

On the changes of value orientations during youth age

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**Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung
Leipzig**

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR OF YOUTH RESEARCH

"YOUTH AND VALUE ORIENTATION"

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THESES OF THE ZIJ MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Harry Müller

On the changes of value orientations during youth age

1. The development of value orientations as a socio-psychological phenomenon is always to be seen and to be investigated in relation to personality development in its structural totality. Youth is a period of ontogenesis in which acquisition of values, i.e. the development of value-awareness, takes place with particular intensity and influences the individual habit in people's subsequent periods of life. Change and stabilization at the same time are characterizing features of intra-individual processes in youth age which are decisively influenced by habitual basis-orientations originating in childhood already. Development has to be regarded as a longer-lasting process.

2. The intra-individual course of the development of value-orientations but simultaneously the considerable inter-individual variations as well can only be followed by means of longitudinal/interval studies. Responsible for the differences within development are the developmental preconditions as well as the variety of conditions under the influence of which individual young people tackle the values existing in society. Subjective and objective conditions have to be differentiated. During youth age the subject position is gaining importance. Young people are not only in need of a mental open-mindedness but they must be able to identify with values. Acceptance of values is combined with previous experiences, anticipated targets and subjective possibilities to realize the values within the concrete behaviour, i.e. by means of the relevance of values practical for life. Investigation of developmental conditions serves for the explanation of inter-individual forms of development and at the same time it represents the most difficult research problem.

3. The development of value orientations as an individual disposition is understood as changes which can refer to re-formation or consolidation of value orientations and integration of values into existing structures on the one hand but simultaneously to labilization and extinction on the other hand. Development can be

very contradictory and must not be reduced to one-line forms. It follows the principle of the unity of continuity and discontinuity at which - measured against larger periods of development - continuous forms come to the fore more clearly.

Gustav-Wilhelm Batake

Social structure - social background - value orientations

1. The personality development of young people is affected by many factors. Societal conditions are of basic importance. Adolescents, however, are not in an active interaction with the whole society, i.e. with the whole complex of concrete historical conditions, but only with certain "sections".

2. In childhood and adolescence, objective socio-structural family background is a social factor of particular relevance because concrete social conditions for the development of the individual are derived from it.

3. The family with its social determination and involvement that result from the social position of the parents is the major mediator of societal conditions. The individual is born into such a social environment. Depending on the social position of the parents, characteristic activity requirements are initiated and communication focuses on certain contents concerning the realization of which important dispositions are formed in the process of personality development.

4. Societal points of contact the adolescent is confronted with and in the development of which he or she at the same time is actively engaged increase in the course of ontogenesis. First social experience is typically governed by the social context of the family of origin without ignoring that objective socio-structural conditions of the family become relevant for personality development only through mediating processes. The decisive mediating link is one's own activity. This being and becoming active, the forms of acquiring societal reality, are, however,

stimulated, promoted or even impeded by the social context of the family background.

5. The influence of the social background on personality development, and thus also on the value orientations of adolescents, can be understood appropriately only if we proceed from the decisive determinant for social differentiation: division of labour. Thus, the content of parents' work, their education and qualification gain differential significance. The existing form of societal division of labour is necessarily related to differences in work activities, in the intellectual level of work, in the educational level and qualification of the various social groups that correspond with differences in the values, aims and behaviours of the parental generation and with an analogous educational behaviour. These differences that are conditioned by division of labour not only affect social differences but as well determine the mechanism of their reproduction over generations.

Günter Lange

Reflexions on a dialectical-materialist conception of political socialization in youth age

1. The accelerated dynamic force of societal processes during the eighties led to a change in the quality of objective reality and subjective states in the lives of young people. This phenomenon can be called a mentality change among youth. So youth sociologists are faced with the task to examine circumstances, factors and processes which contribute to the formation and development of young people's ways of thinking and behaving. This has to be done more intensively under the altered conditions of the eighties and with a view to the nineties. A possible approach is given by the conception of political socialization.

2. Focal theoretical preconditions of a dialectical-materialist conception of political socialization should be:

(a) the dialectics of individual and society in its concrete historical form of development,

- (b) the primacy of an active acquisition of environment by the individual versus societal educational intentions,
- (c) the Marxist ideal of man and society related to the perspective demands of society development in the nineties and beyond.

3. Starting from these preconditions, such a conception of political socialization in youth age should be characterized by the following features:

- (a) It is subject-orientated, i.e. the young personality is the virtual subject of political socialization.
- (b) It is society-orientated, i.e. the concrete socializational situation of political socialization in the sense of a circumstances-preconditions-system is formed by the social conditions according to their concrete historical development, their actual politico-ideological structures and their social prospects now and in future.
- (c) It is action-orientated, i.e. the active acquisition/objectification of targets, needs and interests of particular social classes or strata forms the virtual process of political socialization.
- (d) It is process- and problem-orientated, i.e. the course of political socialization in adolescence, its driving contradictions and effects are in the centre of research.
- (e) It is future-orientated, i.e. not a description of previous proceedings is intended but their analysis aiming at a scientifically founded prognosis of future politico-ideological developmental processes in the socialist society.
- (f) It is complex-orientated, i.e. research aims at an interdisciplinary complex analysis of differentiated conditions, factors and forms of development of political socialization in youth age based on a methods-triangulation.

4. Future empirical research on political socialization in adolescence thus continues traditional research approaches on the basis of a new theoretical and methodological consensus. Crucial

point of further research will be an interval study on political socialization in early youth age.

Werner Gerth

National conditions and socialization

1. The importance of young people's belonging to a national group for socialization is at present insufficiently theoretically understood and only few specific comparative empirical studies are available on this question. On the other hand, however, in recent years the situation has substantially changed favouring an increasing role of nations and of national questions in international politics. Thus, the interest of the social sciences increasingly focuses on the importance of national conditions and specific problems for the development of thinking and behaviour predominantly of young people.

2. National conditions for the socialization process are the material, ideal and social conditions of those people's existence who because of their common language, their relatively independent territory and predominantly homogenous socio-economic conditions, such as production relations, class structure, close mutual distribution relations (so-called internal market), objectively have a particular social relationship towards each other, leading to a substantial degree of thinking and behaviour patterns in these people typical for that particular nation as well as a sense of togetherness and close emotional bonds with the commonly inhabited territory.

3. Subsequently the present paper identifies the areas decisive for the socialization of growing generations and their national peculiarities. Furthermore, interactions between superordinate production relations and class- or socio-structural conditions and specific national conditions are elaborated with different levels of national conditions being generalized concerning the spheres of influences and action in a socializatory respect. National conditions of a global character, of provenance specific

to socialism and occurring in every-day social communication and co-operation are hierarchically interrelated with each other. Using empirical examples we demonstrate what sort of national peculiarities and historical changes exist at these three levels of national conditions among young members of different nations. First theoretical generalizations concerning the character of national socialization conditions are derived from this.

Leonhard Kassk

Work as a value in one's life

1. Almost all young workers cannot imagine their lives without work. In the last few years, this has hardly changed. Some changes result from the fact that spare time has gained in value and that expectations concerning the content of one's work have increased.

2. An ideal job is expected to be diversified and many-sided, to leave much room for taking one's own decisions, to permit utilization of what one has learned and to introduce one's own ideas into the solution of tasks; it is also expected to make social contacts possible and to be characterized by continuity, without stress and strain, without phases of high working pressure on the one hand and enforced working breaks on the other as a result of deficient working organization. Moreover, there should be enough free time.

3. Male skilled workers for whom work is high-ranking in their life plane are characterized by the following traits: Their work tasks confront them with low physical and comparatively high intellectual requirements permanently forcing them to enlarge their knowledge and skills. They emphasize a self-critical attitude as well as the possibility to introduce their own ideas into the solution of tasks and to gain their managers' appreciation. They have good chances to organize and plan their own activity and put less emphasis on leading a pleasant life without much effort. They also prefer active and creative ways of spending their spare

time as for example handicrafts, puzzling, reading and going in for sports. On the contrary, young workers for whom work is lower-ranking prefer spending their spare time in a passive and receptive way, mainly by watching TV; also, they more often pay visits to restaurants and pubs. In comparison to this, young female workers are more interested in gaining social appreciation in their working team.

4. Reasons for changing expectations and attitudes towards work are probably to be found in inconsistent social experience at work, a relatively high level of education, a relatively high living standard, increasingly experienced menaces by global problems (above all environmental pollution), new kinds of high technology etc.

Barbara Bertram

Sex Role Change and Models

During the last four decades a substantial change occurred in the social functions and roles of gender groups in the GDR. Studies demonstrate that this is reflected both in the thinking and behaviour of young women and men. Main criteria of new social functions (i.e. the biological and socio-economic tasks to be solved by the gender groups in order to maintain and develop society) are in our opinion the equal share of women in the working process and all other spheres of social life and at the same time equal responsibility of men for their home and family.

Sex roles (summation of social expectations, instructions, norms and standards that are to produce a certain behaviour) used to and still affect behaviour control in this connection. We consider the concept of sex roles in sociological research legitimate under the following assumptions: roles are not conceived as "final cause" of behaviour, but regarded on the basis of their objective determination under societal conditions, they are no behavioural compulsion, but only guide-lines that do not discriminate people or declare them to be an object of adaptation, but

support them in their function as a ruler over societal conditions.

Models, i.e. normative ideas about sex-specific or sex-indifferent behaviours that are to be aspired to, are components of sex roles. In our research we found that young people orient along them and that lacking or unclear social models lead to behavioural insecurities. Our studies show a strong approximation of model-like ideas among young people concerning the function of gender groups in working and social life (what women and men should be like). This does not equally apply to family. Some traditional conceptions of both gender groups with regard to the roles to be played by women and men in the family partly oppose women's taking-over of new tasks at work. So it is by far not only differences in the objective living conditions that impede a further change in the main social functions realized by women and men for the purpose of equality. Research and practice should pay more attention to the problem of models.

Dieter Wiedemann

The influence of value orientations on young people's cultural life

The multidimensionality and multifariousness of the interrelationships to be discussed here call for a limitation to the analysis of single but typical relationships. The following theses refer to the interrelationships to be exemplified.

1. Contents and forms of young people's spare time culture are increasingly affected by value orientations directed at enjoyment and an unregulated development of individuality. The consumption of culture and art on the part of the young generation of the eighties is more clearly determined by such values than that of the young generations of the seventies or sixties.
2. For many young people a spontaneous and enjoyable spare time is not contradictory to values with an orientation towards socio-political involvement, cultural many-sidedness and occupational

ethos. The value orientation patterns young people have developed do not influence any element of their culture and art consumption, but predominantly determine their habitual strategies for organizing their cultural life. The content-related variety and individual equivalence in the expression of value orientations in most young people prevent a permanent concurrence between the "content-related expectations" of the developed value orientation patterns and the cultural behaviours actually possible in certain situations.

Otmar Kabat vel Job
Sarina Keiser

On the significance of the family for the formation of value orientations during adolescence

1. The general and fundamental influence of the family of origin on the entire personality development of young people also determines its significance for the formation of value orientations. Particularly two aspects of family socialization are to be noted here:

- As a socialization authority that itself is essentially determined by the conditions prevailing in the whole society, family to a large extent imparts societal conditions and requirements, social values and norms to young people.
- As a primary reference group and extremely important sphere of life, family influences the personality development of adolescents until late adolescence in such a specific way that disturbances in this field can hardly be compensated or corrected by other educational institutions.

2. The strong influence of the family of origin on the formation of value orientations among young people is particularly obvious in the high conformity of value orientations within families that has repeatedly been confirmed. However, this conformity in the value orientations of young people and their parents *per se* does not yet reveal anything about the qualitative or quantitative

effects of family factors and mediation processes.

3. The content-related aspect of the family-specific mediation and influence on value orientations of young people is basically determined by parental value orientations and attitudes which are expressed in certain educational aims, behaviours and behavioural requirements as well as the content of intrafamily interaction and communication. The mediation of value orientations in the family takes place consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly in the process of family interaction and communication. Young people identify themselves with or adopt parental value orientations via functions of their parents such as reference person, model and adviser. What is decisive here is the specific character of the social relations within the family, in particular the adolescent-parent-relationship.

Lutz Schmidt

Achievement orientation among parents concerning the development of their children

1. Already in the sixties GDR parents showed a primarily socially determined high achievement orientation regarding school development of their children. In connection with the demands of the scientific-technological revolution the importance of education, qualification and individual capability has further increased in the GDR and in all developed industrial countries since then. This in turn has led to enhanced achievement expectations of parents as regards their children.

2. However, high expectations of parents as to education (about 40 per cent aspire to A-level for their children) are confronted with far less chances of realization (approximately 12 per cent of the young people in this country pass A-level), thus enforcing the necessity for high school performance in order to ensure the aspired social and professional development of the child. Achievement orientation of parents is further influenced

- by increased norms and expectations as regards the families'

educational capability due to advanced scientification of educational processes (better knowledge of the child's needs, performance and of ways for their promotion) and

- by increased societal demands for the families' previous and current contributions to support the aims of the institutionalized educational systems.

3. The combination of these demands on parents with additional stress regarding time budget and nerves which result from their own work and problems in ensuring the economic function of the family (lacks in market and services) leads to the establishment of patterns in everyday organisation characterized by rationalisation of educational processes:

- ostensible orientation of parents towards actual achievements (marks) and demands on the child's performance,
- restriction of the reaction variety, lack in tolerance and in emotional protection in case of failure,
- orientation towards prompt success by inadequately strong support in mastering school requirements.

4. Empirical findings give evidence to these correlations and point to the future necessity to organise the level of achievement expected as well as the amount of specific promotion even stronger according to the child's individual possibilities or his/her particular stage of development. This will be reached the more successfully the more society - especially school - can manage to replace an ostensible stress of performance by a differentiated promotion of the child's/young person's interest in the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and orientation towards an individual advancement in development.

Peter Förster

Change of values and achievement development:
Experience gained in the complex and developmental analysis
of value orientations of senior pupils

1. The methodological basis of our research is the thesis that value orientations do not exist in isolation of each other, not in the form of unconnected mosaic stones, but that they represent integral parts of the general value orientation structure of the personality. As functional systems they exist and work only within the framework of the complex value orientation structure (W. Friedrich). This perspective is of basic importance for the subject-adequate investigation of value orientations, last but not least designed to evaluate changes in value orientations by means of interval studies (longitudinal analyses).

2. The validity of the above thesis is demonstrated by most recent results from an interval study of senior pupils (eighth to tenth grades) in the following respects:

2.1. The existence of complex value orientation structures (profiles, syndromes) is established using an ensemble of selected life aims relevant to achievement. Included are the orientations:

- to learn for a good school record;
- to continue learning after finishing school;
- to be creative;
- to be overachieving at work.

2.2. Complex relationships between these structures on the one hand and relevant achievement indicators on the other hand are shown in cross sections of the various stages of research (performance in distinctive school subjects, classroom activity, level of aspiration, learning motivation).

2.3. Changes in value orientation profiles between the distinct research stages are analysed by means of complex longitudinal correlations. Developmental types as an expression of a significant change of values are established.

2.4. Existing relationships between significant changes in value orientation structures on the one hand and corresponding changes in school performance and other relevant personality traits on the other hand are demonstrated with the aid of so-called process correlations.

3. Finally, implications for the subject-adequate analysis of value orientations are discussed.

Werner Hennig

The personality barometer as a standardized instrument of sociological research

1. Empirical data on single attitudes or other separate sides of personality are quite valuable findings for the purpose of a study. But their theoretical and practical utility can be increased considerably by integrating each single finding into personality, into its structure, in other words by adopting the principle of personality.

2. Naturally, the integration of single personal variables into personality cannot include each and every side of personality in their structural relatedness. Practicable and appropriate is their integration into the core of personality. From our point of view it comprises the life aims, value orientations and action competence of a young person. Paying attention to these personal variables is in our opinion a major step towards realizing the personality principle. Another step is the inclusion of associated variables such as interests, satisfaction with the various sides of life organization and with oneself, one's real behaviour and important living conditions (housing, possessions).

3. A battery of indicators was elaborated for every core and associated variables. The eight batteries as a whole represent a standardized personality barometer. It guarantees comparable studies of different working groups. Being used as a constant part of the inquiry programme it may be completed by a variable part aiming at topical problems. It analyses the different sides of personality and, in particular, their interrelations.

Kurt Starke

Life values of students

Life values and life aims have been central subjects of youth research right from the beginning. This also refers to student research which (in a more sociological approach) investigates students as a part of youth and future intelligentsia and (in a more psychological approach) follows the personality development of studying young people. The first large investigation of the ZIJ among students STUDENT '69 was titled "Living conditions and attitudes towards life among students". It proved to be fruitful to retain this headline also for the following studies STUDENT '79 and STUDENT '89 and to use the large population (1500 - 6000 - 4000 students of different universities and colleges) for the multivariate analysis and for comparisons between subpopulations as well. In our two interval studies of students in 1970 (SIS) and in 1982 (SIL) the development of attitudes towards life can be followed in the course of studies and well into occupational life of each particular population.

Theoretically, we start from the fact that attitudes towards life are formed in the course of previous individual development, in the active personality's tackling demands as well as under specific, historically concrete conditions and that they determine the actual and future behavior. Within the interrelationship of cognitive and estimative factors attitudes towards life represent "coagulated" life experiences. Life values in the form of life aims can at the same time be regarded as anticipation. This is an important basic approach, since the researcher's view is not only directed towards the previous life of students but also towards their future. The life aims (which are interwoven with each other) are of different ranges. In the sense of life designs occupation/work, family and one's own self-realization in a given societal background are particularly dominant. Obvious anticipations of college or university freshmen are expectations towards and plans for their studies. Towards the end of studies, the later employment comes to the fore. The actual behavior is - to a smaller or larger extent with each student - determined by these anticipations.

Our investigations indicate that the various life values do not exist without any connections but dispose of characteristic correlations. These correlations are the result of objectively existing relations between the attitude objects on the one hand, and the subjective processing of these interrelations, on the other hand. The individual processing and structuring depends on the individual student and leads to distinct personality profiles. Within the context of other life values, individual life values are developed differently and become relevant for behavior to a different degree. Examples for this are the identification with one's subject of studies, the life value of science and the interest in technology. By means of our studies we are able to demonstrate how the value orientations connected with this are formed and gain importance for the routine of studies.

Attention has to be paid to the conditions and particularities of the student's development. The body of students exists within a historically concrete space and the development of the student's personality takes place under concrete conditions in history. These conditions are changing, thus contributing to the characteristic features of each generation of students. Sociologically, this refers to the students as a whole (generational particularities - mentality sequences), but it is also essential to the individual development: dynamics and differentiation of personality development increase; individual conditions and situations in life come to the fore; different personality profiles develop and gain societal interest. Youth research - just like all sociological research - faces an increasing dynamics of developmental conditions and thus also of value orientations among young persons.

Life values are of different autonomy. At the same time, they are related to real life activity, in particular to the main activity, which for students is their studies. Without investigation into the main activity meaningful statements on life values can hardly be made. In recent years, student research has increasingly dealt with achievement development during studies. Achievement (as a process and as a result) is an expression of the personality's level of development (and not of a special, isolated disposition),

and achievement is a life value in itself.

With respect to the achievement-oriented personality development of students youth and student research follows such concepts as:

- scientific learning, not only a mere reproduction of known facts
- optimum instead of maximum achievement during studies
- orientation towards the promotion of strong points or potentials instead of the reduction of weaknesses/ filling of gaps/ avoidance of mistakes
- the individual promotion and stimulation of each single student instead of an élite-like, sophisticated promotion of the most proficient ones
- partnership between university teachers and students instead of a patriarchal educator-subject constellation
- a direct theoretical and practical confrontation of the students with the matter of their subject instead of an overloading with metaknowledge and eclectic treatment of exam knowledge alien from life or science
- personal activity, not only re-activity
- a creative, politically far-reaching, responsibility-loaded motivation instead of the conditioning of mediocrity and good behavior.

Our future research will focus three main points:

Firstly, the profile of students of the nineties, their changed mentality interrelated with living conditions and attitudes towards life and trend analyses on this problem. Secondly, the efforts to make the studies more efficient. And thirdly, the course of individual development of students and graduates. This is due to the concept of individualization of studies and involves a stronger promotion of each individual student.

