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Socio-Demographic Changes in Japan and Germany and Cross-Cultural Comparisons of the Value of Children[1]

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Abstract

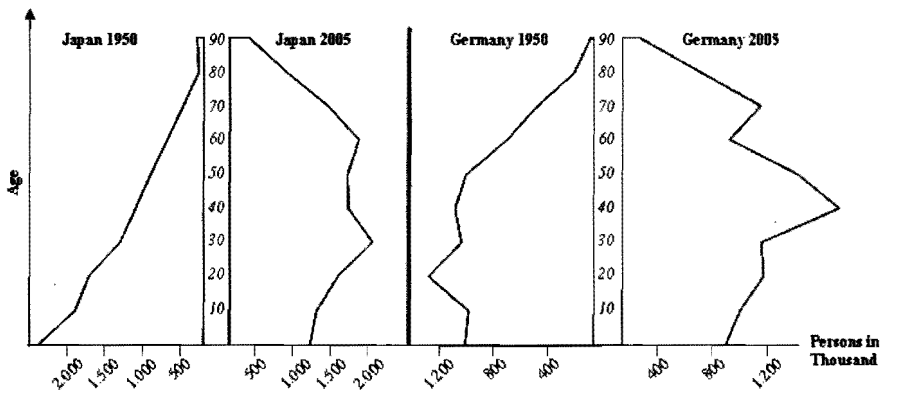
This paper deals with questions of social change from the perspective of socio-demographic changes, especially declining fertility and increasing longevity in industrialized countries. In the first part, the situation in Japan and Germany is compared with respect to similarities and differences in the changing structure of the whole population, relations between female employment and fertility, and the changing structure of the family. In the second part, the concept of "value of children" is introduced in order to study the possible effects of macro- and micro-level variables on socio-demographic changes. Here, the question is dealt with in how far characteristics of societies are related to values associated with having children. Some results on this issue from our large multi-country study on the "Value of Children and Intergenerational Relations" are presented. The main results are that the emotional value of children is high in most countries and does not differentiate between low and high fertility; the economic value of children is relatively higher in those countries with lower economic development, lower postmaterialist values, and lower religious orientation. In the final part, these results are discussed with respect to the questions of changes in birth rate, parenting, and parent-child-relationships over the life-span. These issues can be integrated as part of a model of value of children and intergenerational relations in changing societies.

1 Socio-Demographic Changes in Germany and Japan: Some Social Implications

All over the world, significant demographic transitions are taking place with increasing fertility in the poorest countries and declining fertility and declining populations in the economic advanced countries which have been declining from 1/3 of the world population 80 years ago to only 1/6 at present. The world population will increase between 1960 and 2050 from three to nine billion. This increase means three times as many people. The paradox situation is: while some countries like Germany and Japan fear that their population will be significantly reduced and over-aged, they also fear the dramatic increase of population in other regions, e.g., in Africa, China, or India.

In Japan and Germany, dramatic demographic changes have been taking place during the last 50 years. In both countries similar changes have occurred regarding the age structure of the population (see Figure 1).

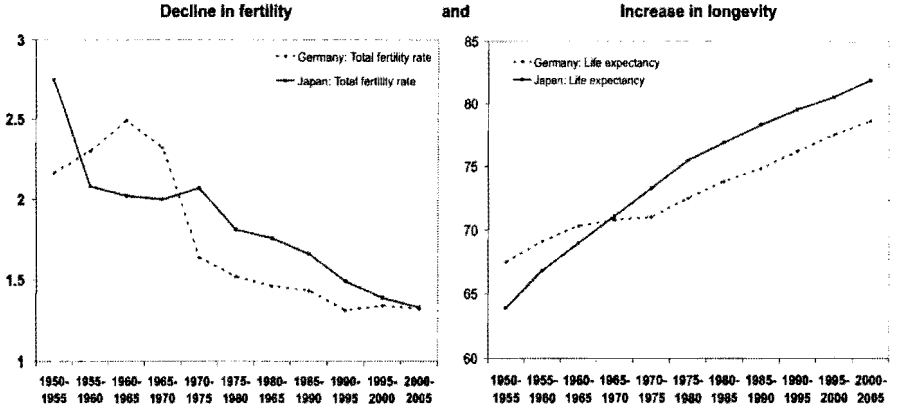
Figure 1: Population Distribution by Age in Germany and Japan.



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (2006) and Statistics Bureau (2006).

The decline of fertility and the increase in longevity are very similar in both countries (see Figure 2). However, the decline of the younger generation, and the increase of the older people have occurred at a much more rapid speed in Japan as in Germany (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Decline in Fertility and Increase in Longevity in Germany and Japan.



Source: US Bureau of the Census and the World Population Data Sheet of the Population Reference Bureau, 2005.

Two questions arise: What are the conditions for these changes and what are its implications? Since we are dealing with a complex of socio-economic, cultural and psychological aspects, it will not be possible to isolate the specific conditions for and consequences of such changes. Therefore, we will focus on some implications for these changes in the first part of this chapter. It will be shown that these in turn constitute preconditions for further change. In the second part of this chapter we will ask whether values can be regarded as the transmission belt for such changes. Here, we will focus more specifically on the value of children in relation to socio-economic conditions on the cultural level.

1.1 Implications for Intergenerational Relations and the Family?

The socio-demographic changes imply a continuous trend towards an aging society. The related decrease of the younger generation and the increase of the number of old aged people affect the general economic development. The declining size of the productive population contrasts to the rapid aging of the society. This is especially the case in industrialized countries with low fertility rates – on top are Japan and Germany.

To give an example, in 2007 Japan expects the baby boomer generation to leave the job market – these are about 30 million people. Even though the aging of the baby boomer

generation inducing this large-scale retirement ("2007-problem") is a temporary event, it clearly indicates that Japan is an aging society facing the task of providing care for a growing number of aged people.

These changes imply a decrease in the labor force and presumably in economic productivity. These changes also imply an increase in the burden on the families and/or the social security system to provide care for the old people. These changes also imply changes in intergenerational relations and corresponding values. For example, old age has been highly valued in East Asia, mostly based on the Confucian belief in seniority, old age has been less valued in Western societies. However, a value change may occur due to recently increasing numbers of pensioners who become dependent on the productivity of the young generation.

The situation of increasing longevity will certainly affect the intergenerational relations which may include child care on the part of the grandparents and care for the very old parents on the part of the adult children. Adult daughters will probably continue to take the responsibility for caring for old-aged parents after having brought up their own child/children. On the other hand, young grandparents may find a new role in helping their adult children in child care thus promoting a new quality of parent-child-relationship over the life span and initiating a new quality of the intergenerational transmission of values (Trommsdorff, 2006; in press b). The so-called "generation-conflict" based on economic inequality between the older and the younger generation thus may only be a theoretical concept relevant on the aggregate level but not relevant for intergenerational relations in the family.

On the level of intergenerational relations in the family, German parents still provide substantial financial support to their children even after they left home as large-scale studies show (Kohli & Künemund, 2003, 2005; Kohli et al., 2005). On the other hand, our own study on the "Value of Children an Intergenerational Relations" has shown that emotional and instrumental support is provided by adult children to their old parents (Schwarz & Trommsdorff, 2005; Schwarz et al., 2005). These studies demonstrate the stability of the intergenerational solidarity in Germany in times of socio-demographic changes.

This is in line with studies from the US where the family traditionally takes the responsibility for supporting the older generation. Family solidarity is usually valued and practiced (e.g., Rossi & Rossi, 1990). According to Neugarten (1968) midlife development is usually characterized by an increasing responsibility in the extended family. The influential model of family solidarity as suggested by Bengtson (2001) and Bengtson, Giarusso, Marby, and Silverstein (2002) assumes a well functioning system of a life-long intergenerational relationship in the family based on associational, consensual, affectional, functional, and

normative solidarity. Empirical studies intergenerational relations in the US by Bengtson and his colleagues (Bengtson et al., 2000) and studies in Germany (Klein & Nauck, 2005; Kohli & Künemund, 2003, 2005; Kohli et al., 2005) are in line with this model. However, one should be aware of the fact that in Germany, different from the US, the extended welfare system transfers a high degree of financial burden from families to the state.

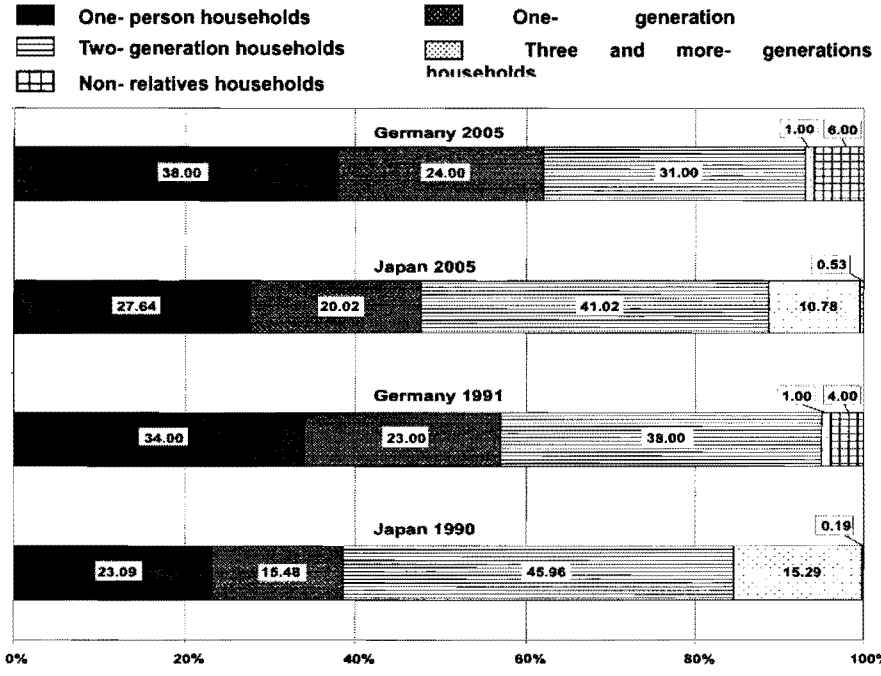
This is different in Japan. Traditionally, the state has not been held responsible for the situation of the aged people in Japan. The present situation underlines that there may be a limit for the burden that families, especially women, can cope with. The burden for women increases when they do not only take the role of the mother who feels (and is seen as) responsible for the successful education of the children but when they also take the role of caring for the aged parents (own parents and/or parents-in-law). According to this double role, young females in middle adulthood are often described as the "sandwich generation". When aging parents need filial care, the respective obligation is traditionally gender-specific and only allows women the limited pursuit of "individual" interests and/or engagement in the labor force. During the period of taking the double role of mother and filial care for the aged parents, the traditional family values can be in conflict with values of modernization and individualization.

One result of this conflict may be the decision of young women to refrain from having children, especially when no substantial support (financial and/or psychological) is provided to carry the double role and the related burden. This should be the case when only limited resources (e.g., income) are available to invest in child care and/or caring for the elderly parents. Furthermore, this should also be the case when traditional gender roles continue to prevail in the family and define the role of the women primarily in terms of caring for the children and the family while at the same time socio-demographic, economic, and cultural changes have an impact on changes in the family system and the individual value orientation.

To give an example of dramatic changes in the family system: Both, giving birth to a child, and taking care of the aging parents, each implies the investment of different resources for women. Whether these investments become a burden depends on the context: A traditional versus a modern family system provides different support to cope. In Japan, the extended family was traditionally the context where children were born, where they were socialized, and where the aging parents were taken care of. Due to urbanization and industrialization, the extended families declined in number, and the nuclear family emerged as the "normal" Japanese family system similar to other industrialized countries (see Figure 3). Accordingly, the burden on the women to fulfill the double role of caring for their children and caring for

their parents has increased due to the decreased sharing of responsibility in the extended family.

Figure 3: Changes in Household Composition in Germany and Japan.



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (2006) and Statistics Bureau (2006).

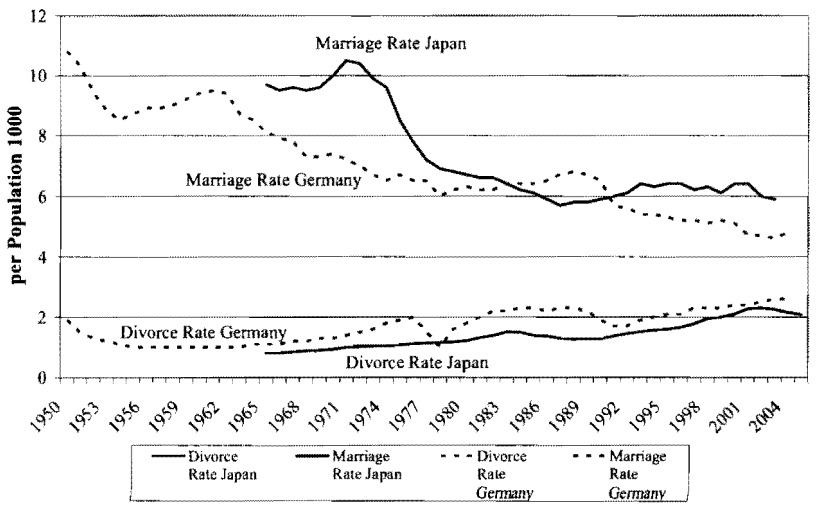
The issue of a growing number of older people has thus become prominent in highly industrialized countries such as Germany and Japan. In both aging societies, the unavoidable burden on the pension system may shake the whole economy. The current generation of workers is financing the pensions of the previous generation. With the declining number of younger generation and the generally declining number of the whole population, for example, the necessary institutions for school education and the labor force will decline.

The compulsory retirement-age (about sixty in Japan) (65 in Germany where new regulations are under way to increase retirement age to 67 in the near future) decreases the society's economic productivity and increases the financial load for the younger generation to balance the pensions and also to take the responsibility for the future socio-political development.

More specifically, in Japan, the retirement of the baby-boomer generation in 2007 will affect the labor market in a way that at least temporarily more young people can enter the labor market. However, whether the number of "freeters" ("free arbeiter" who have recently increased in number due to several reasons) (see Hommerich, this volume; Kornadt, this volume) will be reduced, at least for a while, is an empirical question. At least, this fresh demand for labor does not mean that the presently difficult situation for less educated young people to enter the labor market will significantly change (Yuki, 2006).

The developmental task of retirement is related to another significant aspect of social change in Japan. The ongoing increase in the divorce rate (see Tominaga, this volume) recently is related to an increasing divorce rate around male's retirement age. "Grey divorce" is initiated by women who are economically better off due to recent changes in the legal system. Traditionally, divorce only occurred at very low rates in Japan, and to a much less degree as compared to Germany (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Divorce and Marriage Rates in Germany and Japan



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (2006); Tominaga (this volume); Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (n.d.).

The recent trend of an increasing divorce rate can be seen as directly related to ongoing value changes regarding the role of the family, gender roles, and developmental tasks. This is in line with the ongoing decline in marriage rates (Figure 4) (see also Tominaga, this volume;

Schad-Seifert, this volume) and changes in household size (Figure 3). The number of single households is increasing in both countries (in Germany at a higher rate); and this is not only due to widowhood in old age but rather due to refraining from marriage. Beside a change in the family structure, a change in the willingness to adopt to previously "normal" adult developmental tasks can be observed. In Japan, the increasing number of "freeters" (see Hommerich, in this volume) indicates a reduced motivation to share responsibilities of an adult member of the society. It seems that freeters (who prefer to live with their parents) postpone emerging adulthood and increase the length of freedom from adult responsibilities. They prefer to delay to start a family, to get married, to have a child rather late, or they refuse to meet these roles. Freeters delay entering the labor market and hold a full job.

In Germany, such postponement of taking adult roles is also well known, e. g., young adults still living with their family of origin instead of moving out is often due to financial restrictions. These young adults participate in household responsibilities to a larger degree than commonly believed (Hurrelmann & Albert, 2006). The present German young generation is characterized by achievement orientation, mobility, and career planning (Hurrelmann & Albert, 2006). One of the most prominent terms in the year 2006 was "Generation Praktikum" which means not in permanent employment but improving one's qualifications.

Even though the motivation to delay or refuse to accept adult roles may differ in both countries, the tendency toward postponing or refusing marriage and child-bearing is similar. Young adults may anticipate economic insecurity due to the difficulty to find a job; they may also rather prefer to extend the period of freedom from family responsibilities and enjoy leisure. This raises the question in how far the perceived lack of economic security and a hedonistic life style contribute to the delay of having children, or whether more fundamental changes in value orientations are related to the decrease of fertility as one aspect of the socio-demographic change.

1.2 Conditions for the Decline of the Birth Rate

Another aspect of socio-demographic change is the declining fertility and the related changes in the family. In the following, we will discuss some factors which have often been assumed to be related to demographic changes on the societal level. In Japan and Germany different policies to stop the fertility decline and to cope with the increasing need for care of older people can be observed, especially with regard to the role of women. The government provides some support for the care of older people, in Japan less than in Germany. Recently,

Japan has invested in the improvement of the infrastructure (kindergartens etc.). Somewhat differently, in Germany, increasing financial support is given to families with children. However, these investments are obviously not sufficient when regarding the relation between social welfare and fertility rates.

Public expenditure on families and children. One often mentioned argument is that the public policy including the social welfare is related to the society's birthrate. This is however, not the case, as can be illustrated by the ratio of public *expenditure on families and children* as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the birthrate in advanced nations (World Bank, 2004). In the US the public expenditure on families and children is lowest but fertility rates are highest. In Germany, public expenditure is quite high but the birth rate is quite low. These international comparative data clearly show that the public expenditure on families and children is only one factor and may not be the best solution to change the decline of the birth rate. Other factors have to be analyzed in order to explain the low birth rate.

Compatibility of child care and work. Another factor related to the total fertility rate of a country is the possible lack of compatibility of work and child care due to female employment. Therefore, in Germany, a grant for parents will be provided in 2007 which allows for 1 year of absence with 67% of payment of the last net income and the reservation of the position at the work place for mother or father. However, whether this policy will have the expected effects remains to be seen. One problem is that the duration of absence is often regarded as a disadvantage for the future career and therefore has a low incentive value. However, there may be other reasons rather related to gender role attitudes.

In many countries, women are expected to participate in the labor force after they have given birth to a child. However, this is different in Japan and Germany where the number of females in the labor forces is moderate (about 62%) while the fertility rate continues to decline. In both countries the number of working women has not increased significantly while the decline of the birth rate has increased significantly. This implies that female participation in the labor force is insufficient to explain fertility.

This hypothesis is empirically tested in recent comparative studies on female employment and fertility (De Laat & Sanz, 2006). These authors demonstrate that increases in women's average levels of education and wages do not necessarily result in increasing female labor force. Examples are South European countries such as Italy and Spain in contrast to Sweden and Finland. Furthermore, the birth rate has been decreasing in these South European in contrast to the North European countries. Spanish women have fewer children than Swedish women, and only 55% participate in the labor market as compared with 75% of Swedish

women. The question is why Spanish women are not participating more in the labor market.

The same question has to be asked with respect to Japanese and German women by focusing on cultural values regarding the working mother and gender roles. The working mother in Germany has to fear the status of "Rabenmutter" (an expression which cannot be translated, e.g., into French; the meaning is a mother neglecting her duties). Such a negative image is not really encouraging young mothers to re-enter the labor market, especially in West Germany. In East Germany, the situation is different. Here, it has been expected during the 40 years of socialist government that women get back to work very soon after giving birth to a child. Also, governmental-supported special institutions (Kinderhorte) providing professional care for toddlers had been established during the time of the former GDR and are partly existing today.

In Japan, in general the attitude towards working mothers is quite negative. As a matter of fact, public opinion surveys on attitudes to working women show significant differences between man and women with men accepting less that women continue to work after they have children. This gender difference is highest for young adults between 20-30 years old and lowest for the older generation. This indicates an even stronger support of traditional gender roles of Japanese males as compared to females from the younger generation while in general the older generation prefers more traditional gender roles than the younger generation.

In general, female employment is not highly valued in countries favoring traditional gender roles as in Japan and South Korea, or in South European countries such as Spain and Italy. Ironically, in these countries the birthrate is significantly declining while the female labor force has not been increasing (De Laat & Sanz, 2006).

In these countries with traditional gender roles men go out working and women stay home, especially when women's role is seen to bring up the children. In countries like Japan and Germany, where the birthrate has been declining, an egalitarian division of labor only takes place slowly; women do not increasingly enter the labor market. In these countries, men may be more reluctant to engage in traditional female activities such as household chores and child-rearing as compared to North European countries like Sweden or Norway. The traditional gender role reinforces women's expectations that they will not receive sufficient support from their husbands in the household and in child care. This makes it more difficult for them to enter the labor market and also to decide to have a child. Furthermore, in Germany, an increasingly large number of men opt for not having children.

The case of the North European countries demonstrates that beside public policy, the general egalitarian views on gender roles, and the related division of labor between the

parents is an important factor in predicting the birth rate. Accordingly, changing regulations on the labor market and in public life which allow for both, maternal and/or paternal leave can be effective in countries favoring egalitarian gender roles while much of the burden to manage the children's education is taken care of by public institutions. In North European countries, more egalitarian gender roles and related policies have reinforced the compatibility of work and children: raising children and doing housework is no longer considered the sole responsibility of the women; paternal childcare and father's responsibility for household chores have increased.

To summarize, the above cited comparative study shows that the question whether female employment is compatible with having children is not easy to answer due to differences in cultural values related to gender roles. Egalitarian gender roles are an important factor allowing for compatibility of work and childcare, and encouraging women to have children. This factor obviously is related to cultural and individual value orientations and brings us to the second section of a culture-informed approach on the role of values in socio-demographic change.

2 Value of Children and Socio-Economic Factors in 10 Countries

In the following, the question whether and how values and fertility are related is dealt with. Here, selected results and some implications of our international comparative and multi-generation Value-of-Children Study (Trommsdorff & Nauck, 2005, 2006; Trommsdorff et al., 2005) are discussed.

2.1 Value of Children

The underlying question of the original study was how changes in fertility can be explained in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework. The original Value-of-children study started by demographers and economists (Arnold et al., 1975; Fawcett, 1972, 1983) has attempted to explain the rising fertility in most developing countries in the world. One significant result of this very large interdisciplinary multi-country study was that individual values, especially the value of children, can partly explain fertility behavior. This widened the perspective beyond a purely economic approach to fertility by taking into account psychological factors such as motivations, needs, and values of the people (Bulatao, 1979a, 1979b; Hoffman & Hoffman, 1973). This approach resulted in a large international comparative study including more than 20.000 married respondents from nine countries (including Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines,

Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, the United States, and a women's sample from Germany. The focus was on differences in fertility by taking cultural and psychological factors into account (e.g., Fawcett, 1983; Hoffman, 1987; Kagitcibasi, 1982a, 1982b). The motive to have children – "value of children" – was differentiated in terms of the economic/utilitarian, the emotional, and the social/normative value (Kagitcibasi, 1996).

The authors showed that in poor countries, the economic value of children motivates parents to have more children. In these countries, the economic value of children is based on the parents' realistic expectation that children will help in the economic survival of the family and later will take care of the old aged parents.

From this point of view, the value of children and the family are related to the economic situation of a country. Furthermore, it also is related to its welfare system: When the state does not take the responsibility for the survival of families and of the aged people, the economic value of children is high. This relationship can be observed in traditional countries where the extended family is the rule, e.g., in most African and many traditional countries (e.g., Sam et al., 2005). Parents expect that their children will take care of the family and the aged parents.

Accordingly, the economic value of children is closely related to the social value of children. This is the case especially in traditional societies where the social norm to have children is part of the general cultural beliefs that maturity and adulthood is only achieved when having children; or where many children indicate social status, and the wife is only respected and given status in the family when she bears children. Here, to have many children is regarded as an indicator of economic and social status.

Several questions arise. First, when low economic development is related to high economic and social value of children and to high fertility the question is whether the opposite relation can be assumed? Is high economic status related to low economic value of children and to low fertility? Can the positive association between economic and social value of children also be expected in societies with low fertility, where the economic value of children is low? In case that the empirical data show a variance in the association between economic status such as GDP and fertility, the question is how this can be explained. Furthermore, the question remains how the decline in fertility as presently observed all over the world can be explained. Also, the function of the different aspects of value of children, e.g., the emotional value, remains to be clarified.

2.2 Cross-Cultural Comparisons on the Value of Children

Statistical data clearly show that in economically advanced countries less children are born; here the economic value of children is preferred less than in economic less advanced countries. At the same time, the emotional value of children is quite high in all countries. During the last decades, the emotional value has increased while in general, the economic value of children has declined especially in countries with economic development (United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2004). The decline in the economic value of children, however, does not necessarily mean a generally low value of children. Children may be valued on the basis of other motives such as the need for affiliation, caring and love. Accordingly, the emotional value of children can still be high. However, the emotional value of children does not necessarily induce the need to have many children. In the contrary, when many resources are needed to bring up children, only one or two children will be sufficient to satisfy the emotional value. As can be seen from several surveys in Germany, the psychological, social, and financial costs for bringing up children are regarded to be very high, especially by university graduates or young adults (female and even more so male) pursuing a career (Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2005). Therefore, the negative value of bringing up a child due to financial and personal investments may contribute to the decision to postpone childbearing or to refrain from childbearing at all.

In order to explain changes in the value of children and fertility, a substantial theoretical framework is needed which takes into account socio-cultural and individual factors. This has been the starting point for our revised international comparative Value of Children study which goes beyond the prediction of fertility and also studies intergenerational relations and social change (Trommsdorff & Nauck, 2005; Trommsdorff et al., 2005). Both is possible by partly replicating the original VOC study (several instruments from the original and the present VOC study are the same), and by following a design where three interconnected generations of a family plus a sample of young mothers (comparable in age to the samples from the original VOC study) are interviewed in 10 countries.

VOC and country-level indicators. The underlying question is if changes on the macro-level such as demographic changes are related to changes on the micro-level, e.g., changes in the value of children, and how changes on the micro-level affect individual behavior and development. This approach has guided the original "Value-of-Children Study" (Arnold et al., 1975) and the recent partial replication and extension of the "Value-of-children and Intergenerational Relations Study" (Trommsdorff & Nauck, 2005, 2006; Trommsdorff et

al., 2005).

Systematic comparisons of countries with different levels of socio-economic development allow to test whether these are related to differences in the socio-economic value of children. Here, we select the Gross National Product as indicator for economic development, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) as indicator for socio-demographic change, the degree of postmodern values, and religious belief as indicators for socio-cultural changes toward modernity. These variables were correlated with the socio-economic value of children in 10 countries (Trommsdorff, in press a).

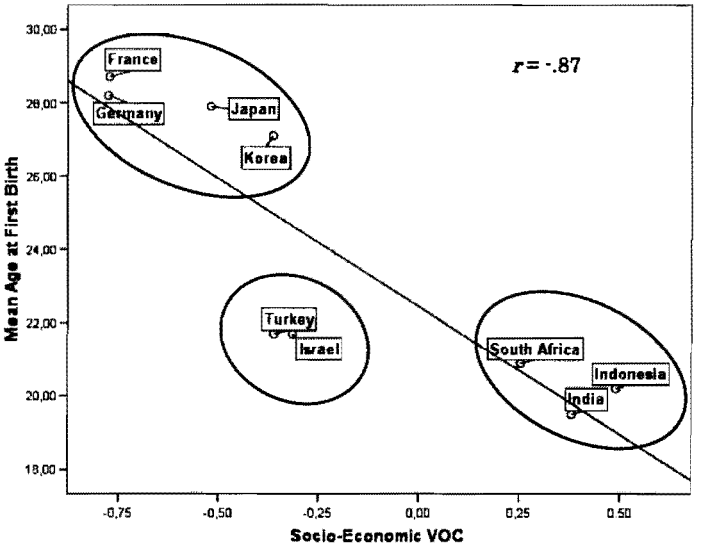
On the basis of the revised sociological rational choice model by Nauck (see this volume), it is predicted that in countries with high economic status, the economic value of children is less important (children are no more expected to provide economic support to aged parents or to help in the household); and the emotional value of the child can be satisfied by having only a few or only one child.

This hypothesis is confirmed by the data analyses correlating Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the socio-economic value of children across the 10 countries from our VOC study. The overall correlation is $r = -.81$ (see Trommsdorff, in press a). France, Germany, and Japan cluster in one group, Israel and Korea cluster in a second group, Turkey and China in a third group, and South Africa, India, and Indonesia cluster in a fourth group, each group representing different levels of economic development and preference of the economic value of children.

Furthermore, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) and the socio-economic value of children also correlate highly significant in the positive direction: Germany and France form one group, China, Japan, and Korea form another group, Israel and Turkey form a separate group, and South Africa, India, and Indonesia form a specific group of the poorest countries with highest fertility rates.

Similar groups can be empirically shown when correlating the mean age at birth and the socio-economic value of children for the 10 countries. The above mentioned poorest countries (except for South Africa) are characterized by the earliest mean age when giving birth; this is in contrast to the well-off countries like Germany, France, Japan, and Korea. Turkey and Israel are grouped in between these two extremes. The very significant total correlation ($r = -.87$) (see Figure 5) shows that the higher the economic value of the child the earlier is the age at which females give birth to a child (Trommsdorff in press, a).

Figure 5: Scatter Plot of the Cross-Culture Correlation Between Women's Age at First Birth and Socio-Economic VOC.



Note: Data for age at first birth are from United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2004). Means for the socio-economic VOC axis are based on ipsatized scores and are from the VOC-Study.

Becoming an adult in the poor countries is a developmental task which cannot be postponed or prepared by acquiring higher education; in these countries this developmental task is rather connected to the immediate economic needs of the society and the family which are underlying the traditional gender role. In the poorer as compared to the economically developed countries, the extended family is the typical family type (Adams & Trost, 2004). Here, mothers receive the necessary support for their various tasks, including child care and caring for the old parents.

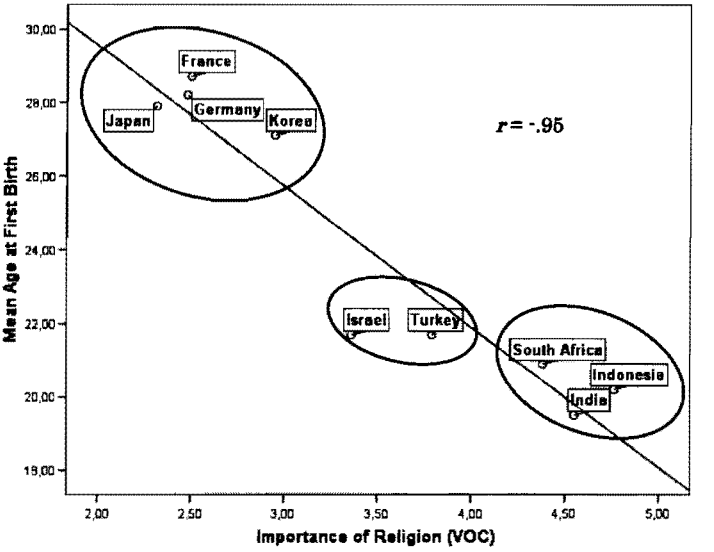
In the following, we want to come back to our previous hypotheses on cultural values and possible relations to the value of children. Inglehart and Baker (2000) explain the changes in the predominance of certain values, related attitudes, and behavior in a theoretical framework of economic development and related change of needs and socialization experience. He describes one important implication of economic development, modernization, and industrialization: the increase of postmaterialistic and decrease of materialistic values. Postmaterialistic values are related to individualism and hedonism, a change in gender roles,

and declining fertility rates.

Our country-level analyses on the relations between postmaterialistic values and socio-economic value of children clearly demonstrate a highly significant negative correlations (r = -.76). Another belief system (related to traditional versus modern beliefs) is described by the theory on "Social Axioms" by Bond et al. (2004). Data on Social Axioms by Bond et al. (2004) demonstrate higher values on the Social Cynicism Index for both, Japan and Germany. The Social Cynicism Index describes differences in generalized expectancies – "basic premises that people endorse and use to guide their behavior in daily living" (Bond et al., 2004). Social Cynicism refers to a negative view of human nature, a view that life produces unhappiness, that people exploit others, and a mistrust of social institutions (Bond et al., 2004). The correlations between Dynamic Externality and socio-economic value of children show a significant correlation. Germany, France, and Japan are forming one group; another group is formed by China, Israel, Korea, and Turkey; the third group is formed by Indonesia, India and South Africa

Finally, a brief look at a specific value orientation is taken in order to ask whether religious beliefs and the value of children are related in a way that actual behavior can be predicted, here the age of giving birth to a child and to the number of children born. Several studies have indicated that religious beliefs and fertility are related. Some of these studies show that Catholics as compared to non-Catholics desire and give birth to more children (e.g., Janssen & Hauser, 1981). However, the kind of religious belief may be confounded with economic development and the intensity of religious affiliation. In our own cross-cultural study we can clearly demonstrate that countries with higher religious affiliation have a higher fertility rate and the desire for more children as compared to countries with low religious affiliation (Trommsdorff, in press a). Even more, we can show that the importance given to religion is related to the mean age at first birth (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Scatter Plot of the Cross-Culture Correlation Between Women's Age at First Birth and the Importance of Religious Beliefs.



Note: Data for age at first birth are from United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2004). Data for the importance of religion are from the VOC-Study.

3 Summary and Conclusion

In the first section, we have discussed questions of social change from the perspective of socio-demographic changes, especially declining fertility and increasing longevity in industrialized countries. In the first part, the situation in Japan and Germany has been compared with respect to socio-demographic changes, relations between female employment and fertility, and the changing structure of the family. We could demonstrate some similarities and some differences. These were discussed with respect to recent comparative studies including South and North European countries which have shown that low fertility is not necessarily a result of governmental support and a family-oriented welfare system but rather is affected by gender roles.

In the second part, the concept of the "value of children" has been introduced in order to study the possible effect of macro- and micro-level variables on socio-demographic changes. On the basis of our own large multi-country study on the "Value of Children and

Intergenerational Relations" certain macro-level variables have been studied in relation to the value of children and to fertility. The emotional value of children is high in most countries and does not differentiate between low and high fertility; the economic value of children is relatively higher in those countries with lower economic development, lower postmaterialist values, and higher religious affiliation. The empirical results from our cross-national study also show that the economically highly developed countries are quite similar in the relationship between high postmaterialistic values, low economic value of children, and low fertility. The results on relations among the value of children, socio-demographic variables, and cultural values across countries indicate certain systematic clusters of societies. This clustering may be interpreted according to theoretical assumptions from modernization theory, more specifically, the theory of family change by Kagitcibasi (1996) which assumes three types of family systems: one with a preference for values of independence (modern type), one with a preference for values of interdependence (traditional type), and another recently evolving type with a preference for both value orientations (Trommsdorff, in press a). With respect to our question on similarities and differences between Japan and Germany, these empirical correlational results on the country level demonstrate strong similarities between Japan and Germany in terms of value of children, cultural values, economic development, and secularization in line with the family type and value preference of independence.

Even though no one-dimensional explanation can account for the steady decline in fertility, it seems that the economic development and related affluence are related to changes in value orientations and behavior. One has to note that this relationship only give information on associations but not on causal relations. Here, no unidirectional relationship can be assumed since economic conditions provide resources and constraints for human development and behavior, and human behavior takes place in context and affects the context, including economic conditions (Trommsdorff, in press c).

In general, our results on Japan and Germany are in line with studies on social change in these countries which show that increasing economic development of a modern society is related to a decrease in three-generation households, an increase of nuclear families, later marriage age, higher rate of single households, higher divorce rate, higher level of women labor, a higher level of individualism, increasing longevity, and declining fertility (Kornadt, this volume; Schad-Seifert, this volume; Tominaga, this volume; Trommsdorff, 1998).

The implications of the ongoing dramatic demographic change imply considerable social and economic changes on the aggregate societal level. Implications of such changes for individual life style and development are not yet clarified. This raises the question of possible

consequences for the individual development of children and aging persons in a changing family system and culture. So far, it is unclear how implications on the societal and on the individual level will interact fostering a vicious circle of societal decline and individual alienation or, in the contrary, a creative mobilization of societal and cultural resources to successfully cope with such changes.

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