

Value of children and inter- generational relations: A cross-cultural study

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VALUE OF CHILDREN AND INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS:

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1. Goals and Research Questions

The research project is a continuation of the interdisciplinary project "*Value of Children and Intergenerational Relations in Six Cultures*" (see grant proposal to the German National Science Foundation, DFG, by Nauck & Trommsdorff, 2001; Trommsdorff & Nauck, 2001). As a whole this project aims to investigate the conditions and consequences of fertility decisions as well as of parent-child relationships throughout the life-span and in times of social change in different cultures. According to the theoretical approach, research questions and methods are tied to developmental and cross-cultural psychology (Trommsdorff) and family sociology (Nauck). Both are combined for a partial replication and extension of the original "*Value-of-Children-Studies*" (Arnold et al., 1975; Hoffman et al., 1973).

It is assumed here that parent-child relationships are a prerequisite for individual development. They have an effect throughout the life-span on child development and on the development of parent-child relations of the present and the future generations and, on their part, are influenced by contextual conditions. Accordingly, parent-child relationships are, on the one hand, part of the "developmental niche," in which the individual development of the child takes place: An essential function of parent-child relationships consists of the socialization of children and therefore also of

the conditions that are relevant for the transmission of parental values and behavioral preferences to children. On the other hand, they are influenced by the socio-cultural context themselves and they influence this context via transmission of values. Thus, parent-child relationships have a social and a cultural function, because, here, cultural values and patterns of behavior (among others also "*Value of Children*" and generative behavior) are socialized and negotiated between generations. This, again, influences the further social development, especially social change. Only when having studied these relations, more precisely predictions about the *generative behavior*, the *readiness to invest in own children* and the *support of parents of the next generation* can be made. At all of these levels, it has to be examined how far the *socio-cultural context* influences these relations as a moderator variable.

In the present study, certain selected conditions and functions of the parent-child relationship are investigated in the given socio-cultural context and over three generations, taking into account social change. This should allow to shed light on the conditions of transmission of values and patterns of behavior to the next generation. The focus of interest here is on the value of children, generative behavior, investment in and support of children and parents.

From a cross-cultural and developmental psychology point of view, *parent-child relationships* are particular social

relationships, as far as they are a result and a condition of bi-directional influences on the basis of initially biological relationships. Their features vary depending on person specific characteristics (attachment, general orientations of independence and interdependence and other values), contextual conditions and developmental age. Parent-child relationships are seen here as dynamic processes (cf. Kuczynski, in press), which, in the course of individual development, show relatively stable (but situation specific) cognitive, emotional and motivational features and correlates of behavior. Components of parent-child relationships are seen here in the sense of a relation-theoretical model (cf. figure 1) as

- experienced quality of relationship (as harmonic, full of conflict, etc.)
- parenting behaviour and
- readiness for support giving.

Parent-child relationships as experienced in one generation are a *prerequisite* for individual development of the following generation; at the same time, they are, on their part, a result of the individual development and the influences of the experienced parent-child relationship in the preceding generation. They can have the function to pass on values and behavior preferences to the next generation (Kuczynski, Marshall, & Schell, 1997; Trommsdorff, & Kornadt, in press). Based on the experienced parent-child relationships, the child will develop expectations, values and behavior preferences which are stabilized throughout the life-span; these values and behavior preferences are assumed to influence the adult children's value of children (VOC), their fertility decisions, their subjective perception of their own children and the formation of their parent-child relationships. This roughly

describes some preconditions for the transmission of the self-experienced parent-child relationship to the next generation (see figure 1).

Here it is assumed that conditions of successful transmission are dependent primarily on

- the personal characteristics of the child and the parents (above all attachment and independence/interdependence)
- the quality of parent-child relationships (respectively extent and interrelations of the mentioned components)
- the cultural context (e.g., more or less homogenous and stable)(see figure 1).

Accordingly, it is assumed here that *transmission of values and intergenerational relations* follows different paths: The transmission depends on a) the internal representation of the working model (e.g., secure or insecure basis of attachment) (cf. Bowlby, 1969), on b) values of independence/interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Greenfield, 1994), on c) the quality of parent-child relations (including child-rearing) (Bornstein, 1991; Trommsdorff & Kornadt), and d) the given socio-cultural context (Valsiner & Lawrence 1997). Here it is assumed that (child and family related) values are transmitted on the basis of their acceptance by the children (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). This acceptance in turn is affected by the parent-child relationship and by the cultural context (and ongoing social change) which can modify the effects of parent-child relationships and the parent-child relationships themselves (cf. Trommsdorff & Kornadt, in press) (see figure 1).

Parent-Child Relations In Three Generations (The VOC Study)

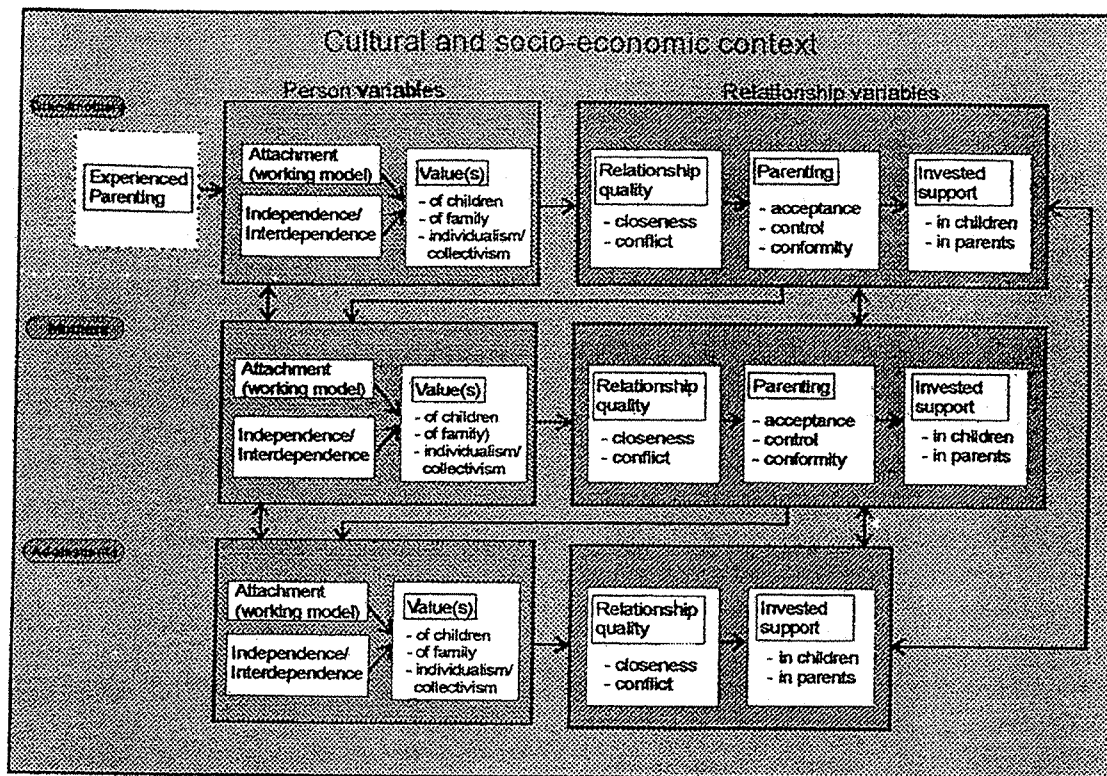


Figure 1

If we consider VOC as one precondition for parent-child relationships and these in turn as a culture-dependent context for individual development, a cross-cultural analysis of *value of children and parent-child relationships over several generations* is required. This includes the question of what kind of parent-child relationships occur, how they develop, and which effect they have during development. Thus, studies on more than one generation are necessary on the one hand, for the analysis of relationship development throughout life-span and, on the other hand, for the analysis of transmission of relationships over generations within the family. Therefore, grandmothers, daughters and their children will be investigated in different cultures in order to test the questions regarding transmission of parent-child relationships

over generations. Data from these *different sources* avoid the confounding of different factors of the model by using only one source of data.

For the planned studies, characteristics of the person variables and parent-child relationships as components of the model have to be examined beside the following socio-economic and cultural context variables and combinations of variables which will be included here in order to allow for a multi-level testing:

- Cultural values and religious/ideological orientations (on the aggregate level): individualism, collectivism; Buddhism; Christianity; Confucianism; Islam; and others
- Fertility rate, family structure

- Social and economic resources (degree of urbanization, status of education, economic status)
- Socio-economic and cultural change.

The initial question for the planned *cross-cultural comparisons* is whether parent-child relationships over the generations of one family are universal or culture specific with regard to

- a) Characteristics of the parent-child relation at different times in the life-span and in the biologically related generations
- b) Processes of the development and transmission of values and behavior to the next generation.

Research model on parent-child relationship over three generations in cross-cultural comparison. The heuristic model of transmission of values and behavior preferences over three generations (grandmothers, daughters and grandchildren) (see figure 1) serves for the testing of both universal and culture specific processes (of Trommsdorff, 2001; Trommsdorff, Zheng & Tardif, 2001). For this purpose, questions about the relations of socio-cultural context, parent-child relationship and individual orientations will be dealt with. We start from the assumption that the parent-child relation, i.e., relations between the grandmother, her adult daughter and her daughter's (adolescent) child (including the relationship quality, parenting and readiness for investment), serves as developmental niche. The developmental niche is embedded in a larger cultural and socio-economic context which interacts with person variables (attachment, independence/interdependence; values such as VOC and VOF, or individualism/collectivism). It is assumed that the quality of parent-child relationships is

passed on to the next generation under the influence of person variables as well as socio-cultural context variables (cf. figure 1).

The factors which are portrayed in simplified terms in the model shown in Figure 1, and their associations are the basis for the *questions and hypotheses*. The *main questions* are under which conditions which *person variables* and which *relationship variables* (single variables and constellations of variables of parent-child relationships) *in which interrelation*

- a) appear within a generation
- b) are transmitted over the generations of one family.

Here, different contexts on the exo-, macro-, meso- and micro-level (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and combinations of contextual variables (e.g., economic and social conditions, religious/ideological orientation, family structure) will be taken into account for the planned multivariate analyses which serve to study individual behavior (and development) in the various cultural contexts (or developmental niches; cf. Super- & Harkness, 1997). This multi-level approach allows to study the dynamics of social and cultural change on individual development over the life span by taking into account uni- and bi-directional processes between the generations.

Conditions are studied on the macro level (socio-economic and cultural contexts) on the one hand, and on the individual level (quality of attachment and values of independence/interdependence) on the other hand. Apart from that, *interactions between the cultural context and individual orientations* that have an influence on the transmission of person variables and of relationship variables (single variables and

constellations of variables of parent-child relationships) over three generations of a family are studied.

It is expected that the *context variables* modify the presumed interrelations. These include influences of social change on value orientations and on related variables. According to Kagitcibasi (1996), in times of strong social change, especially radical changes of values (decrease of collectivistic and increase of individualistic values; decrease of materialism and increase of post-materialism), a growing variance of value orientations can be expected, e.g., with respect to independence/interdependence.

Regarding our questions about parent-child relationships and functions of transmission, more specific hypotheses will be tested: To give an example, in contexts which experience a transition to industrialization and urbanization as compared to traditional contexts, it can be expected that

- a) intergenerational differences occur between grandmothers, mothers and adolescents in regard to the prevalence and patterns of interrelations of values and components of parent-child relations, grandmothers showing more interdependent orientations than mothers and grandchildren (adolescents);
- b) the stability of the parent-child relationship throughout the life-span is lower and less characterized by norm-guided asymmetrical relationships;
- c) a transmission of values and parent-child relationship to the next generation is both mediated by attachment quality and also by interdependence orientation (stability

over the generations), and not anymore primarily by interdependence orientations.

To summarize, characteristics and effects of parent-child relations with regard to the transmission of values and behavior in different socio-cultural contexts will be studied here. Intra- and intercultural comparisons on parent-child relations including more than one generation should shed light on the *conditions* of parent-child relations and on their *function* for value of children and fertility decision; the investment and support over three generations. Thus, this project follows the main idea of the original "Value-of-Children-Studies" (VOC) of the seventies and aims to overcome some theoretical and methodological deficits of these studies.

2. Methods and Procedures

The contextual and individual factors will be studied as part of a multi-level model that allows to analyze the dynamic processes. Cross-cultural comparisons are conducted here as comparisons of samples from certain countries with the primary purpose of increasing the variance of the theoretically interesting variables in order to test the culture specific and universal characteristics of the conditions and functions of parent-child relations for the transmission of values and behavior preferences (including VOC). Advantages of cross-cultural comparison are, apart from increasing the variance of the theoretically relevant variables, the avoidance of a confounding of interacting variables, the empirical analysis of interrelations under controlled conditions and the possibility of discovering ethnocentric prejudices in the theorizing.

However, at the same time numerous problems exist which do not allow an exact cross-cultural comparison in the sense of a systematic variation of cultures as "independent variable" (compare with the methodological problems of culture specific (emic) and culture comparing (etic) proceeding, Poortinga, 1997). These reflections determined the methodological proceeding of the main study, too. Therefore, a research strategy results which takes samples from *different cultural contexts* (respectively countries) if possible. To define a cultural context by national and regional borders and a "shared meaning system" is hardly possible nowadays, e.g. because "cultures", regions or nations are not necessarily congruent and are seldom homogenous. Additionally, there are problems of functional equivalence of indicators, of cultural adequate conducting of examinations and of the culturally informed interpretation of data (cf. Trommsdorff, 1989; in press: van de Vijver & Leung, 1997).

The *selection of countries and culture context* is based on a *replicative design* for the examination of social change. Therefore, some countries were chosen for the application of the main study which had been included in the original VOC studies: Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Turkey and Germany. Furthermore, the main study also includes Israel and the People's Republic of China. Both countries had participated in the pilot study (Israel with financial support by the DFG and the People's Republic of China with their own resources as well as financial aid from Konstanz University). Although Israel is a country in the "near east", significant differences exist in comparison with Turkey, e.g. in regard to the individualistic values, degree of urbanization and welfare state protection which affect VOC and intergenerational relations. The

inclusion of the People's Republic of China permits another differentiation of context variables that otherwise are confounded with variables in the "far east". Here, the effects of the Confucian tradition, the Cultural Revolution, and the ongoing massive modernization (including the "one-child-politics") on generative behavior and parent-child relationships are of interest.

Furthermore, the results of our *pilot-studies* (both empirical results and also results regarding feasibility) and country statistics were another basis for the selection of countries. Country statistics (e.g., including socio-economic and demographic factors) served to specify the context variables and their combinations that seem relevant for the multi-level model. E.g., population growth is highest in Indonesia, Israel and Turkey, while the Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China demonstrate a similarly low population growth, but differ highly in regard to the standard of education and degree of urbanization. These combinations of variables indicate aspects of social change and will be taken into account when comparing countries in order to avoid simple comparisons.

Our selection criterion consisted of theoretically relevant combinations of variables (e.g. cultural values, religious orientations, socio-economic development, degree of urbanization, socio-demographic variables, number of births).

Further cultures beside the above mentioned may join.

According to the empirical results of cross-national studies on value orientation (aggregate level) by Schwartz (1992), Hofstede (1997/2000), and Inglehart (1997)

the value "individualism" is highest in West Germany and Israel, and lowest in the Republic of Korea and Indonesia (Turkey ranges in the middle). The Republic of Korea, Israel and Turkey show also similarities with regard to the extent of values of "uncertainty avoidance".

These results show again that simple comparisons of cultures, which are only characterized by one variable, are not advisable, but that combinations of variables should be considered. This procedure of connecting different context variables comparing samples from different "cultures" has proven to be useful in earlier studies (e.g. variation according to religion; degree of industrialization) (Trommsdorff, 1994). Combinations of variables of relevant indicators according to the model of social change by Kagitcibasi (1996) may demonstrate different degrees of socio-economic development. Thus, the selection of countries should raise the variance of selected, theoretically interesting variables and combinations of variables. This provides an access to the study of interrelations of contextual factors on the macro level and variables on the individual level.

The selection of cultures has consequences for all other methods because those have to be culture specifically adapted.

2.1 Samples, Design, Procedure, and Operationalization

For details on samples (selection of subjects), research design, data collection,

and operationalization of variables, please refer to the Report on Selected Instruments (Schwarz, Chakkarath, Trommsdorff, Schwenk, & Nauck, 2001) and the Field Work Info (Trommsdorff & Nauck, 2001).

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