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Editor of the Electronic Journal of Sociology <http://www.sociology.org>

1999 Andreas Schneider. "US Neo-Conservatism: Cohort and Cross-Cultural Perspective." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 19:56-86.

U.S. Neo-Conservatism: Cohort and Cross-Cultural Perspective

Abstract

In materialistic societies, identities denoting authority, family, and religion are highly appreciated. Authority is instrumental in the achievement of materialistic values. Religious values are epiphenomena dealing with feelings of shame and guilt arising from materialistic indulgence. Securing materialistic well-being, young adults stay longer in the family home. This dependency makes contemporary North Americans see family identities more potent than 20 years ago. However, only females can legitimate their dependency and show more appreciation of family identities. Today's U.S. males and females love authorities more than they did in the late 1970s. Following the ideal type of postmaterialism and postauthoritativeness, a cross-sectional comparison with German data of the 1990s provides a reference point for the North American time series of the late 1970s and 1990s.

U.S. Neo-Conservatism: Cohort and Cross-Cultural Perspective

In this study, I demonstrate changes in conservatism in a cross-cultural and over-time perspective. A micro model explains the interdependency of materialism, religion, authority, and family in establishing conservatism. In my empirical investigation I study identities that reflect these changes. Here I combine the analysis of a time series established over 20 years in the U.S. and a cross-sectional analysis of Germany to test a model of conservatism. Examples play a critical part in the sociological process of *verstehen*.

The interdependence of social structure and culture is of analytical importance. Social structure is established by patterns of social behavior. When "people do things together in space and/or time" (Wallace 1983,p.29), social-structural components are central in establishing the concept of identity. Identities, within this study, are measured in terms of their affective meanings. Affective meaning in turn is determined by cultural structure, reflecting "people perceiving, thinking, or feeling things together in space and/or time"(Wallace 1983, p.29-30). Social identities directly reflect cultural and structural changes in a given society.

Liberal developments in the 1970s, the conservative regression in contemporary North America, and the liberal developments in contemporary Germany can be illuminated using the concepts of modernity (Giddens 1992, 1990, Inglehart 1997), late modernity (Giddens 1991), postmodernity (Rosenau 1992, Inglehart 1997), the information age (Toeffler&Toeffler 1994), the radicalization of politics (Giddens 1994), and the idea of the powershift era (Toeffler 1990). However, these perspectives investigating contemporary developments in different societies are far too abstract and complex for my empirical investigation. Rather, I concentrate on the two

more specific subsets of postmaterialism and postauthoritativeness to describe the developmental stage of a culture. Materialism and authoritativeness describe conservative and neo-conservative cultures. The absence of materialistic and authoritative values describes postmaterialistic and postauthoritative societies.

Modern materialistic societies place an emphasis on respecting authority, obedience, national pride, religious faith, and family to secure their materialistic well-being. Being less restricted by materialistic priorities, postmaterialists can show tolerance and trust. If a value system emphasizing tolerance and trust is shared, traditional authority will not only be unnecessary, but will be disliked as being restrictive. By lessening the obsession with material goods, postmaterialism opens the horizon for values that can be described as postauthoritative. In contrast, materialism leads to values of dominance or traditional authoritarianism to collect and secure material values.

In the development from materialism into postmaterialism and from authoritativeness into post authoritativeness, or in a regression from postmaterialism into materialism and from post authoritativeness into authoritativeness, authority and scarcity are interrelated explanatory variables.

According to Inglehart (1997), scarcity of resources increases the effort to secure these resources (for oneself). In a society that follows the Weber's (1922) model of rational bureaucratic organizations, the exercise of authority will be the predominant means to achieve resources. Economic security allows individuals to shift their focus to the their quality of life and their subjective well-being. Security also diminishes the belief in both private and institutional authority. Once authoritarianism decreases, equal distribution of attractive goods is more likely. If economic resources are not the top priority for the individual, less energy will be

allocated for their pursuit. In such postmaterialistic societies, economic resources are distributed more evenly than in societies with a materialistic orientation.

Absolute, Relative, and Subjective Scarcity

For Inglehart (1997), a society's GNP/capita is the predominant indicator variable of the factors of materialism and postmaterialism. GNP or average income per household are measures for absolute scarcity in a given society. In an over-time comparison of North America between 1978 and 1998, the mean household income increased from \$42,815 to \$51,855 in 1998 dollars (U.S. Census Bureau. 1999). In Germany, the average household income in Germany was \$47,182 in 1998. This income is slightly lower than in the U.S. If the household income is adjusted for the fact that fewer household members are working, contemporary Germans have a slightly higher household income (\$53,989) than contemporary North Americans.¹ One can argue that the German's lower interest in participating in the workforce might reflect non-materialistic values and the lack of subjective scarcity.

I would like to raise a word of caution about the structural determinism involved in the comparison of average income of GNP. Comparing average household incomes as an indicator of scarcity does not reflect relative scarcity, a direct outcome of social comparison processes. Nor does it reflect the related cultural variable of subjective scarcity, the relative importance put on materialistic achievements. In developed countries, where basic needs are met, relative and subjective scarcity should have a stronger effect on the motivation for materialistic achievements than absolute scarcity.

Relative scarcity is indicated by income distribution, the share of aggregate income. In the cross-sectional analysis, differences in relative scarcity can be underlined by different

methods used in taxation. Income in Germany is more evenly distributed. Valid cross-national comparisons are complicated by the different tax rates. The current 14 % sales tax on most goods in Germany lowers disposable income and thus gives lower income persons a disadvantage. This disadvantage, however, is more than equalized by highly progressive tax rates. Income distribution is much flatter in Germany than in North America.

Within the U.S., income is more unevenly distributed today than it was in the 1970s. One of the biggest single factors is the gigantic tax cut, \$43 billion in budget cuts in domestic programs and cutbacks in environmental and business regulations, all of which were pushed through the Congress by Ronald Reagan in 1981. The radical conservative financial policies initiated in 1980 by the Reagan administration, were kept up by the Bush administration. Policies were only moderated, but not eliminated by of the Clinton administration. Nineteen years of redistributing income showed its impact on the North American society. Today, three indicators show the structural problems of relative economic deprivation: the decrease of the median income, the increasing relative number of people in the lower income brackets, and the relative economic deprivation of American males when compared with their fathers.² Between 1979 and 1993, the median household income decreased from \$34,666 to \$33,660 (U.S. Census Bureau 1998). In 1996 it increased again to \$35,172.

A more central variable for relative deprivation is the income distribution. The share of the lowest fifth in the income structure dropped from 4.3% in 1978 to 3.6% in 1998. In the same time frame, the share of the top 5% climbed from 16.2% to 21.4%. Structural properties of income and income distribution are rendered by a cultural perception of the importance of materialistic values. I will call this factor subjective scarcity. For the cross-sectional analysis, perception of scarcity can be indicated in the focus on non-monetary properties in labor

negotiations. The income comparison above does not take the different vacation times of both nations into account. Not only do the extra vacation days in Germany emphasize the higher income in Germany, they are an indicator of postmaterialistic values of recreation. Dependent on their age, paid vacation days for Germans vary between 28 to 32 days. In addition, Germans enjoy up to 14 public holidays (with slight variations depending on the state). During the 1980s and the early 1990s, unions successfully fought for the decrease in weekly working hours which today are officially 38.5 hours a week. This emphasis on vacation time and shorter working hours supports the argument that Germans share more postmaterialistic values than do North Americans.

Plastic Materialism and Materialism

The booming economy of the late 1960s and early 1970s led to an upward mobility that changed the focus from materialistic to more to postmaterialistic values. In the period of the late 1960s and the 1970s there was strong concern about tolerance, the women's movement, imagination, free choice -- variables that Inglehart (1997) uses to describe the factor of well-being. Since the early 1980s, there has been less happiness and more concern about respect of authority, money, and hard work -- variables that Inglehart uses to describe the concern for survival. Indeed, for an increasing proportion of the U.S. population, there was reason to be concerned.

Macro Perspective

In some cultures, materialism and the related instrumental value of power became independent of their instrumental utility of overcoming scarcity and became cultural value by themselves. I call this value plastic materialism. Here I differentiate between the concept of instrumental materialism where resources are instrumental in overcoming absolute, relative or subjective

scarcity, and the concept of plastic materialism where resources become the object. Plastic materialism contrasts with instrumental materialism just as intrinsic love of power contrasts instrumental power and authoritarianism contrasts authoritativeness.

For materialists, material values are abstract currency of power. In Marxist terms, one form of material resource (capital) is used to gain another material resource (surplus value). The common currency often makes it hard to differentiate between instrumental use and intrinsic attraction of material values. Material achievements are also widely accepted as a means of power. It is accepted, for example, to pay people for doing something they might initially not intend to do. If we, however, use our resources to indulge in the exercise power, we shift the interest from the object, material gain, to the instrument, power. Both aspects of power find an analogy in the differentiation between authoritativeness to authoritarianism. It appears perfectly fine if someone hires someone else and makes the person work for her profit. It appears less legitimate, however, if someone enjoys commanding people without caring for the benefits of their actions. In materialistic societies, the common currency of power blurs the borderline between instrumental power and the power as an object of desire. This blurred borderline contributes to the blending of authoritativeness and authoritarianism.

Power, authority, and materialism are interrelated, no matter if the materialism is instrumental or plastic in nature. Power secures resources, and power can be secured through rigid authoritative procedures. Placing intrinsic interest in material values involves the use of power to defend these material values. This process links the obsession with material values and the obsession with power. If materialism and authority lose their instrumental objectives and become objects of desire in themselves, instrumental materialism turns into plastic materialism, and authoritativeness into authoritarianism.

Materialism, plastic or instrumental, works most efficiently using some form of rational bureaucratic organization (Weber 1922). The postauthoritativeness-authoritativeness dimension is strongly associated with cultural concepts of secular-rational authority (Inglehart 1997).

Plastic and instrumental materialism are cultural and structural reasons for the U.S. authoritativeness. In contemporary North America, scarcity and plastic materialism have a combined effect on authoritativeness, an effect which makes contemporary North Americans more authoritative than their 1970s cohorts. Contemporary North Americans will, therefore, show more rigid beliefs in law and order.

Plastic Materialism in Micro Perspective: A Model of Addiction

In his concept of the Protestant ethic, Weber (1930) demonstrated the interdependence of culture and structure. Here he showed that a religious belief system generated a pattern of behavior that supported the rise of capitalism. The Protestant ethic was influential in the generation and spread of industrial capitalism. According to Swedberg, "Weber saw the emergence of modern capitalism as a gradual process, which had institutional as well as cultural dimensions and extended over several centuries. The influence of ascetic Protestantism is only an episode in this long process, albeit an important and particularly fascinating one"(1998, 7). It is not just Protestantism by itself, but the specific dynamics it created historically in North America that makes capitalism different in European countries and in North America. Following Weber's (1930) ideas, the Protestant ethic is part of this cultural phenomenon. Authoritativeness and the obsession with family values are epiphenomena of the North American form of materialism. Religiosity, family values, authoritativeness, and materialism are dimensions that describe contemporary U.S. neo-conservatism. The interconnectedness of these dimensions will be demonstrated in my model of addiction and codependency.

Following Craig Nakken's (1988) model of addiction, plastic materialism can be interpreted as having aspects of compulsion and addiction. People get "high" on materialism. One of the central instruments, the "fix" in achieving a materialistic "high," is traditional authority. The high and the fix are both forms of "time out... the person, as it were in 'another world,' and may regard his or her ordinary activities with cynical amusement" (Giddens 1992, 72). Indulging in the addictive activity, people temporarily abandon their reflexive concern with their self-identity: "The sense of loss of self is later succeeded by feelings of shame and remorse"(Giddens 1992, 73). States of shame and remorse are conducive for many forms of Christian religious practices. The "high" of plastic materialism is linked instrumentally to the "fix" of traditional authority. As a consequence of the addictive indulgence in the "high" and the "fix," individuals abandon their moral self-identities and feel shame and remorse. Using remorse in the repair of moral self-identities, Christian practices can be seen as a codependency in the addiction to plastic materialism. In this way materialism, authoritarianism, and religion go together. Religion, in turn, is linked to family values. This link is especially true in North America where this combination is highly propagandized by the political Right. The idea that plastic materialism can be modeled as a process of compulsion and addiction is summarized in Figure 1.

Comment [A1]: In a post scarcity era, the need for material goods is removed from instrumental purpose of survival and well-being. I call the love for materialism and authority in post scarcity periods, plastic materialism.

Figure 1 here

In contrast to materialism, postmaterialism de-emphasizes the importance of religion. According to Inglehart "postmaterialists ... are less likely to need the security of absolute rigid

rules that religious sanctions provide. Many religious norms such as “though should not commit adultery” or “honor your father and mother” are linked with maintaining the family unit”(1997, p.40).

Gender differences in the legitimation of Family Authorities

The Ideal Type of Authority

Being coerced is an unpleasant predicament, and generally leads to resentment toward the coercer. But if the other's coercion is legitimated, then he or she is an authority and may be evaluated positively (Weber, 1922). In fact, it is the central idea of the ideal type of an authority, that someone is powerful, yet positively evaluated. Also high status may be assigned to a political operative as long he follows accepted bureaucratic rules, but political operatives are villains or even terrorists when people do not share their cultural rules of legitimation. Cultural norms or rules are the source of the legitimation of power. Coercive persons are devaluated if there are no cultural rules to legitimize their coercion. Legitimation is a matter of culture specific rules. If coercion cannot be backed up by legitimating rules, an identity is seen as authoritarian. The ideal type for an authority expands to someone who is positively evaluated despite being potent (Schneider 1993, 1999a, 1996).

Scarcity and Authority in the Family

Changes in the perception of relative and subjective scarcity lead to a reevaluation of family identities. The intergenerational downward mobility found in the 1980s and the emphasis on material values, create a scarcity effect for contemporary North Americans. Today young North Americans feel financially more dependent on their parents than 20 years ago. This dependency should be reflected in the higher potency ratings assigned to family identities. Since dependency

Comment [A2]: Authority is dependent on the persons who are object of authority. Emerson noted that "to have a power advantage is to use it, and to use it is to lose it"(1969: 391). Only in not using power are people able to maintain their authority. When powerful roles are expressive, they appear persuasive or physically active but not authoritative, or authoritarian. Machiavellian persons who are engaged in power plays appear persuasive, but not authoritative. Powerful and legitimated figures who display their power through physical activity (e.g., athletes) also do not fit the meaning of authority. Authorities cannot solely rely on their material power, they need to have power and status ascribed by others in order to get things done. Just as the leader is dependent on his followers (Barnard, 1968), authority is based on socially constructed power and status, and there is no objective authority outside the situation in which actors and objects define and respond to each other.

Comment [A3]: The distinction between authoritarian and authoritative authority concepts is often located in Weber (1922) and Adorno et al (1950). However, Adorno misconstrued the construct because he located authoritarianism in a fascistic population, rather than understanding that authoritarianism is something that emerges from the evaluation of powerful social operatives. Indeed, Adorno partly was responsible for the fact that "perhaps the most widely disseminated and accepted description of national character among both social scientists and laymen was the "authoritarian personality" of the German people"(House, 1981: 532), yet Adorno's empirical construction of the F-scale is not based on empirical data from Germans. I suggest locating the differentiation between authoritarian and authoritative in the motive underlying the exercise of power. If power is used is used, according to Weber's definition as "the chance of a man, or a number of men to realize their own will in social action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action. (Gerth and Mills 1946; 1958, p.180), I will speak of authoritativeness. If someone, however, is power itself is an object of someone's interest, I will speak of authoritarianism. Power is legitimate as an instrument, but not as an object of desire.

is a negative experience, people will slightly stigmatize family identities. This stigmatization will be absent, or less intense, if the dependency can be culturally legitimated. In the conservative U.S. culture, it is more appropriate for females to stay dependent on their family than for males. For that reason I do not expect that contemporary U.S. males will love family identities more than in the 1970s.

Theoretical Model and Related Hypothesis

The North American Model

In the theoretical model of neo-conservatism in North America, relative and subjective scarcity creates instrumental materialistic interest and thereby indirectly authoritativeness. Plastic materialism, the intrinsic love of material values, will also cause an appreciation of authorities.

Periods of relative or subjective scarcity lead to a higher dependency on family members. Family identities are ,therefore, seen as being more powerful. Social comparison processes can be biased by a cultural exaggeration of the importance of materialistic and/or the active manipulation by the consumer industry. Relative and subjective scarcity in North America makes young people more dependent on their parents. This dependency should be true for males and females

Hypothesis 1: Today, U.S. family identities are more potent than they were in 1978.

In order to achieve a materialistic lifestyle, contemporary young North Americans stay longer with their parents than in the 1970s. Being instrumental in the increase of consumption capacities of young people, family identities are appreciated. This appreciation goes hand in hand with the ideas of the religious right that stresses family and individual prosperity.

Hypothesis 2: Today, U.S. family identities receive a higher evaluation by U.S. males than in 1978.

Since there are gender differences in legitimating family authorities, this appreciation should only be true for females. Dependency on the family makes family identities appear more potent. Being dependent on someone is an unpleasant experience that leads to a devaluation of the person on whom someone sees oneself dependent. This dependency could lead to a slight devaluation of family identities. The stigmatization effect, however, is mediated by gender roles. The degree of stigmatization depends on the degree of legitimation family identities receive. In a conservative culture, this dependency on family members is not problematic for females who are supported by the double moral standard of conservative gender roles. However, for males, the dependency on family identities will be unpleasant. Stigmatization of family identities, therefore, should only occur for males, not for females.

Comment [A4]: Relative or subjective scarcity will make people more dependent on the family. This dependency will make people experience family identities more powerful. Being dependent raises feelings of coercion and a devaluation of the coercer. Being able to receive legitimation, the coercer becomes an authority figure and escapes stigmatization. In North America, there are conservative gender specific norms about legitimating the exercise of power within the family. The effect of scarcity on the evaluation of family identities will, therefore, be mediated by gender.

Hypothesis 3: Today, U.S. males evaluate family identities less than females

Instrumental as well as plastic materialism calls for authoritative control of resources. This need for control and the resulting authoritativeness should be the case for males and females.

Hypothesis 4: Today, authorities are liked more in North America than in 1978.

As indicated in the model of compulsion and addiction -- if the high is provided by (plastic-) materialistic indulgence, and if the fix in achieving this high is provided by authoritative control of resources -- Christian religious practices help to overcome potential shame and remorse and provide identities that substitute ethical identities that were abandoned and neglected in the addictive indulgence. Neo-conservative societies that engage in plastic materialism and authoritativeness will highly evaluate religious identities that serve as substitutes of secular moral reasoning.

Hypothesis 5: Today, identities that positively identify with Christian religious practices are liked more in North America today than in 1978

Figure 2 here

The German Model

Establishing the Comparison to the U.S. Model: Absence of the Scarcity Model

The absence of the scarcity effect in the German model gives no reason to raise the potency level of family identities. This absence should hold true for males and females

Hypothesis 6: In Germany, the potency of family identities should be lower than in North America.

There is no excessive power to be legitimated in the family. In addition, the conservative gender difference of females accepting the power of the family will be absent in Germany.

There will be a weaker tendency and less reason for females to accept the power of the family and to refrain from stigmatizing identities.

H7: In Germany, there should be no gender difference in the evaluation of family identities.

Hypothesis six and seven are not directly concerned with the German model. However, including them allows testing a general conservative tendency: North America turned more conservative during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1998 as well as in 1978, North America shows more conservatism than Germany in 1990. Testing the German data against the 1978 data makes the cross-sectional comparison more stringent. It also allows the logical connection between the cohort study and the cross-cultural study. Variables that indicate neo-conservatism should be strongest in the contemporary U.S., less strong in North America of the 1970s, and weakest in Germany.

The German Model: Postauthoritativeness and Authority

In a postmaterialistic society, there is no reason to increase the love of family identities for economic incentives. This love should hold true for males and females.

Hypothesis 8: German family identities are not as highly evaluated as in North America

Postmaterialism is the rejection of authority. German authorities should not receive the legitimation of their U.S. counterparts. With the relative absence of cultural rules of legitimation, Germans will not be able to like potentially coercive identities. Compared to the U.S. culture where law and order is kept up to protect the flow of revenues to the powerful, the

postmaterialistic German culture will dislike authoritativeness. This dislike should be the case for males and females.

Hypothesis 9: Germans evaluate authorities less than North Americans in 1978

The abstinence from materialistic indulgence and the resulting decreased use of authoritativeness reduces shame and guilt which are conducive for Christian religious practices. Postmaterialistic societies allow the occupation with moral/ethical identities that render religious moral substitutes less attractive.

Hypothesis 10: Germans evaluate religious identities less than North Americans in 1978

Again, to make the test more stringent, the German model is tested against the 1978 U.S. data, that is expected to reflect less authoritative and materialistic values than the 1998 U.S. data. Testing the German data against the 1978 U.S. data is expected to establish an order on the materialistic – postmaterialistic and authoritative – postauthoritative continuum.

Figure 3 here

Procedures

Methodologically, I am working from a very different angle than Inglehart. Whereas the World Value Survey implied dimensions of interest, I analyze the subjective representation of identities for the reflection of postmaterialistic and postauthoritative values. I employ Osgood's (1962)

approach to the measurement of affective meaning. In one of the largest research projects ever conducted in the social sciences, Osgood, May and Miron (1975) found evidence for the cross-cultural universality of the evaluation, potency, and activity dimensions of affective response. In this investigation, I focus on the evaluation and potency dimension, the core dimensions are accepted by an even wider range of social scientists concerned with the measurement of sentiment (Collins 1990, Kemper 1990, Kemper and Collins 1990).

Semantic differential ratings of affective meaning of the evaluation and potency dimension are collected with scales that are defined by clusters of adjectives. The evaluation dimension's cluster of adjectives are good or nice versus bad or awful. The potency dimension is described as big or powerful versus little or powerless. The bipolar, interval scales range from –4.33 to +4.33. The common component of identities of three studies is used in this comparison.

Data were collected by questionnaire from undergraduates in North Carolina, and each stimulus was rated by approximately 56 subjects. Further details on the study design and data collection is available in Smith-Lovin (1987). Mean ratings by males and by females are available in Heise and Lewis (1988). In the 1998 U.S. study, the same scales and stimuli were used as in the German study. The subjects were undergraduate students in Lubbock Texas.³ The sampling method was similar to the previous U.S. and German study.

In order to overcome the researcher bias in the classification process of identities, an additional empirical study was undertaken (Schneider 1999a). This study determines the classification of identities as family identities or authorities. The data only included six religious identities that were easy to identify. The positive religious identities of *Christian, church deacon, evangelist, God, minister, and puritan* were not tested with this additional sample.

The German study was designed to be comparable with the American study (Schneider 1996). To correspond to the undergraduate population in North America, subjects were not only university students, but also pupils of the thirteenth grade in "Gymnasium".⁴ About 400 subjects were recruited from Mannheim University and two schools (*Gymnasien*) in Mannheim, a large industrial city attracting students mainly from the Rhein-Neckar region in former West Germany.⁵ The focus lies on comparability, not generalizability. Regional differences in North America and influences caused by the different time frames of both samples were controlled by using smaller current samples of American undergraduates. Although in the following I will speak of cultural differences, one should keep in mind that the U.S. and German cultures are represented by a subset of post adolescent youth with a predominant middle class heritage. The existing American dictionary was used for the construction of the German stimuli set. The method of blind back-translation (Krebs and Schuessler, 1987) was employed (Schneider 1999a, 1999b).

Focusing on undergraduates, the selection of the population is defined by comparability. To stress the independent variable culture and time in my comparison, I will allow myself the convenient generalization to refer to Americans and Germans. Having read the description of the sample, the reader may judge herself to which extent she agrees with this generalization.

Results

Testing the Models

All tendencies followed my hypothesis (table 1, 2, and 3). All but the first and fourth hypotheses failed to be disconfirmed at a significance level of five percent. The increased potency for

family identities, stated in my first hypothesis, did not reach a significant level. Only males show a significant increase in their love of authorities, just as I state in my fourth hypothesis. However, significance tests for the model are very conservative estimates. Degrees of freedom are determined by the number of identities compared in each category. These t-tests in the analysis are based on the minimum assumption that every identity was rated by one subject. The fact that average rating of 30 males and 30 females are compared is not taken into consideration. Harvesting this explanation power would increase the degrees of freedom by using an f-test statistics in an analysis of variance. Since the 1978 North American data are only available in their aggregate form, I have to compare conservatively the means (of means).

As stated in my second hypothesis, today females love family identities more than in 1978 (table 2). The gender difference in the evaluation of family identities in conservative societies is explicitly stated in my third hypothesis. I find strong support for the positive reception of family identities by females, not by males (Table 3). This gender-mediated effect interacted with the cultural effect of plastic materialism on the evaluation of family identities. Following a conservative stereotype, only males appreciate authorities more than in the 1970s. Although present in its tendency, this effect was not significant for contemporary U.S. females. Contemporary U.S. females and males agreed in their high appreciation of religious identities. Religious identities were evaluated significantly higher by North Americans of the late 1990s than in the 1970s.

Comment [A5]: I also tested the potency of family identities by males. As expected, with a t-value of 0.296 there is no difference to 1978.

Hypotheses eight, nine and ten describe the original German model. The analysis confirmed the German model in all respects. This includes hypotheses six and seven, which were introduced for a complete cross-sectional comparison of the U.S. model. In a very conservative test, the German model was compared to the U.S. data of the 1970s, not to the more

materialistic and authoritative contemporary North Americans. This conservative comparison was done in an effort to establish an order on the materialistic – postmaterialistic and authoritative – postauthoritative continuum. All cross-sectional cultural differences, with the exception of the potency rating of family identities, reached statistical significance of above 5%.

Compared to North Americans, German males and females showed less appreciation for identities with family denotation and identities with religious or authoritative denotation. There was no conservative gender bias in the appreciation of family identities. Gender differences in the evaluation of family identities were not only insignificant, but also insubstantial.

There was strong support for the model describing contemporary Germans as postmaterialistic and postauthoritative. Contemporary North Americans represent the of (plastic-) materialistic and authoritative ideal type, whereas North Americans of the 1970s lie somewhere between both ideal typical extremes.

Tables 1, 2, and 3 here

Discussion

Encouraged by Inglehart's example, I use the bold approach of utilizing cross-sectional data to indicate cultural change. Without any doubt for the validity of the measurement of social change, nothing could substitute for a third U.S. sample. Nevertheless, using cross-sectional data of contemporary Germans widens the scope of the analysis.

Another potential criticism might be my use of a Texan sample to complement the North Carolinian sample in my over-time comparison. No matter where in North America, as soon I present survey results from a Texan population, researchers, as well as lay people, give me a

stereotypical response: Texans are different. Here, Texans as well as non-Texan agree. With this stereotype salient, people often fail to consider that nearly every sample population of undergraduates is faced with a high mobility of young North Americans. There are very few studies that consider it necessary or feasible to engage in an exact control of the local heritage of their subjects. Local heritage was never a major point of critique in any of my presentations or publications based on the German and North Carolinian data sets. However, as soon Texas comes into play things change – an interesting observation in itself. I have to leave it up to the reader to discard concerns about treating the North Carolinian and the Texan data as a time series or not. If the reader buys into the idea that both regions are comparable, I establish a time series that supports the idea of an increasing U.S. conservatism. If the reader is a strong believer in the unique status of West Texas, my study might be judged as a valid approach to compare degrees of conservatism in different (sub-) cultures.

One important factor of conservatism is the use of authoritative rule in order to control morals. In North America, the enforcement of morals has become an obsession. This obsession can be demonstrated by looking at vice (victimless crime). Today, the average served sentence for drug-related charges is about four times higher than for manslaughter. For U.S. children, authoritative control starts early.

Primary education is consumed by an emphasis on controlling children, not educating them to engage in critical thinking. Instead of giving them time for themselves when their teacher is unavailable, barely educated substitute teachers are sent into classes to control the children. Judging from my own observation of pupils, gifted young German pupils feel intellectually underfed and overly controlled when changing from a German to a U.S. high school system. They suffer with other gifted North Americans who are subject to meritocracy

imposed by school officials to keep the less gifted in the school system. Government substitutes to high schools are partly dependent on the ability of the school to lower dropout rates. The immanent fear is loss of control over the dropouts and to have to use the more expensive and less efficient juvenile law enforcement and detention system as a means of authoritative control. For minor infringements of moral regulations that would receive hardly any institutional attention in many other countries, adolescent offenders are sent to boot camps or other forms of detention and reeducation. Physical and mental techniques are used to break the teenager's resistance and to force them into obedience. The very first voices analyzing this intolerant authoritativeness become vocal (Skiba and Peterson 1999). Slowly the popular press goes beyond the common plea for more teachers and corporal punishment, and starts to reflect upon zero-tolerance authoritativeness in the U.S. education system. The *Time* (Cloud 1999) started to question the purpose of policies that led to the suspension of at least 20 students for the possession of Alka-Selza and to the felony charges of injury and intended murder against 10 year olds that squirted some soap gel into their teacher's water bottle.

As in the German past, there has to be an enemy of legitimate oppressive rule. As Durkheim has already pointed out, deviance is instrumental in the maintenance of group cohesiveness and solidarity. To legitimate coercive practices, politicians create a culture of fear (Glassner 1999). Nancy Reagan initiated the War on Drugs, which allowed President Reagan, President Bush, and President Clinton to spend large sums on financing the law enforcement and detention industry (Goode 1997, Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). The focus on school violence led to a feeding frenzy by the press. Fear of pornography allowed President Clinton to sign the Communication Decency Act in 1996. Three years later, the President himself fell victim to the enforcement of sexual morals. With the investigation of the private sexual life of the President,

North America lapsed back into the dark ages of conservatism and moral righteousness: the McCarthy area. Once having been one of the freest nations in the world, North America moved towards postauthoritative values. The development came to a standstill and regressed into neo-conservative authoritative values.

In contrast to North Americans, contemporary Germans are exposed to a political environment that reflects a continuation of the liberal 1970s. The decriminalization of the consumption and the possession and import of “reasonable amounts” of drugs like marihuana can be taken as an anecdotal indicator of liberal policies. Another indicator for less liberalism in the sexual domain can be seen in the lowering of the age of consent to fourteen in 1994 (Strafgesetzbuch 1994, §176). Having a lower age of consent does not mean that Northern European youth engage in sexual activities earlier than their U.S. peers (Weinberg et al 1995). However, fewer legal restrictions might make it easier for German youth to develop their own sexual morals in conjunction with parental and community standards. In any case, the lower age of consent limits the exercise of power of the state in moral issues. The focus on personal responsibility instead of moral control by the government is also reflected in the relatively high U.S. teenage pregnancy rate.

The root of U.S. conservatism can be seen in the culture of materialism and in the related need for authoritative control. Materialism can be instrumental in overcoming scarcity and to improve well-being, security, and to improving chances of survival. Scarcity can be seen as absolute in terms of historical and national comparison. Scarcity can be seen as relative, defined by comparison between the well-being of different states in a given society. Third, scarcity can be subjective, as defined by cultural standards of achievement.

No matter if scarcity is real, relative or subjective, it will be objective for the individual's behavioral consequence. There are many factors systematically influencing the subjective representation of scarcity. Excessive media attention and exaggeration of crime, violence, and indecency, combined with extended media consumption, support the interest in security that is offered by a rigid value system, authoritarianism, and material success. People below the poverty line have a much greater chance to be a victim of a violent crime or become subject of to the law enforcement and detention industry. Wealthy people have better health and a longer life expectancy. Materialism in the U.S. is a matter of survival.

Cultural standards that establish subjective scarcity are closely related to the processes that establish plastic materialism, a form of materialism that by becoming independent of scarcity loses its instrumental value. Plastic materialism is the intrinsic love of material values, independent from economic necessities. The analytical differentiation between plastic materialism and instrumental materialism becomes unimportant for the actual behavior. Just as it is unimportant for actual behavioral consequences if scarcity is real, relative or subjective, the differentiation between the instrumental and plastic form of materialism will not be salient to the individual. The outcome, authoritative behavior to secure resources, will be identical.

According to Inglehart: "Postmaterialists are not non-Materialists. The term 'Postmaterialist' denotes a set of goals that are emphasized after people have attained material security. Thus, the collapse of security could lead to a gradual shift back towards materialist values"(Inglehart 1997, p.35). The development between the ideal typical stages of plastic materialism/authoritativeness and postmaterialism and postauthoritativeness are not necessarily smooth and linear. In a transition from scarcity into post scarcity, the onset of post scarcity will not automatically trigger a change in the value system of the individuals. The emergence of a

new value system will create a defensive ultra-conservative stand. In the transition from materialism to postmaterialism, the portion of cultural leaders who still worship their obsession with material goods and the power rooted in their possession will become more radicalized as a defense.

In the mid-1990s, the U.S. was about to recover from its recession. Subjects of the survey that I conducted in November and December of 1998 were beginning to recognize this change. My model allows the investigation of dynamic cultural change. If the U.S. economy continues its strong recovery, it will be interesting to observe the redistribution of wealth and the perception of materialism. Then we can investigate the point at which the absence of absolute scarcity diminishes the influence of relative and subjective scarcity on the materialism – postmaterialism and authoritativeness – postauthoritativeness dimensions. Today, we might be at a point where the political pendulum has reached its most extreme point of neo conservatism and is about to move back in the direction of postmaterialism and postauthoritativeness.

Is it possible to explain the U.S. neo-conservatism using structural political factors? I am not sure, but I would like to present two possible causes that should help the process of *verstehen*. The de facto two-party system and the absence of leftist role models might be political causes for the U.S. shift to conservatism. By 1998, the shift to conservatism that started in the Reagan era of the early 1980s has shown its impact on the North American cultural representation of identities. When we refer to the political system in North America, the term conservatism refers to the Republicans. Democrats are seen as the other end of the spectrum in this de facto two-party system. Since the de facto two-party system of North America does not cover the whole spectrum of political opinions, the term conservatism should not be used synonymously with the belief system conveyed by the Republican Party. By standards of more

socialistic or liberal Northern European countries, the U.S. Democratic Party can be judged as essentially conservative in most of their actions of the 1980s and 1990s.

Cultural values of contemporary Germans are more similar to North Americans at the peak of liberalism in the late 1970s than to contemporary conservative North Americans. One political reason for the relative conservatism in North America is an almost complete absence of socialist vision that would widen the political spectrum and temper conservatism. One of these reasons is rooted in the collapse of the Soviet Union. Already in an ultra-conservative position since McCarthyism, the U.S. Left has lost its remaining socialistic role models and ideals.

There was a flicker of identification by the more radical parts of the young generation with Che Guevara and his writings about communist guerilla revolutionary warfare (1998 [1961], 1966). Che Guevara marked the left end of the revolutionary left and conservative right continuum. Che Guevara was a Latin American role model for a small minority of radical North Americans. Today, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was the main socialist country salient to the U.S. population, even foreign nations are not able to produce socialist role models for North Americans. China would be another source of a potential socialist role model. However, for a race-conscious society like North America, China is even less likely than the Soviet Union to produce a socialist role model. In addition, China is moving in the capitalist direction on the socialist - capitalist continuum. The availability of socialist models is different in Germany where the influence of East Germany and their proximity of the former Soviet satellite states, still provide evidence for the possible influence of socialism on democratic systems. Here proportional representation supports a multiple party system that allows for a much more colorful variety of participating politicians.

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- People get “high” on materialism.
 - The instrument or “fix” in achieving this “high” is traditional authority.
 - High and "fix" are forms of “time out” where persons are in “another world.”
 - Indulging in the addictive activity, people temporarily abandon their reflexive concern with their self-identities.
 - The sense of loss of self is later succeeded by feelings of shame and remorse.
 - Feelings of shame and remorse are conducive to many forms of Christian religious practices.
 - If people are using remorse in the repair of identities, Christian practices can be seen as a codependency.

Figure 1: Plastic Materialism: A Model of Compulsion and Addiction

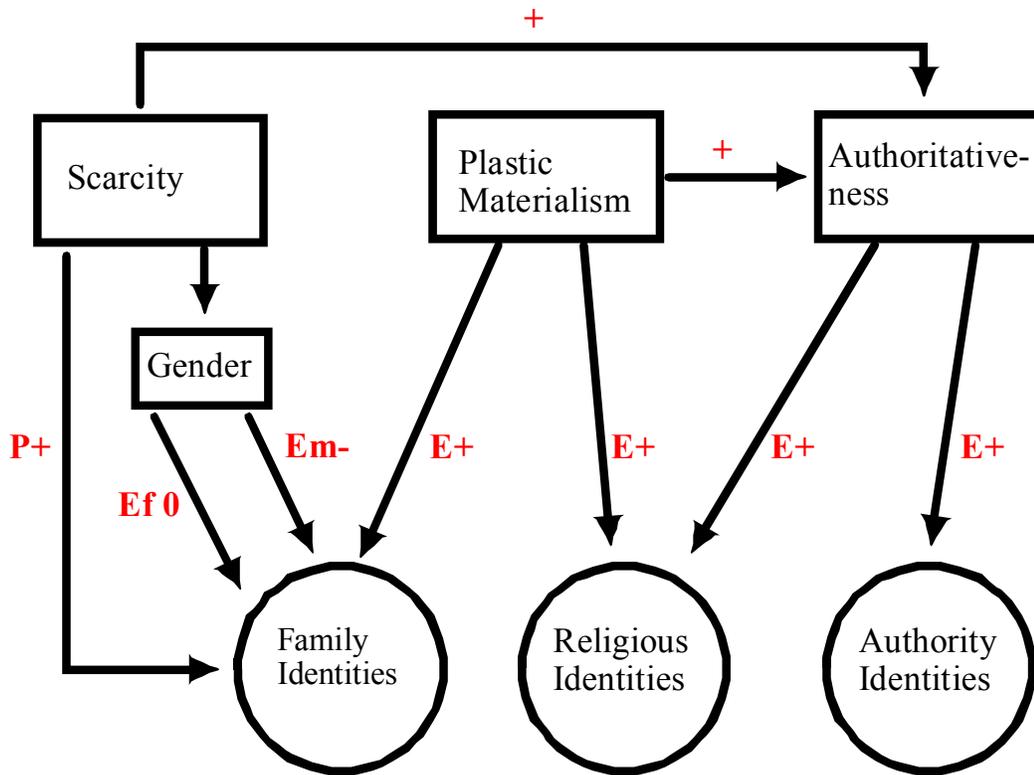


Figure 2 The Model of Neo-conservatism in North America: Influence of Scarcity, Plastic Materialism, and Authoritativeness on Family and Authority Identities. P: Potency, E: Evaluation, f: female, m: male, +: Positive Change, -: Negative Change, 0: No Change

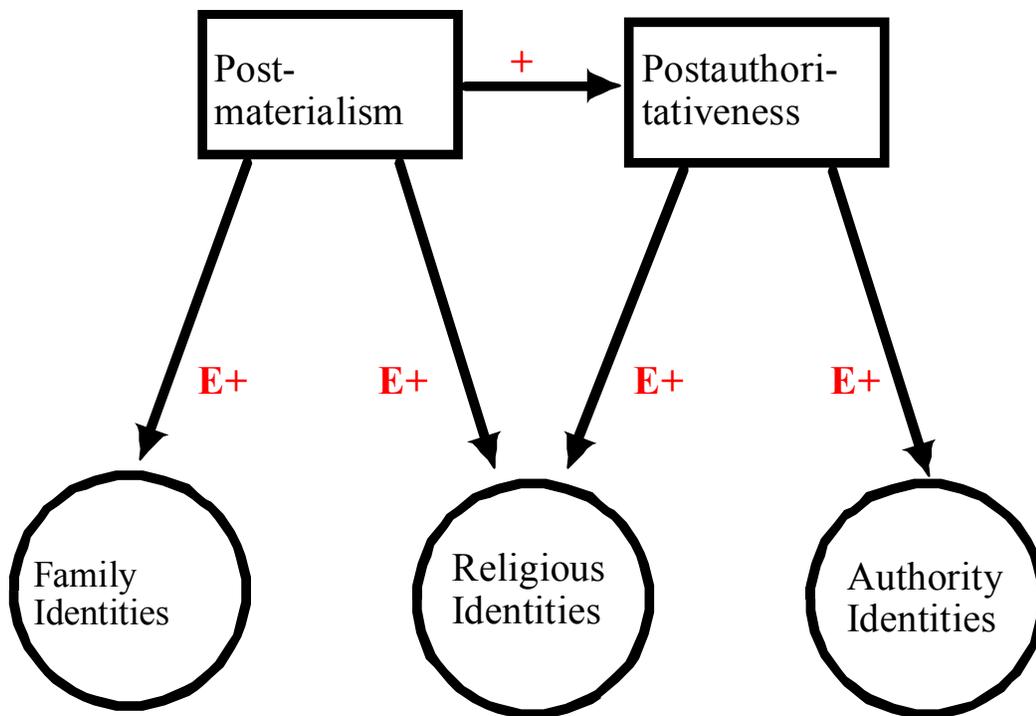


Figure 3 Cultural Model in Germany: The Influence of Postmaterialism and Postauthoritativeness on Family and Authority Identities. E: Evaluation, +: Positive Change.

Table 1: Differences in mean evaluation and potency ratings of 40 family identities, 69 authorities, and 8 religious identities rated by 30 males in each of the samples (North America 1978, 1989, and in Germany). The * indicates 5% significance level.

Family Identities				
	Hypothesis 1		Hypothesis 6	
1998 potency	>	1978 potency	>	Germany potency
.35	t = .95	.29	T = 1.55	.14
Hypothesis 8				
		1978 evaluation	>	Germany evaluation
		1.27	T = 6.34*	.94
Authority Identities				
	Hypothesis 4		Hypothesis 9	
1998 evaluation	>	1978 evaluation	>	Germany evaluation
1.03	t = 2.61*	.87	T = 10.07*	.31
Religious Identities				
	Hypothesis 5		Hypothesis 10	
1998 evaluation	>	1978 evaluation	>	Germany evaluation
1.98	t = 3.94*	1.16	T = 3.37*	.18

Table 2: Differences in mean evaluation and potency ratings of 40 family identities and 69 authorities rated by 30 females in each of the samples (North America in 1978, 1989, and in Germany) The * indicates 5% significance level.

Family Identities				
	Hypothesis 1		Hypothesis 6	
1998 potency	>	1978 potency	>	Germany potency
.517	t = .947	.452	t = 1.48	.322
Authority Identities				
	Hypothesis 2		Hypothesis 8	
1998 evaluation	>	1978 evaluation	>	Germany evaluation
1.555	t = 6.884*	1.468	t = 5.199*	.979
Religious Identities				
	Hypothesis 4		Hypothesis 9	
1998 evaluation	>	1978 evaluation	>	Germany evaluation
1.115	t = 1.35	1.036	t = 7.625*	.486
	Hypothesis 5		Hypothesis 10	
1998 evaluation	>	1978 evaluation	>	Germany evaluation
1.92	t = 2.05*	1.66	t = 3.24*	.38

Table 3: Differences in mean evaluation and potency ratings of family identities: gender comparison for North America in 1978, 1989, and Germany (t-values above 1.645 indicate a 5% significance level).

	Hypothesis 3		Hypothesis 7	
(1998 evaluation female - evaluation male)	>	(1978 evaluation female - evaluation male)	>	(Germany evaluation female - evaluation male)
.252 t = 3.95*		.199 t= 3.43*		.038 t = .70

¹ In Germany 1998, 35,740 of 82 Million people participated in the workforce, in North America 132,000 of 268 Million. The average income of a German household was 75,492 German marks. Using an exchange rate of 1.60, this translates into \$47,182. Within the recent 10 years, the exchange rates fluctuated between 1.35 and 2.00.

² Median household income of 1969, \$33,072, increased to \$34,666 by 1979 and then decreased to 33,330 by 1993. This downward trend was broken in 1996, when the median household income started to increase dramatically. Between 1969 and 1996 the average income for the upper third median of the population rose by 24% (adjusted for inflation), and for the center median it rose by 19%. For people in the lower third, however, the average income only rose by 1%. A good measurement of subjective relative economic deprivation is the comparison of young people with their parents. "The hopes of each new generation is to do at least as well, economically, as their parents. This has been the case until recently. For example, men aged 25-34 in 1967 had more total money income than did their fathers' generation (men aged 25-34 in 1947). In 1977, men 25-34 still fared better than their fathers did in 1957. In 1987, however, men aged 25-34 were the first to experience a lower median income than their fathers' generation; this trend continued into 1997." (Weinberg 1998). Women however, are still more likely to fair economically better than their mothers.

³ I would like to thank Texas Tech University for awarding me the Research Enhancement Grant to finance the "Data Collection of Texas Tech Undergraduates' Sentiments of Identities, Behaviors and Emotions for Cross-cultural Comparison"

⁴ The "Gymnasium" is the German educational equivalent to the American high school, a prerequisite for entering university that lasts two years longer than the American High school.

⁵ I want to thank the Lehrstuhl Sozialpsychologie, Prof. Martin Irlle and the Lehrstuhl Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung und angewandte Soziologie, Prof. Walter Müller as well as the Departement of Sociology at Indiana University for their support. I also want to thank the Ltd. Regierungsdirektor vom Oberschulamt Karlsruhe, Herr Gehring, for the permission to interview pupils in the Gymnasium, and all the 380 subjects that participated in the German study.