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Langha De Mey<sup>a</sup>; Hans-J. Schulze<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

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# Indoctrination and Moral Reasoning: a comparison between Dutch and East German students

LANGHA DE MEY & HANS-J. SCHULZE

*Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

**ABSTRACT** *This contribution presents the results of an empirical study aiming to test Kohlberg's complexity hypothesis. It is assumed that in complex socio-political surroundings, individuals are stimulated into higher stages of moral judgements than in a less complicated environment. In order to test the hypothesis we compared the stages of moral judgements of Dutch and former German Democratic Republic (GDR) students belonging to two types of schools. The Dutch (Amsterdam) group was split into VWO (pre-university) students and MAVO (low general secondary education) students. The East German students attend the "Gymnasium" (pre-university) and the "Mittelschule" (low general secondary education). The mean age of the Dutch VWO-students was 16.33 and of the MAVO students, 15.39. The mean age of the East German "Gymnasium" students was 16.35 and that of the "Mittelschule" students was 16.00. The individuals of the Dutch and East German groups were asked to rate the moral problems in the Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure. The scores were subjected to multivariate analyses of variance to detect differences between the groups. The results did not support Kohlberg's complexity hypothesis.*

## Introduction

Until now, cross-cultural research in the domain of moral development has paid little attention [1] to communist nations. This is understandable, considering the inaccessibility of many Warsaw Pact societies in the recent past. However, since the fall of the Berlin Wall many investigators have taken the opportunity. We took the occasion to examine the moral judgements of Dutch and former German Democratic Republic (GDR) students, aiming to test an important hypothesis of Lawrence Kohlberg. This eminent researcher in the Piagetian cognitive-developmental tradition introduced a stage model of the development of moral reasoning in 1958. Since then, the model has become well known to researchers in the field and there is no need to describe it again (see e.g. Kohlberg, 1981).

Kohlberg committed himself to a "mild doctrine of social evolution" (1971). He argued that societies and cultures could be ordered in terms of "societal differentiation", "economic productivity" and "political integration", thereby showing different degrees of complexity (1981, p. 234). Although there is nothing new to

this, we are interested in his hypothesis that "increased socio-political complexity poses new problems for members of a society which give an impetus to the growth of a new (moral; LdM & HS) stage to cope with these problems" (Kohlberg *et al.*, 1983, p. 107). Stated differently, in complex socio-political surroundings, individuals are stimulated into higher levels of moral judgement than in a less complicated environment. We examined this thesis by comparing the moral judgements of two groups of students who have lived in countries of different socio-political complexity: one group in The Netherlands (Amsterdam) and the second group in the GDR (Leipzig) [2].

### Assumptions About the Complexity of Two Macro Environments

This section articulates some assumptions that are fundamental to the examination of moral judgements of students from Holland and the GDR. The two groups of students have lived in differently organised societies. First we assume that, before 1990, the year of unification of Germany, using Kohlberg's terminology, The Netherlands were in a way (a) socially more differentiated, (b) more politically integrated and (c) in economic terms more successful compared with the GDR. We shall comment on this briefly.

State power in The Netherlands is clearly divided into the legislature, the executive and the judicial branches (*trias politica*). Also, economics, politics, religion and the private sphere are separate domains. On the other hand, the GDR was the prototype of a socio-political system that controlled all the social processes from one centre. "The Socialist Party blurred the differences between levels of societal systems and shaped the whole society as a formal organisation" (Pollack, 1990, p. 294 [3], our translation).

Being a constitutional democracy, The Netherlands offer their citizens opportunities and conditions for a civil role in a multiparty system. Moreover, one can say that the inhabitants in general accept the democratic political system. The opposite was valid for the East German system, aiming at political integration that fitted in with a communist-dominated one-party system which excluded deviant groups (Pollack, 1990).

In addition, the economy in Holland is not only successful but it also undoubtedly has an autonomous role within Dutch society. The GDR was also economically inefficient (Wendt, 1994) and the economy was commanded by party decisions that were known by the phrase "five-year plans".

The rough comparison between The Netherlands and the GDR in terms of Kohlberg's criteria for societal complexity supports the assumption that, before the unification of Germany, The Netherlands were societally and politically more complex than the GDR.

Secondly, it is assumed that after the fall of communism in the GDR The Netherlands are still socially and politically more complex than the GDR. There is no indication that since 1990 the GDR (the new Bundesländer) has built up a democratic political system that is as settled and as differentiated as the socio-political and economic system in The Netherlands (Trommsdorff, 1994). Starke (1993,

p. 310) supposes that differences between settled western democracies and East Germany in some respects will remain, given the fact that the clash with the new social situation can only be coped with by making use of old habits. Furthermore, after the demolition of the wall, the masses of unemployed people and the disintegration of social networks caused gloomy life-expectancies (Dalbert, 1993). In short, it will take a long time before a democratic socio-political structure and a modern market economy will be realised in East Germany.

### **Research Hypotheses: complexity and moral socialisation**

Our main hypothesis pertains to the relationship between socio-political complexity and moral reasoning. Following Colby & Kohlberg (1987, p. 351), the degree of socio-political complexity must be understood especially in terms of the democratic quality of the society or the surroundings in which individuals participate. The more developed the democratic quality of the societal surroundings, the more the individual autonomous moral reasoning will be stimulated, meaning the reasoning at the highest levels (Stage 4 and above). We shall take up this subject further below.

A certain degree of democratic quality in the surroundings can be expressed in the interpersonal relationships with family members and friends. It can also be expressed through real participation in the economic, political and legal institutions of society, for instance through occupational, educational and citizenship activities. All these aspects provide experiences that are important for the development of differentiated role-taking skills (Walker & Moran, 1991) and accompanying social perspectives that ease the notion of the social system in abstract ways, i.e. ideas that are compatible with many different situations. Differentiated role-taking skills and the internalisation of abstract social orientations also based on experiences with conflict situations are the prerequisites for moral reasoning at higher levels (Edwards, 1982).

In several studies, Kohlberg's claim on the influence of democratic quality on moral reasoning is affirmed. In this context the Kohlberg kibbutz study (Snarey *et al.*, 1984), the Just Community studies [4] (Jennings & Kohlberg, 1983; Kohlberg & Higgins, 1987) and the analysis of the relationship between Kohlberg's theory and politics by Weinreich-Haste (1986) must be mentioned. For example, the kibbutz study reported that the kibbutz's youth showed higher stages on moral reasoning than children in America. Weinreich-Haste observed that "the Kibbutz is an ongoing 'just community', continually stimulating reflection upon political and moral processes" (1986, p. 353). She also argues "that the child who grows up in a liberal household or subculture will have greater access to collectivistic explanations, and explanations that focus on social institutions than the child who grows up in a conservative environment" (1986, p. 355). Individuals using so-called collectivistic explanations surmount the level of moral reasoning which is characterised by ego-centred perspectives or the intention to avoid sanctions in the case of making decisions of moral salience. At the lower levels they use individualistic statements, not to be confused with the Piagetian meaning of autonomy.

So far, some arguments have been provided to make the relationship between

the democratic quality of the societal surroundings and moral reasoning stages more intelligible. Our next step will be to take a closer look at this relationship in the GDR.

One of the consequences of central control of all social processes in the GDR was the full participation of almost all women in paid work [5]. As a result, the education of children largely took place outside the home, in kindergarten and at school during and after the lessons (Schulze, 1993). The firm control the Minister of Education [6] had over the educational system, ranging from day care to adult professional training during a period of 40 years, was aimed at adaptation to the one-party system and subordination. As Dalbert notes (1993), the object of this "public education" was "to a lesser degree the development of the students' own standpoints, a self-determined orientation with respect to public affairs and individualization. Tight norms reduced the individual developmental chances and contradicted private norms" (Dalbert, 1993, p. 83 [7], our translation). One can rightly speak in this context about the intention to indoctrinate the children. Spiecker (1991) says that indoctrination is related to certain convictions, in which the oppression of the abilities for critical reflection is striven for and combined with the aim of making people think in a way that is programmed by an external force (see also Peters, 1981). For us the decisive external force is the simplistic and almighty state of the GDR which by means of its system of schooling tried to prevent their children and adolescents from developing autonomous moral thinking. This is the very reason for the assumption that there are marked differences in the level of moral reasoning between comparable groups of adolescents in the GDR and in The Netherlands as one of the western countries with a liberal tradition.

Regarding some socialisation aspects in the GDR just outlined, it is interesting to look at the empirical data Dalbert (1993) offers. For two groups of pedagogics students from, respectively, Tübingen (West Germany) and Jena (East Germany), she compares several socialisation indicators. She arrives at the conclusion that "in the GDR a socialisation had taken place strongly directed at obedience and subordination: the Jena students demonstrate a clearer inclination to authoritarianism than the students from Tübingen" (p. 91). However, what has this socialisation effect to do with the moral development of East German children? In fact, Van Ijzendoorn (1988) in The Netherlands has found negative correlations ( $-0.36$ ,  $-0.48$ ) between the variables "moral development" and "sensitivity to authoritarianism" of, respectively, pedagogics students and students of secondary education. One of his conclusions is: "The higher the moral judgement level, the more anti-authoritarian the subjects were" (Van Ijzendoorn, 1988, p. 41). It is reasonable now to expect that the repressive socialisation in the GDR slowed the moral development of children.

Although we stress national features in examining the complexity hypothesis, quite possibly these are not the only relevant variables. The possible influences of other factors such as gender (Kulke, 1991) and type of school could interfere in the relationship between nationality and moral reasoning and therefore have to be explored. We shall refer to the relevance of gender first and then turn to the type of school.

Since the Gilligan-Kohlberg debate, many investigations have been made into

possible gender differences in moral reasoning. We think the results are controversial. The well-known meta-analysis of Walker (1984) revealed no significant gender differences. Another meta-analysis, however, done by Thoma (1986), indeed demonstrated significant differences between males and females.

In fact, there is yet another reason other than the previously mentioned gender-role controversy which brings us to include this factor. In The Netherlands the gender roles were much more differentiated than in the GDR. As has already been mentioned, before the demolition of the Berlin Wall almost all East German females participated in full-time paid work. This was not true in the Netherlands (Kuijsten & Schulze, 1996) [8]. To what extent this difference in social experience between women from Holland and the GDR may have affected their moral reasoning and finally the moral reasoning of their adolescent children is something we just do not know.

Edwards (1982) suggests that students participating in "higher" forms of education are stimulated to solve moral problems in a way more abstract and, consequently, at higher stages of moral reasoning than students in "lower" types of school. Put another way, the cognitive development seems to be linked to moral development. Walker (1986) found cognitive development to be an important but not a sufficient prerequisite for moral development. Consequently, observed differences in moral reasoning between more or less demanding ("high" and "low") types of school would not be surprising. Given this situation, we think it is of more interest to explore the possible interaction between nationality and type of school. We suppose differences in moral reasoning between individuals or groups belonging to societies with different degrees of complexity to be small if we look at groups that have undergone the highest level of formal education.

## **Method**

### *Subjects*

The literature (Nissan & Kohlberg, 1982; Tietjen & Walker, 1985) suggests education and urbanisation to be critical factors in the explanation of moral reasoning. In this study both factors have been controlled for by selecting Dutch (Amsterdam) and East German (Leipzig) students from cities of about equal size and from comparable types of schools.

The Amsterdam data were gathered in 1991 and at the end of 1992 the Leipzig data came in [9]. The Amsterdam subjects (males  $n = 71$ , females  $n = 82$ ) were recruited from the so-called VWO [10] ( $n = 92$ ) and MAVO ( $n = 61$ ), both types of secondary education, the first group being the highest. The Leipzig subjects, males ( $n = 59$ ) and females ( $n = 95$ ) were students from similar schools: the "Gymnasium" ( $n = 97$ ), being formally the highest type of school, and the so-called "Mittelschule" ( $n = 57$ ). The mean age of the Amsterdam VWO students was 16.33 years and the MAVO students was 15.39 years. The mean age of the Leipzig "Gymnasium" students was 16.35 years and that of the "Mittelschule" students was 16.00 years.

*Instrument*

The questionnaire administered consisted of two clusters of questions. The first cluster included background variables such as age, gender and type of school. The second cluster was the Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure (SROM; see Gibbs *et al.*, 1984). The SROM contains two moral dilemmas that were constructed by Kohlberg; the Heinz dilemma and the father-and-son dilemma (also called the Joe dilemma). The instrument is based on Kohlberg's Moral Judgement Interview (MJI) and the Sociomoral Reflection Measure (SRM) developed by Gibbs *et al.* (1984); for the German context we used a version that was translated by ourselves; for the Dutch part of the project we made use of a version of the SROM produced by Van Ijzendoorn (personal communication) and applied by him in several research projects (Van Ijzendoorn 1986, 1988).

The Heinz dilemma includes several moral problems about life, law, conscience, punishment and so on and contains questions such as "Should a poor man (Heinz) steal a medicine to save his dying wife, when the pharmacist who invented the medicine is reluctant to supply it free of charge or very low-priced" and especially, "why should he steal it?"

The father-and-son dilemma concerns topics such as contract, authority and obedience, related to questions such as "Should a boy (Joe) obey his father and give him money he had earned himself when the father had promised the boy he could keep it" and especially, "why should the boy disobey his father?"

The justification-related responses elicited by the SROM are based on recognition. Subjects must respond to 16 multiple choice questions. Every question has six options; five are representative of a Kohlbergian moral stage and one is a "pseudo" option to check for the respondents' tendency to give socially desirable answers. First, subjects must mark the options as follows: close/not close/not sure (circle one). After this, the subject has to choose one option which is the closest to the option that (s)he would give.

*Procedure and analysis*

Before the scores were analysed a check took place on the respondents' number of "pseudo" ratings. Because of this check, 21% of the subjects had to be removed from the Dutch sample and 19% of the subjects from the German sample, resulting in the above-mentioned sample sizes.

Gibbs and his colleagues (1984) reported in favour of the reliability and validity of the SROM. In The Netherlands researchers (Van Ijzendoorn 1988; de Mey, 1993a, 1993b) reported the same positive results.

Computation of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability for the Amsterdam and Leipzig group resulted in  $\alpha$  of, respectively, 0.73 and 0.72.

Following the procedure of Gibbs *et al.* (1984) the collected scores at the question options have been developed into item indexes and a total weighted average index (SROMTOT [11]). The index calculation made it possible to fix for every individual and group the moral judgement stage both per item and in general; it

TABLE I. Means and standard deviations for item issues [12] by nationality (Dutch, GDR) and type of school. "Low" = lower general secondary education, "high" = pre-university education

Issue↓; school type →	Nationality			
	Dutch		GDR	
	Low	High	Low	High
Life and law 1	382 (105)	397 (102)	320 (133)	364 (112)
Life and law 3	263 (118)	296 (96)	259 (130)	285 (115)
Life and law 4	322 (120)	336 (81)	305 (130)	354 (78)
Property 5	236 (96)	307 (110)	238 (134)	325 (118)
Law 6	269 (115)	280 (117)	278 (107)	336 (104)
Fairness 7	293 (65)	318 (78)	257 (114)	367 (89)
Conscience 8	261 (112)	298 (94)	264 (87)	306 (87)
Conscience 9	276 (134)	258 (108)	213 (169)	247 (135)
Punishment 10	276 (104)	330 (128)	279 (136)	353 (100)
Contract 11	208 (118)	272 (120)	210 (121)	264 (127)
Contract 12	280 (105)	292 (105)	293 (89)	302 (92)
Contract 13	295 (112)	360 (92)	320 (130)	385 (90)
Contract and money 14	267 (110)	308 (97)	258 (86)	339 (89)
Contract and money 15	247 (143)	333 (104)	267 (128)	333 (115)
Contract and loyalty 16	242 (103)	295 (119)	261 (124)	293 (116)
SROMTOT	274 (47)	312 (35)	268 (58)	323 (30)

could range from 100 to 500, i.e. stage multiplied by 100. Herewith, a higher score implicates a higher moral development. Table I presents the distribution of means and standard deviations according to item issue, level of education and nationality.

The indexes, that is to say the item indexes and the total weighted average index (SROMTOT), were subjected to analysis of variance (MANOVA, SPSS/PC). We first looked for differences in item indexes, since we wanted to know in which particular moral domain (life, law, authority, punishment, promise, conscience, etc.) they arise. After that, to assess whether these also hold on a more general level, we analysed the total weighted average index.

## Results

In order to examine the hypothesised difference between Dutch and East German students, the data were subjected to a three-way analysis of variance (country, gender, type of school, with the co-variate age). The co-variate age is included because the Dutch students were on average slightly younger than the German students [13]. We started with a multivariate analysis of variance on the item indexes (see Table I) to obtain some idea about the crucial moral domains that played a role in emerging differences. Tables II and III present the results.

In Table II we notice a strong effect for the main factor type of school and an



TABLE II. Hotelling's  $T^2$  values (d.f. = 15,274) from a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  multivariate analysis of co-variance on item indexes (Table I), age as covariate

Source of variance	Hotelling's $T^2$
Country (A)	0.084
Gender (B)	0.089
Type of school (C)	0.325**
A $\times$ B	0.034
A $\times$ C	0.099*
B $\times$ C	0.043
A $\&$ B $\times$ C	0.060

\* $P \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $P \leq 0.01$ .

effect for the interaction between country and type of school. Although the appearance of a strong main effect for type of school may be obvious, the country by type of school interaction complicates the interpretation of the observed main effect and may be the expected but unobserved country main effect as well. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, it is not the school main effect that interests us. In view of the cognitive discrepancy between high, pre-university education and low, general secondary education for vocational training, this is not surprising [14]. Therefore, we shall explore the country by type of school effect. It is appropriate to look at the univariate  $F$ -test results for all items, to see which items are responsible for the observed effect. Table III shows the distribution of means for items showing significant differences on the univariate  $F$ -test in the country by type of school interaction.

A rough examination of the data reveals the following tendencies. At the so-called low education level (MAVO + Mittelschule), Dutch students tend to perform better than the GDR students. On the other hand, at the "high" education level (VWO + GYMNASIUM) the reverse is suggested: the GDR group seemed to

TABLE III. Issues,  $F(1,288)$ -values and other data relevant to the type of school by nationality effects. Low = lower general secondary education, high = pre-university education

Issue $\downarrow$ ; school type $\rightarrow$	Dutch		GDR	
	low	high	low	high
Fairness 7 ( $F = 16, P \leq 0.01$ )	293	318	257	367
Conscience 9 ( $F = 4, P \leq 0.05$ )	275	258	213	247
Contract and money 14 ( $F = 4, P \leq 0.05$ )	267	308	258	339

TABLE IV. *F*-values from a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  multivariate analysis of co-variance on the index of the common moral level (SROMTOT), age as co-variate

Source of variance	d.f.	<i>F</i> -value
Country (A)	1	0.00
Sex (B)	1	0.03
Type of school (C)	1	62.03**
A $\times$ B	1	0.06
A $\times$ C	1	3.97*
B $\times$ C	1	0.70
A $\times$ B $\times$ C	1	0.24

\* $P \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $P \leq 0.001$ .

be doing better than the Dutch [15]. We will give an explanation for these differences in the next section. In short, we may say that the difference between "low" and "high" is very much smaller in the Dutch case than for the GDR.

The results so far were not supporting Kohlberg's hypothesis nor our specification of it that differences between Dutch and GDR students tend to disappear in higher forms of education.

Our next step was to analyse the total weighted average index since it allowed conclusions on a more general moral domain. The results of the analysis of variance on this variable (SROMTOT) are presented in Table IV.

Again, the same effects arise. Regarding the type of school by country effect, represented in Fig. 1, the earlier observed tendency is confirmed. Indeed, at the low level the Dutch ratings on the general moral domain are higher than the East German ratings and the reverse is suggested at the high level. An interpretation of this phenomenon will be given in the discussion.

In short, the results do not support Kohlberg's complexity hypothesis. To repeat our interpretation of it, the East German students living in a more indoctrinated and less complex society than their peers in The Netherlands were expected to have lower scores than the Dutch students. More specifically, these differences in moral reasoning would probably arise in lower forms of education and diminish in higher forms. On the contrary, it has been demonstrated that there seems to be a tendency at the higher education levels for East German students to get better moral reasoning results, using the SROM, than their Dutch counterparts.

## Discussion

Kohlberg's thesis of complexity suggests that moral judgement varies, depending on the socio-political complexity of the surroundings. The results of this study, however, hardly support this hypothesis.

We did not find main effects for country and sex: that is, there were no moral

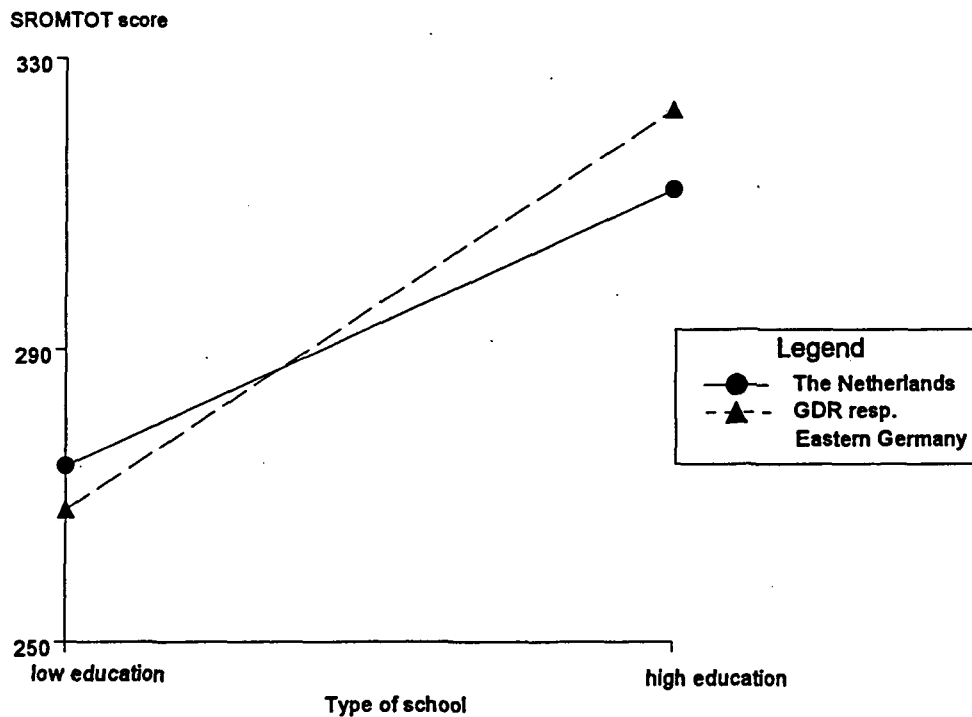


FIG. 1.

reasoning differences between either the Dutch students and East German students, nor males and females. What we did find was a main effect for type of school and, of more interest, a country-by-type-of-school-effect.

In trying to explain the missing country effect and the interaction between type of school and country some interpretations and considerations will follow.

The discussion about the missing country-main-effect and the demonstrated country-by-type-of-school-effect is centred around the increasing tension in the GDR between private and public norms, possibly connected to moral reasoning. By public norms we mean the ensemble of prescriptions and expectations concerning the behaviour and convictions of the well adjusted citizen; in other words, the ensemble of formally codified conventions which regulate the public exchange in authoritarian regimes. The leading question is: could it be that the socio-political system of former East Germany was more complex than reports suggested? The following observations justify this question.

First, considering the fact that in the former USSR many parents hardly participated or showed any interest in the state's ideology—but were mostly occupied by everyday and domestic chores (Liegle, 1970)—we can assume that this also applied, at least to some extent, to parents in former East Germany, a country relatively less isolated than the former Soviet Union. Therefore it seems likely that parents and guardians did not pursue the same targets as the political system aimed

at and thus undermined the attempts of indoctrination of the state. However, one could argue, as pointed out before, that women participated fully in paid work and that "education" was predominantly organised outside the home and through after-school care. Then, is it not true that in the case of the East German children who only spend a minimum amount of time at home, a negative influence on their moral development took place? The answer to this question is probably "no". The studies of the role of parents in education in the USSR (Liegle, 1970) and in the kibbutz in Israel by Liegle (1972) indicate that, in spite of the small amount of time parents spend actively in the education of their children, the family remains the predominant group of reference with the most important educational function.

Secondly, in the course of the 1980s an increasing indifference or resistance to the system by different groups (workers, high school and university students) became increasingly apparent (Förster, 1991). This early sign of political upheaval points to the possible positive influence relatives and family had on the moral thinking of the child: perhaps the norms for public and private moral reasoning were contradictory (see Dalbert, 1993, p. 83). Recent research on predominant value orientations in different cohorts in East and West Germany reveals that a great deal of value change, from conventional to postmodern value orientations [16], has taken place and left its mark, especially on the younger population groups (see Friedrich, 1991, p. 231). If we suppose that postmodern values are connected to higher forms of moral reasoning, we can conclude that the younger cohort that was born in about 1976 neither experienced the full pressure of the educational nor the political system in the GDR and was exposed to a complicated mix of totally diverging public and private moral standards granting complexity within the seemingly uniform society.

Thirdly, the tension between public and private norms possibly created many conflict-like situations, which could stimulate the moral development of some groups. The interaction effect (country-by-type-of-school) suggests that the East German pre-university students, cognitively well equipped, were provoked to a faster moral development by these conflicts than their Dutch peers who participated in democratic but probably less turbulent surroundings. To the East German lower secondary education students, these conflicts could act as a brake on their moral development. Their confrontation with change was probably accompanied by feelings of anxiety which could make for a slow moral development or even a regression. The Dutch lower secondary education students, on the contrary, who during the same period experienced no comparable societal change, developed themselves morally in a steady way.

The surprising political change between 1989 and 1992 in particular could have been generated social conflicts and accompanying complexity. This, too, may have generated group specific moral developments within the former GDR or in its aftermath (Krettenauer *et al.*, 1994). In fact, these suggestions correspond to the results of other investigators. For example, Krebs & Gillmore (1982) reported on one of Walker's findings that an intervention designed to stimulate moral change was more effective for children who were at more advanced stages of cognitive development than for those who were not.

Why should, after all, the East German students manifest a slower moral

development than students of a western democracy such as the Netherlands? We must consider the possibility that in the case of indoctrination in favour of loyalty to the state, as happened in the GDR, a development to Stage 4 (one of the higher stages) was stimulated, for Kohlberg (1981) describes Stage 4 as taking the point of view of the system that defines roles and rules. Since we measured the Stages only, in other words, the formal aspects of moral reasoning development, this possibility is quite realistic. If we had paid more attention to closely related content-issues of moral reasoning (moral orientations) [17], some differences could have arisen. Of course, rules and roles are quite different in a democratic system on one hand and a totalitarian, one-party system on the other hand. Totalitarian systems decide upon virtually every biographical step of every person submitted to their power, whereas democratic systems create the conditions in which every citizen may and has to take her/his own biographical decisions [18].

All in all, it seems reasonable to reconsider Kohlberg's thesis of complexity. To consider complexity in political terms as the democratic quality of macro surroundings is not fruitful in our opinion. We suggest focusing research on the interaction of public and private (family) norms and its effects on individual moral development.

Finally, we put forward the following general hypothesis: whether we talk about a democratic or a totalitarian society, it is not political ideology that determines individual moral development.

*Correspondence:* Dr Langha de Mey and Professor Dr Hans-Joachim Schulze, Vrije Universiteit, FPP, Van der Boechorststraat 1, NL-1081 BT Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

#### NOTES

- [1] Walker & Moran (1991) examined Kohlberg's universality claim in a communist Chinese society.
- [2] Leipzig now belongs to the expanded Federal Republic of Germany. Following our complexity hypothesis, we directed our study at the German group belonging to the former German Democratic Republic (GDR).
- [3] "Die SED-Führung nahm eine Ebenenverwischung vor und richtete die gesamte Gesellschaft als ihre Organisation ein."
- [4] "The Cluster School was an alternative high school within the Cambridge High and Latin School in which students and staff were given equal say over the operation of the school" (Leming, 1986). This democratic system of social relationships aims to stimulate the moral thinking.
- [5] As well for ideological ("emancipation") as for economic reasons women more or less had to do paid work in order to make their and their family's living.
- [6] For some years Honnecker's spouse Margot was in charge of this ministry.
- [7] "... weniger die Bildung eines eigenen Standpunkts, selbständige Orientierung und individuelle Entfaltung. Vielmehr begrenzten enge Normen die individuellen Entfaltungsmöglichkeiten und standen häufig im Widerspruch zu privaten Normen" (Dalbert, 1993, p. 83). We shall return to the thesis that public and private norms were contradictory in the former GDR (see Discussion).
- [8] In 1979 35.5% of all married women aged 25-29 years were part of the labour force; within the age bracket of 30-34 years 28.5% of women participated in paid labour. In 1990 29% of all Dutch women who had a child aged up to 4 years had a paid job (Federkeil & Strohmeier, 1993).
- [9] We thank the administrative bodies, the parents and the students for their co-operation which

made the collection of the data possible. Our gratitude is expressed to Albrecht Döhnert for organising and administering the data collection in Leipzig. With respect to the school system and its change in East Germany the following is worth noting. After the demolition of the Berlin Wall, the uniform school system in the GDR, that is to say the "Polytechnische Oberschule" (POS), was abandoned (Fuchs & Petermann, 1991). It was replaced by two types of school: the one that is called "Gymnasium" and the other one that is called "Mittelschule". The type of school called Gymnasium is pre-university and comparable with the Dutch VWO, also a form of pre-university education. The other school type is similar to the Dutch MAVO. "Mittelschule" and "MAVO" schools are both forms of low general secondary education, preparing their students for vocational training.

- [10] Meaning Advanced Scientific Education.
- [11] A subject is asked, for each problem, to choose item options, representing Kohlbergian stages in two ways: (a) by circling one of the alternatives close/not close/not sure, (b) by choosing the option "closest" to the reason the subject would give. The item indexes have been constructed with the aid of the manual of Gibbs *et al.* (1984). The following four steps have been carried out: (a) for each item a score was calculated by averaging the options (Stages) answered as close, (b) a second score was adjusted regarding the option chosen as "closest", (c) a total average per item is calculated adding up scores 1 and 2, weighting the "closest" answer by factor two, (d) the total weighted average index (SROMTOT) equals the average calculated over the "close" and "closest" scores.
- [12] For practical reasons the questionnaire was reproduced in the former GDR. We noticed too late that the text of the pseudo option of Issue 2 was not legible. For this reason we decided to delete Issue 2 from our analyses.
- [13] The  $\beta$ -coefficients of the co-variate calculated for each item index were all positive and non-significant. To the SROMTOT a test of parallelism was carried out. This was done to see whether an important requirement for analysis of co-variance was being fulfilled: in all observation cells the regression of the criterion variable must be homogeneous to the co-variate. This was confirmed ( $F(7) = 1.57, P = 0.143$ ).
- [14] On this subject one of the authors has published details elsewhere (de Mey, 1993a).
- [15] The distribution of scores on Issue 9, the Dutch "high" group score lower than the corresponding "low" group. This anomaly demands further research.
- [16] Values that stress the sense of fulfilment of personal endeavours and hedonic aims.
- [17] Kohlberg (1976) suggested four moral orientations which are more closely related to the content of moral reasoning.
- [18] This view is being justified by some observations showing a kind of nostalgia of former East German inhabitants facing the problems of unemployment and job seeking and dreaming about the "good old days" when everyone had a job.

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