perspective, lead to the conclusion that the unidimensional theoretical concept of materialistic-post-materialistic values, developed in the West, does not

necessarily apply to other cultures. Not only multiple but eventually culture-specific methods for measuring value orientations in a given cultural context are necessary (Trommsdorff 1989a; 1992a). Otherwise, an ethnocentric bias and misinterpretations of value change in other cultures can occur.

#### *4.2.2 Value Change of Adolescents in Japan and Germany*

It is especially fruitful to compare societies that share some similarities and differ in other aspects. Several authors have pointed out value orientations in Germany and Japan which led to rapid industrialization, that were very similar (Bellah 1971; Bendix 1966/67). Japan and Germany also share many similarities with respect to economic and technological development. Both are now post-modern societies, and both are undergoing significant value change. It is especially interesting to compare value changes in these societies because they are quite similar with respect to technological and economical development, but at the same time based upon very different cultural traditions. Such comparisons would also allow insights into possible universalities and cultural peculiarities in value changes of so-called "post-modern" societies. It is even more interesting to focus on value change on a specific subgroup of the same cohort and facing similar development tasks. Both adolescents from Japan and Germany have grown up in relative affluence and both face the developmental task of achieving self-identity, becoming independent from their parents, finding a job, and establishing intimate relations in a newly founded family.

In the following, some aspects of the studies on value change of adolescents in Japan and Germany from 1978 and 1988 are discussed. These are parts of representative time series studies of the Youth Affairs Administration Office (Sōmushō Seishōnen Taisaku Honbu 1989).

*Family.* Some changes occurred with respect to the father's role in the family. An increasing number of adolescents in both societies prefer "a father who puts his family before his job." However, the percentage in Japan is still much lower than in Germany (58.4% vs. 74.6%). Furthermore, an increasing number of adolescents in both nations reject the traditional male-female role differentiation in the family, while Japanese adolescents still show less rejection than German adolescents (19.6% vs. 30.6%). This is in line with a study of our own of gender role differences. "Traditional" values concerning gender role, the roles of the father and mother, and socialization goals are still very prevalent in Japanese as compared to German adolescents (Trommsdorff & Iwawaki 1989).

Interestingly, a considerable value change with respect to supporting

one's parents in old age has been shown for Japanese (but not for German) adolescents. Japanese would support their parents less (from 34.5% to 25.4% in Japan; in Germany from 33.9% to 32.0%). This decrease in the willingness to support old parents may indicate that adolescents face less social responsibility for their parents in Japan. Also, this may indicate confusion and uncertainty in value orientations, or an increasing egoism and detachment from one's parents as a result of a new orientation toward individuality and autonomy. However, this data may also indicate that adolescents do not feel competent enough to deal with a new and serious problem: the rising life expectancy in Japan and the lack of public support systems for the aged. In Germany the public support system and cultural values may not cause a comparable responsibility and be burdensome for German adolescents (in comparison to Japanese youth; see Trommsdorff 1992b). Therefore, the answers of adolescents from these cultures are not easily compared. Again, this may illuminate the problems in cross-cultural comparisons and the need to use functionally equivalent indicators.

To *summarize*, on the one hand one can observe a decrease in "traditional" values in Japan, while on the other hand these values are generally still more preferred by the Japanese youth in comparison to the West.

*Work Place.* From 1978 to 1988, work values of Japanese adolescents have decreased and now are very similar to the German youth: the belief in gaining satisfaction through one's job has decreased from 30.5% to 21.5% in Japan (Germany: 26.1% to 22.6%). Also the seemingly post-materialistic value of gaining self-fulfillment through one's work is increasingly less accepted by Japanese youth (34.5% to 25.7%). Instead, working for money is gaining increasing acceptance (54.5% vs. 64.5%) in Japan as compared to decreasing acceptance in Germany (70.1% vs. 60.1%). "Traditional" beliefs with respect to social relations at the work place also decreased for Japanese youth. Social contact with one's superior was less preferred during the last decades by Japanese youth while for German youth it remained stable (73.4% vs. 58.1%; 48.2 vs. 45.7% respectively). The traditional means for promotion retained support from Japanese youth between 1978 to 1988: "Promotion mainly by seniority" is preferred by 36% as compared to 39.2% in Japan versus 14.3% to 13.8% in Germany.

To *summarize*, with the exception of the seniority system, less importance is seen in "traditional" values by the Japanese youth. Work values seemingly do not differ significantly between both cultures.

*Society.* With respect to active participation in societal problems, Japanese youth decreasingly report a belief in their own control. They also use active measures less often than a decade ago. This is in strong contrast to German youth values (e.g., "belief in luck/fate": 43.8% vs. 51.8% in Japan; 30.9% vs. 28.9% in Germany; "active use of legal means when dis-

satisfied with society": 26.0% vs. 19.0% in Japan; 32.2% vs. 39.1% in Germany; "societal problems cannot be solved by individuals": 64.7% vs. 70.8% in Japan; 46.2% vs. 41.1% in Germany). Furthermore, an increased preference for individualistic values and a decreased readiness to serve collective interests can be observed in the Japanese youth, e.g., "live as I like": 41.2% vs. 46.6% in Japan; 60.6% vs. 60.3% in Germany; or "sacrifice own interests for society": 20.3% vs. 13.3% in Japan; 41.5% vs. 41.0% in Germany.

In *summary* then, with respect to values concerning societal participation, Japanese youth show less interest than Western youth; they believe less in their own control and report more individualistic values. Some similarities and considerable differences seem to exist between adolescents of both countries. This may be related to the experience of strong societal constraints in the Japanese family and society. Individualistic values are in contrast to societal restrictions and may induce the need for detachment from such societal obligations and constraints. For German adolescents, however, a very different pattern of values can be observed. This rather fits the post-materialistic value orientation with individuality being related to the belief in active political participation and the pursuit of social responsibility.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

### 5.1 Methodological Questions

What conclusions are to be drawn from these findings? *First* of all, it has to be pointed out once again that we can only deal with indirect measures of values. From our data on subjective evaluations of family, school, political participation, etc., we can only describe what people report about their preferences. Whether such preferences really measure individual value orientations cannot simply be assumed since the relationship between such reports and real decision-making and behavior is unclear. However such reports may reflect subjective beliefs about general cultural and societal preferences and also about individual tendencies. These reports may have different meanings according to the particular historical and cultural context, and thus cannot be easily interpreted.

*Second*, the assumed value changes do not necessarily include the whole nation or society. The picture looks very different when studying single subgroups, for example groups or certain occupational and educational subgroups. Our data on cohort effects make it especially clear that it is necessary to take age, socialization experience, and present social condi-

tions into account, in order to discuss value changes. From a developmental point of view, childhood experiences will determine the quality and the kind of value development, whereas sozialization through the course of one's life will affect the stability and the change of such orientations. In order to predict the direction of value change of the individual person, childhood experiences, life events, and the socio-cultural context must be considered (Trommsdorff 1992a). Life cycle events can have a strong impact upon the value orientation of the individual. Even though value orientations can be considered as relatively stable systems of understanding the world and the self, they do undergo change in the course of a lifetime when certain developmental tasks arise and have to be solved by the individual. Here then, sociological and psychological approaches should be combined in order to better understand the interactive processes of individual and social action as a basis for value change.

*Third*, one has to be aware of the area of value change: which values undergo change, which values remain stable, and what does that mean for the respective person or social group? In the case of stability among certain values, their meaning may change. Belief in seniority may indicate a low belief in one's own abilities and the necessity to work hard in order to fulfill one's duties. Changing values may mean different things in different value systems or different cultures. For instance, the value of parental control ("strict parents") means an attack on the individuality and independence for Western adolescents. However, the same measure for Japanese adolescents means parental acceptance and warmth (Trommsdorff 1984).

Similarly, *global* values such as "post-materialism" do not at all have the same meaning in different value systems or cultural contexts. This becomes clear when observing *single* items which are supposed to measure materialism. Focusing on just one single item will not allow the measurement of a complex value orientation. For example, the value of safety and security is greatly preferred in highly industrialized societies in the West. However, in Japan, where social control still prevents crime and unsafe cities, there is little need to consider such issues. The value of safety and security may be equally high in both cultures. However, in a societal context where hardly any security problems exist, this need will not be articulated nor reported in a questionnaire. Consciousness about certain values and readiness to report such values partly depend upon the experienced discrepancy between ideal and reality. Another problem is in how exact the social, political, and cultural context, in which values are measured, are known and included in the interpretations.

Particularly the comparative study of values and value change demonstrates that it is misleading to simply measure single items. Instead, the pattern of values and value changes in the given socio-cultural and

economic context should be observed; and this should be interpreted in respect to this context. Only then will it be obvious that post-materialistic values in the West do not mean the same as in Japan. In the same line, value change towards more individuality may have a different meaning for Japanese and German youth (Trommsdorff 1989b; 1992a) and presumably also for different subgroups (e.g., differentiated according to gender, education, and work experiences) in both cultures.

### *5.2 Problems of Change in an Individualistic Value System*

One may attempt to formulate questions for further research. The value of individuality may indeed be an interesting subject for such a study if embedded in a theoretical framework. Present industrialized societies have undergone considerable value change towards pluralism, individuality, and self-fulfillment. Accordingly, the socialization of the individual person has increasingly focused on values of independence and autonomy. These values are transmitted through the media and institutions such as schools. In a pluralistic society, in which diverse lifestyles are practiced and a variety of individual choices are made during the course of one's life, global values and rules may lose their obligatory character. Decision-making is based upon secularized values, and related behavior is oriented toward pragmatic solutions. This, of course, does not mean that values have lost their function in guiding individual behavior. Since values and lifestyles are increasingly diversified, the sociological method of analyzing values with aggregate data of whole groups or populations becomes increasingly useless. Today's values are determined by many variables and not only by belonging to a certain group.

However, little is known about problems of such pluralistic orientation. For example, sufficient resources have to be provided in order to allow the fulfillment of individual goals and values. Also, sufficient regulations are necessary in order to deal with possible conflicts arising from divergent individualistic values. Then, sufficient general acceptance of such regulations and their legitimacy are needed to ensure their functioning. These (among other) preconditions for a smoothly running pluralistic society may allow for individualistic values, which, however, do not mean egoistic values of an autonomous individual.

On the contrary, certain further values may be needed in a culture favoring individuality such as *self-control and acceptance of social control*. This means a certain motivation and ability to assume social responsibility may have to be developed by individuals living in a pluralistic society if this society is to survive. Such social responsibility demands quite a lot from a person: An understanding of the complex socio-economic and political sit-

uation and one's own individual role in this context; an acceptance of the restrictions on one's individual actions without experiencing frustration or the loss of control; and the acceptance of this as a challenge in order to improve one's individual situation as well as social conditions. Accordingly, the motivation and ability to accept social responsibility in a pluralistic society require a sound balance between the pursuit of individual and social goals. Unbalanced egoistic motivation could mean acquiring as much as possible from public resources without paying, or the hedonistic living out of one's desires without taking other people's needs into account. A balanced relationship between the self and the social environment can presumably be better achieved by balancing individual and social goals. Therefore, the value of individuality can be socially and individually dysfunctional if simply isolated from other, especially social, values.

In a culture in which social and collective goals are valued more than individualistic ones, a sudden shift towards the promotion of individualism at the level of public opinion, in the mass media for example, may pose problems for the individual who must cope with conflicting expectations. Still facing strong social control in the immediate social environment (family, job), a person presumably experiences barriers that hinder individualistic values. When socialization experiences have stressed the acceptance of social control and have limited experiences of individuality, it becomes difficult for a person to visualize and to decide between several alternatives, to structure related problems and to pursue one's own goals by employing personal control. Instead, the experience to this point of very limited personal control may rather have induced the belief that personal efforts to change the social situation are unwanted and futile. Thus, neither the motivation to achieve individual goals nor the motivation to serve the goals of society can develop. Accordingly, renunciation of control and retreat from social responsibilities may be a consequence (Trommsdorff 1989b; 1992c).

Whether these results of recently observable individualistic value orientation can be observed for Japanese adolescents is not yet clear. Also, it is not clear whether the presently reported attitudes will remain stable throughout the lifespan. It may well be that Japanese adolescents experience discrepancies between group orientation and individualism since they may not yet have had the opportunity to actively participate in society (Trommsdorff 1992b; 1992c). The experience of one's own abilities and belief in one's own control, which means one's potentialities and limitations, may be a precondition for the development of individuality and also of the related values of social responsibility. How far the experience of both individual and social control may be necessary has to be tested empirically by studying individuals and their subjective experience, instead of comparing statistical aggregates.

Further studies on value change should not, as previous studies have done, focus on value change by studying single selected items or predefined attitudes without taking into account the sociological and psychological meaning of such items, or without looking at the function of verbalized answers for individual behavior and social integration. Future research therefore should deal with value change in a theoretical framework in which changing relations between the self and social environment are systematically related. This also suggests focusing upon the changing importance of aspects of the self, one's relationship to authority and institutions, and one's beliefs in individual and social control.

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