

Family Values and Parenting of East and West German Mothers: Two Cohorts from the Value of Children Study

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Aims of the Study

- Compare two cohorts of mothers between East and West Germany with respect to
 - Individualistic, collectivistic, and family values
 - Values of children
 - Child-rearing goals
 - Parenting behavior
- Contribute to the study of family-related values and parenting in East and West Germany in times of social change:

Do differences found in the 1990 between East and West still exist 12 years after the unification?



Role of the Family in East and West Germany

- Since socialization was more institutionalized in the GDR as compared to the FRG, the family was seen as less important in East as compared to West Germany (Schmidt, 1996)
- Family orientation provided emotional security and bonds in times of social and political tension in the GDR (Trommsdorff, 1994; Trommsdorff & Chakkarath, 1996)
- Influence of the socialistic state ideology lead to a “retreat into the family” (Rückzugshypothese) (Schneider, Tölke & Nauck, 1995)
- Studies showed a stronger family orientation in East as compared to West Germany after the unification (Lenz, 1995; Spellerberg, 1996)



Child-Rearing Goals and Parenting in East and West Germany

- Child-rearing orientations and parenting behaviors in East and West Germany share a common history changing from authoritarian parenting to more authoritative parenting (Sturzbecher & Kalb, 1993)
- The collectivistic socialization ideology in the GDR focused on child-rearing goals such as conformity, compliance to rules and norms, and taking responsibility for others (Ahnert et al., 1994; Walper, 1995)
- In contrast, in the liberal-democratic context of the FRG, socialization orientations were more in direction of autonomy and self-actualization (Bertram & Hennig, 1995; Pollmer & Hurrelmann, 1992)
- East as compared to West German parents emphasized discipline and obedience more after the unification (Nauck & Joos, 1996; Zinnecker & Silbereisen, 1996)
- East German parenting goals and parenting were more protecting & autonomy restricting after the unification (Doerfel-Baasen & Rauh, 2001; Uhlendorff, 2001, 2004)



Value of Children

- Values of Children (VOC) are reasons for having children and refer to the needs children fulfill for their parents (Hoffmann & Hoffmann, 1973)
- Emotional, economic-utilitarian, social, old-age security values (Kagitcibasi, 1982)
- Results of the current study yielded four dimensions in Germany: (Mayer, Albert, Trommsdorff, & Schwarz, 2005)
 - Emotional VOC
 - Traditional (economic-normative) VOC
 - Family-oriented VOC
 - Old-age-oriented VOC
- Traditional and old-age VOCs are less relevant in modern as compared to traditional societies (Kagitcibasi, 2007)



Hypotheses: Values

- Mothers from **East** as compared to **West** Germany, and **older mothers** as compared to **younger mothers** are relatively
 - less individualistic, and more collectivistic
 - higher in traditional family values
 - and are higher in
 - Traditional VOCs
 - Family-oriented VOCs
 - Old-age-oriented VOCs



Hypotheses: Childrearing Goals and Parenting

- Mothers from East as compared to West Germany, and older mothers as compared to younger mothers
 - Place more importance on obedience as a child-rearing goal
 - Place less importance on independence as a child-rearing goal
 - Show more controlling parenting behavior
- Research questions:
 - Do East and West German mothers differ with regard to **Acceptance** in parenting?
 - How are child-rearing goals and parenting related in East and West Germany?



Sample

- Chemnitz (East)
 - City in Eastern Germany (260.000 people)
 - 100 mothers of small children (2-5 years)
 - 104 mothers of adolescents (14-18 years)
- Konstanz (West)
 - Small city in Southern Germany (80.000 people)
 - 100 mothers of small children (2-5 years)
 - 107 mothers of adolescents (14-18 years)



Data collection (face-to-face interviews) was carried out in 2002.



Background Variables

	Young mothers		Older mothers		Effects		
	East Germany	West Germany	East Germany	West Germany	Cohort	East/West	Inter-action
Mother's Age	30.7	34.7	41.5	45.1	**	**	
Socioecon. Status	2.9	3.2	2.9	3.1		**	
Education	3.6	4.0	3.5	3.4	**	+	**

Socioeconomic Status: 1 = low 2 = lower middle 3 = middle 4 = upper middle 5 = upper

Education: 1= No schooling 2 = Volksschule (8./9. POS) 3 = Mittlere Reife (10. POS)
 4 = Fachhochschulreife 5 = Abitur



Instruments

- **Individualism/Collectivism** (5-point scale) (Chan, 1994)
- **Family Values** (5-point scale) (Georgas, 1991)
- **Value of Children** (5-point scale) (Arnold et al., 1975; Trommsdorff & Nauck, 2005)
- **Child-Rearing Goals: Obedience, Independence** (5-point scale) (Hoffman, 1988)
- **Parenting** (4-point scale) (Rohner & Cournoyer, 1994)



Reliabilities

Variable	No. Item	Young mothers		Older mothers		Sample Item
		East	West	East	West	
Individualism	7	.75	.70	.73	.67	Independence (self-reliance, choosing your own goals)
Collectivism	6	.76	.76	.81	.69	Obedience (fulfilling duties, meeting obligations)
Family Values	5	.64	.62	.65	.55	We should honor and protect our family's reputation.
Emotional VOC	4	.80	.78	.75	.74	To have someone to love and care for.
Traditional VOC	6	.72	.79	.77	.80	To have one more person to help your family economically.
Family VOC	4	.80	.71	.78	.74	Because having children intensifies contacts with your kin.
Old-Age VOC	3	.70	.74	.65	.62	Your children can help you when you're old.
Acceptance	9	.62	.64	.58	.58	I make my child feel wanted and needed.
Control	3	.57	.52	.50	.56	I am always telling my child how (he/she) should behave.



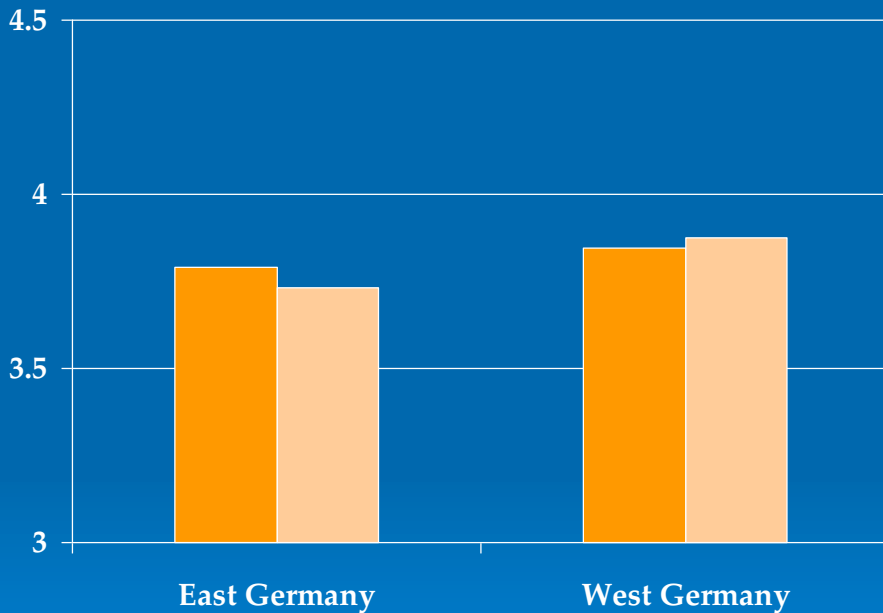
Results

- Individualism/collectivism
- Family values
- Value of children
- Child-rearing goals
- Parenting
- Relations among C-R-Goals and Parenting



Individualism

Older Mothers Young Mothers

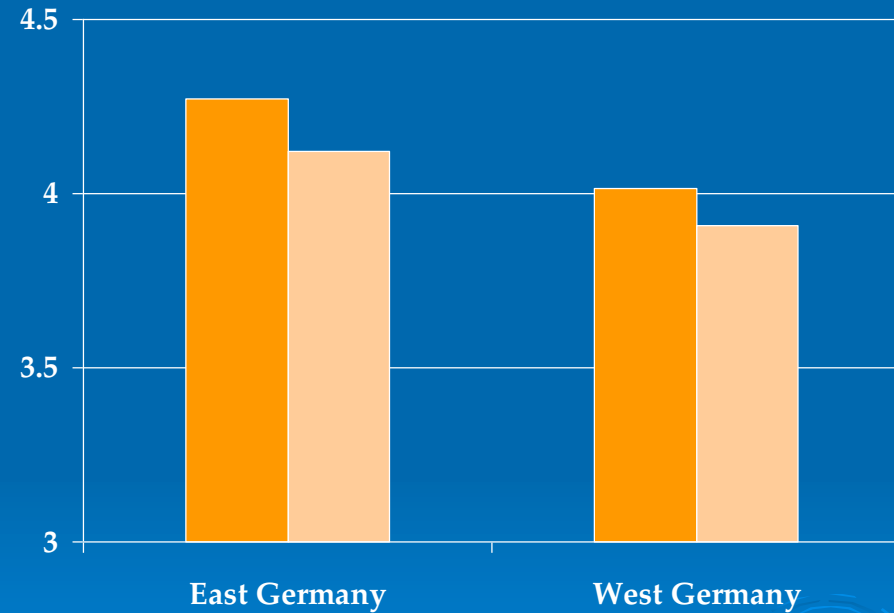


ANOVA Effects	orig.	+ ses & edu	+ age
East/West Cohort	*	ns	ns
East/West x Cohort			

+p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Collectivism

Older Mothers Young Mothers

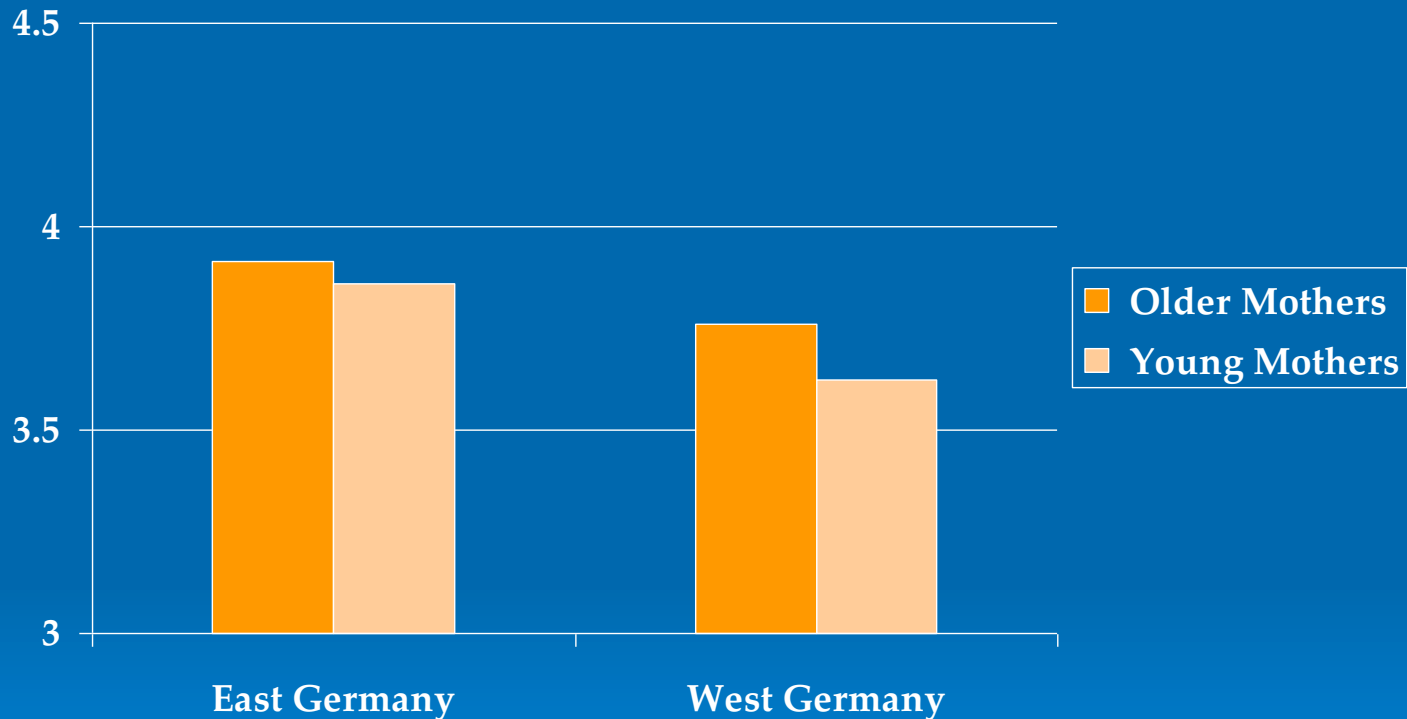


ANOVA Effects	orig.	+ ses & edu	+ age
East/West Cohort	**	**	**
East/West x Cohort	*	*	

The VOC-Project



Family Values



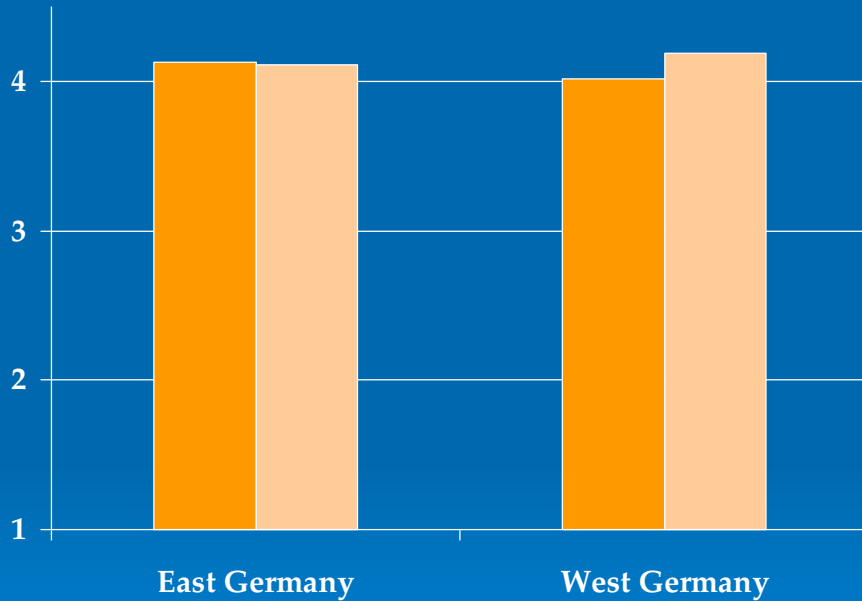
ANOVA Effects	orig.	+ ses & edu	+ age
East/West	**	**	**
Cohort	+		
East/West x Cohort			

+p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01.



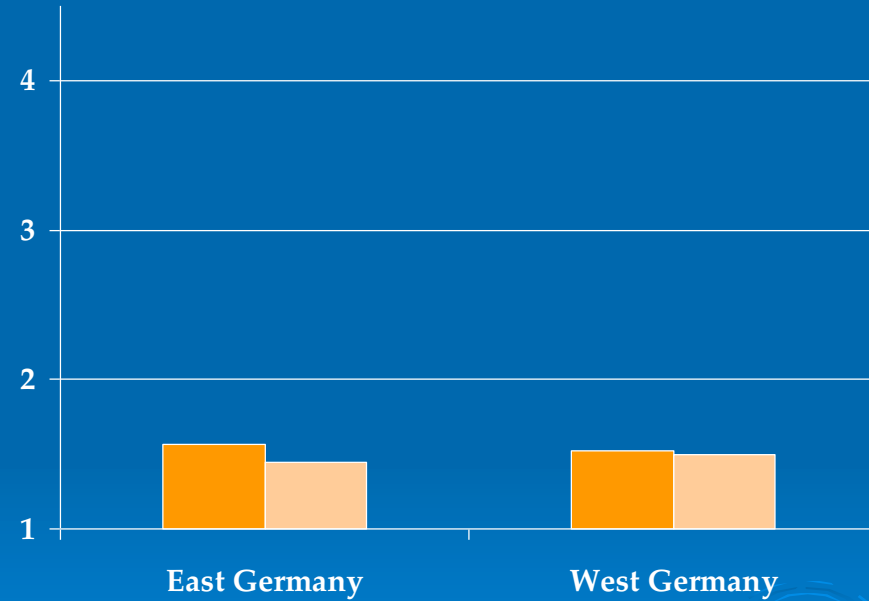
Emotional VOC

Older Mothers Young Mothers



Traditional VOC

Older Mothers Young Mothers



ANOVA Effects	orig.	+ ses & edu	+ age
East/West Cohort	ns	ns	ns
East/West x Cohort	ns	ns	ns

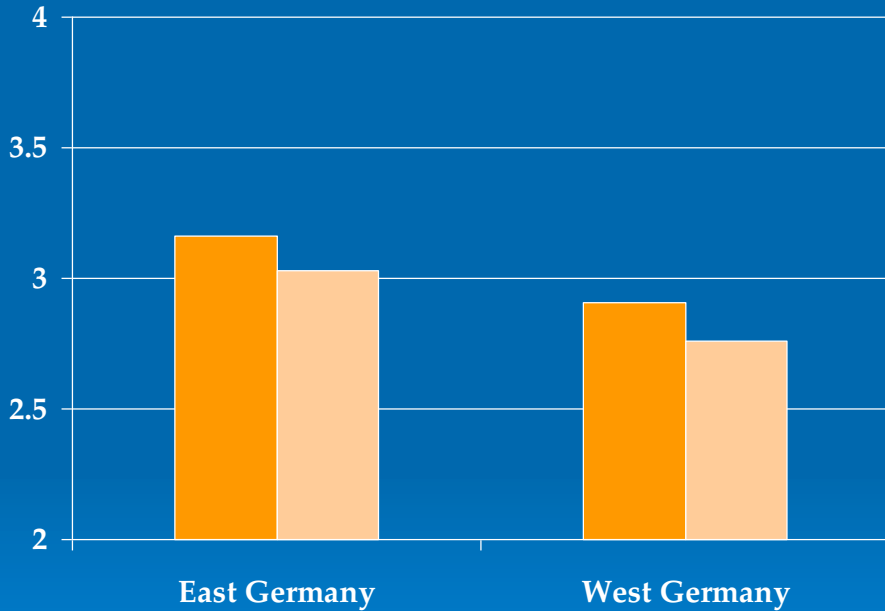
ANOVA Effects	orig.	+ ses & edu	+ age
East/West Cohort	ns	ns	ns
East/West x Cohort	ns	ns	ns

+p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01.



Family VOC

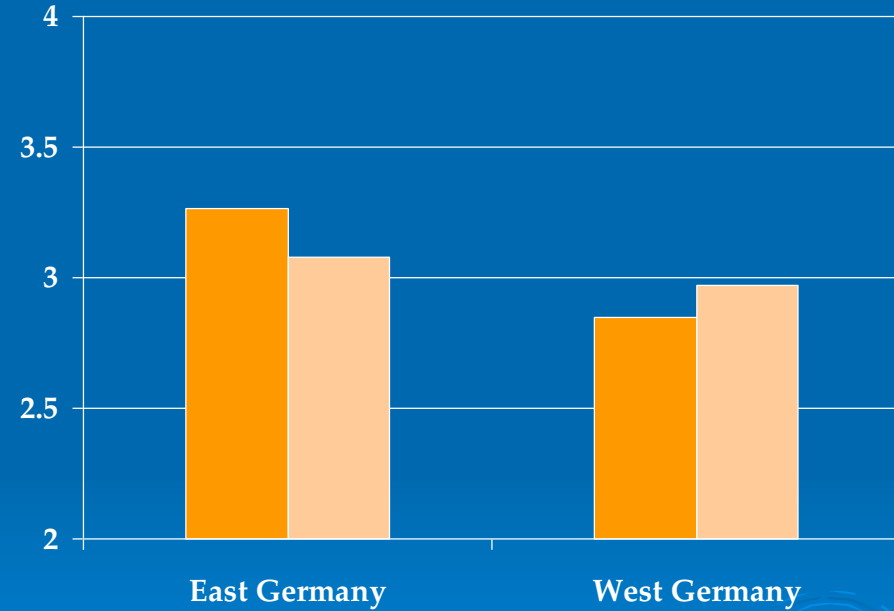
Older Mothers Young Mothers



ANOVA Effects	orig.	+ ses & edu	+ age
East/West Cohort	**	*	*
East/West x Cohort			

Old-Age VOC

Older Mothers Young Mothers



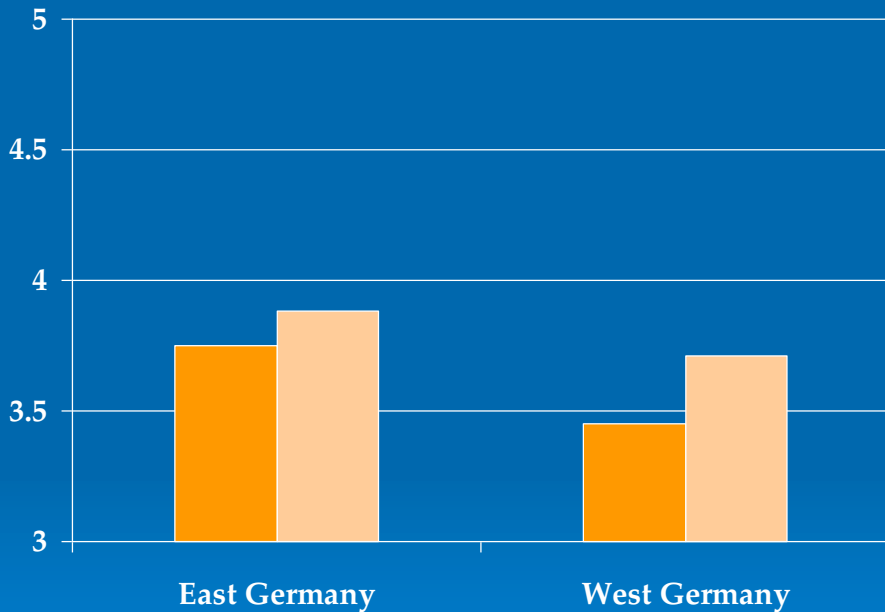
ANOVA Effects	orig.	+ ses & edu	+ age
East/West Cohort	**	**	**
East/West x Cohort	+	*	*

+p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01.



Obedience

Older Mothers Young Mothers

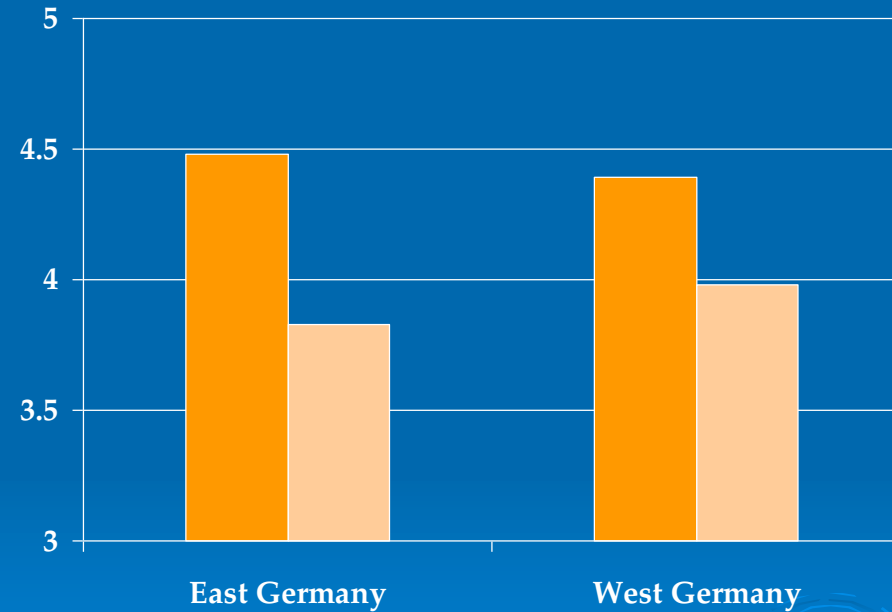


ANOVA Effects	orig.	+ ses & edu	+ age
East/West	**	**	**
Cohort	**	**	
East/West x Cohort			

+p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Independence

Older Mothers Young Mothers



ANOVA Effects	orig.	+ ses & edu	+ age
East/West			
Cohort	**	**	**
East/West x Cohort	+		

The VOC-Project

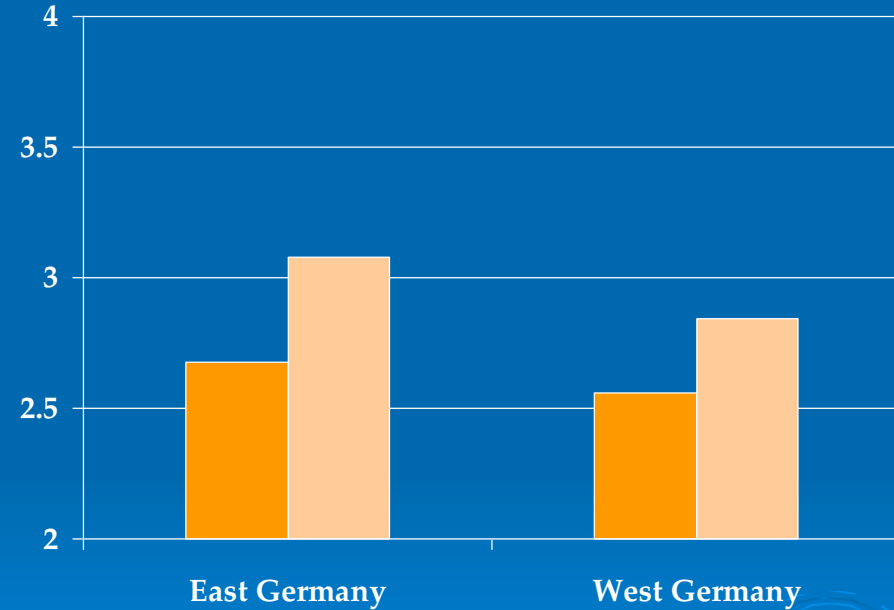
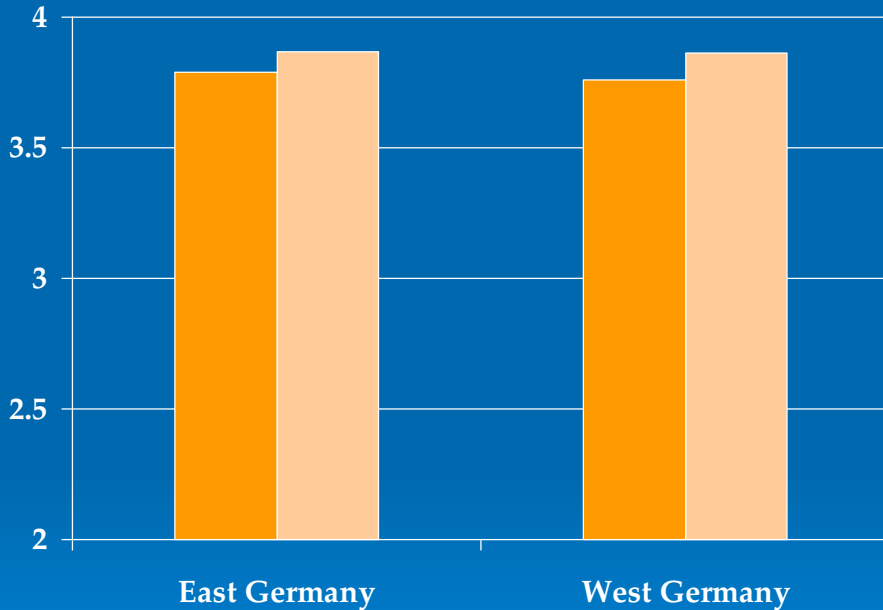


Acceptance

Control

Older Mothers Young Mothers

Older Mothers Young Mothers



ANOVA Effects	orig.	+ ses & edu	+ age
East/West			
Cohort	**	**	**
East/West x Cohort			+

ANOVA Effects	orig.	+ ses & edu	+ age
East/West	**	**	**
Cohort	**	**	**
East/West x Cohort			

+p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01.



Correlations of Childrearing Goals & Parenting

		East Germany			
		Obedience	Independence	Acceptance	Control
West Germany					
Obedience	YM		-.02	-.11	.39**
	OM		.34**	.08	.39**
Independence	YM	.06		.12	-.16
	OM	.18		.22*	.10
Acceptance	YM	.07	.12		-.09
	OM	.02	.12		.24*
Control	YM	.23*	.03	.12	
	OM	.28**	-.15	.07	

*p < .05. **p < .01. YM = Young Mothers; OM = Older Mothers



Discussion 1: East-West

- East as compared to West German mothers were more **collectivistic**, higher in traditional **family values**, **family-VOC**, and **old-age-VOC** (older mothers only)
- East as compared to West German mothers placed more importance on **obedience** and reported more **controlling** parenting
- → **Results largely in line with hypotheses**
(exceptions: no differences in individualism, traditional VOC, and the child-rearing goal of independence)



Discussion 2: Cohorts

- Few **real** cohort (or age) differences
 - older as compared to younger mothers were somewhat more **collectivistic** and less **obedience**-oriented
- Some differences between older and younger mothers were probably due to the age of their children:
 - Younger as compared to older mothers reported more **acceptance** as well as **control** in parenting, and less **independence** as a child-rearing goal
 - Small children may demand more **acceptance** and **control** (and also less **independence**) than adolescents



Discussion 3: Relations

- **Obedience and independence** as well as **acceptance and control** were positively related for **East German older mothers**, but not for the other 3 groups
- Control and obedience may (still) have a more positive meaning and be more compatible with acceptance and independence for older mothers from East Germany who were socialized and gave birth to their child(ren) in the collectivistic context of the GDR
- This interpretation is in line with findings suggesting different meanings of control in different cultural contexts (e.g., Chao & Tseng, 2002)



Conclusions

- More than a decade after the German unification, mothers' **family-related values** and **parenting orientations** were still more traditional in **East** as compared to **West** Germany
- Overall, differences between the two groups of mothers possibly indicating social change are rare
- However, results of some variables suggest that younger mothers in East Germany are less traditional than their 10-years older counterparts
- Persistent differences in values and socialization orientations despite strong societal transformations are in line with the literature on the effects social change (Silbereisen & Youniss, 2001)



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