

COHORTS AND THE TRANSITIONS TO DEMOCRACY
IN GERMANY AFTER 1945 AND 1989*

by

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ABSTRACT

According to Mannheim's theory of generations, major historical events shape the views of cohorts who come of age in those times. However, social scientists have not often found correspondingly clear cohort- or period-cohort effects. One major confirmation of Mannheim's theory was previous research that showed strong period-cohort effects on attitudes toward Nazism and democracy in West Germany after 1945. Several factors may have been responsible for producing these exceptional findings: (1) The generating event, Nazism, was much "stronger" than most and was surrounded, before and after, by much different events. (2) The event was concentrated in a relatively short 12-year period, and its effect was thus focused on a small number of birth-years. (3) Unless the survey questions referred specifically to the generating events, the effects were not strong. (4) If attitudes were measured too long after the generating event, subsequent events reduced the cohort effects (this is the "period" portion of the period-cohort effect). The present paper compares the post-1989 period in eastern Germany to the post-1945 period in western Germany. Since arguably, (1) East German communism was a "weaker" generating event than Nazism, (2) it was more spread over time, (3) it is harder to ask focused questions about communism than the personalistic Nazi regime - and despite the fact that (4) attitudes were measured almost immediately after the fall of the regime - cohort and period-cohort effects were not expected to be as strong in post-1989 eastern Germany as in post-1945 western Germany.

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INTRODUCTION

In his influential essay, "The problem of generations," Karl Mannheim ([1928] 1952) argued that generations come into being when birth cohorts experience especially striking historical events at the time they come to social and political maturity in late adolescence or early adulthood.¹ These historical events shape the cohort's outlook even after the formative historical period has passed, and the cohort's identity of views and distinction from other cohorts creates a "generational consciousness" that competes with the consciousness of other group ties, like class consciousness.

Structural functionalists like Eisenstadt (1956), Parsons (1963), and Davis (1940), by contrast, have argued that generational differences or conflicts arise from differences in personality development or status across the life-cycle (see literature reviews in, e.g., Spitzer 1973; Bengtson, Furlong, and Laufer 1974; Fogt 1982). Generational differences can arise if social (economic, political) conditions do not permit rising generations to be integrated into the social (economic, political) order, and thus block their movement through normal life-cycle stages.

While Mannheim's arguments do not contradict the structural functionalists at every point, much subsequent debate and research has crystallized around the corresponding contrast between cohort (or period-cohort) effects and life-cycle (or "age") effects.² Mannheim's model, which emphasizes the interaction between cohort

¹Some of the first part of this paper summarizes or repeats arguments and analyses published earlier as Weil 1987.

²Part of this debate involved the attempt to disentangle age, period, and cohort effects (see, e.g., Ryder 1965; Mason, Mason, Winsborough, and Poole 1973;

(generation) and historical period, has been more influential in empirical research on social and political attitudes - and increasingly so. Yet despite researchers' preference for cohort or period-cohort explanations, most rigorous empirical studies (of, e.g., secularization, political alignment, participation, alienation) have not been able to rule out age effects entirely. To cite only one example out of a voluminous literature, Delli Carpini (1986, p. 323) found mostly cohort and period-cohort effects, but concluded that "aging has an independent effect on the development of most political attitudes, opinions, and behaviors," including alienation, ideology, voting turnout, and partisan strength and direction.

Yet if they prefer Mannheim's theory, why have researchers not been able to find more persuasive evidence that cohort or period-cohort effects are more important than life-cycle effects? An answer is suggested by reconsidering Mannheim's basic proposition. He argued that generational consciousness is shaped by historical events that occurred at the time of the cohort's socialization. This proposition implies several important corollaries. (1) The historical event must be sufficiently "strong" or impressive and also sufficiently different from prior and subsequent events. If the event does not strongly contrast from what went before and after it, its impact on cohorts will not be very distinctive. (2) The historical event or change must be sufficiently concentrated in time. It is difficult to measure cohort effects of events that last a long time because they affect so many cohorts. A concentrated event will produce an enduring "spike" in the cohort curve, and an abrupt historical change will produce a lasting "step function." By contrast, a gradually changing historical condition will produce a simple slope in the cohort curve that is mathematically difficult to distinguish from life-cycle or period effects. Thus, "strong" short-lived events or abrupt changes produce the most easily recognizable cohort effects. (3) One must measure cohort effects with appropriate indicators that are clearly related to the formative historical experience. The vaguer or less appropriate the indicators, the less likely that divergent generational views can be detected. Finally, (4) cohort effects may have to be

Fienberg and Mason 1979; Markus 1983; Mason and Fienberg, eds. 1985). Methodological advances depended on the insight that each of the three effects is a linear combination of the other two, and solutions centered on methods for constraining parameters in underdetermined models. And "conscious compromises" reminded us that this methodology is inherently an accounting approach. One was urged to derive models closely from theoretical concerns and to leave theoretically uninteresting variables out, while still watching for their possible effects.

measured sufficiently soon after the generating event. Assuming that experiences later in life can at least partly counteract early socialization, the persistence of generational consciousness will vary inversely with the strength or impressiveness of subsequent historical events. If later events overtake the former, then cohort views will tend to converge.

Perhaps studies have failed to find clearer cohort or period-cohort effects because some of these conditions were not satisfied. Some of the best investigations of generational change have focused on the effects of the New Deal on partisan realignment (Burnham 1969), the effects of peace and prosperity and/or struggles over civil rights and the Vietnam War on the values of the "1960s generation" (Inglehart 1977; Delli Carpini 1986), the effects of a regime change on the establishment of a new party system (Converse 1969), or the aftereffects of fascism on various attitudes in Italy (Barnes 1972). But these events may not be sufficiently impressive or concentrated in time - or their effects may be measured too late or with inappropriate indicators - to find much larger cohort or period-cohort effects than life-cycle effects.

Germany: Cohorts and the Transitions to Democracy

One clear example of a historical event that satisfies all these conditions is the Nazi regime in Germany. Indeed, it was one of the aims of that regime to reshape the outlooks of new generations by means of concentrated socialization and propaganda efforts. And it was sufficiently short-lived and sandwiched by two democratic regimes that we can look for its impact on a single, bounded cohort. If Mannheim's theory holds true, we should be able to find cohort effects among the cohorts that came to political maturity under that regime, for at least some time after the transition to democracy. But if the Bonn democracy has been as successful as it appears, then this residual cohort effect should have been overcome by subsequent events some time after the regime change, and the views of the cohorts should have converged.

Numerous studies have investigated the growth of popular support for democracy in Germany since the end of World War II (e.g., Verba 1965; Boynton and Loewenberg 1973, 1974; Conradt 1974, 1980, 1981; Greiffenhagen and Greiffenhagen 1979; Greiffenhagen 1984; Noelle-Neumann and Piel, eds. 1983), and many others have examined generational change in German values and political orientations (often in a comparative perspective: e.g., Jennings 1976; Allerbeck 1976, 1977; Inglehart 1977; Baker 1978; Barnes and Kaase, et al. 1979; Baker, Dalton and Hildebrandt

1981). However, most of the former works concerning the legitimation of democratic political institutions concentrated on aggregate changes in the population in the early decades of the Bonn Republic, without focusing on cohort effects at that time. And most of the latter studies on generations and values concentrated on the post-mid-1960s cohorts. But besides often finding that older citizens were more conservative, most of these latter studies were not able to isolate specific socialization effects of the Nazi regime. To be sure, it has been recognized for some time that the young generations after 1945 maintained a residual attachment to the Nazi regime and skepticism about democracy (Merritt and Merritt 1970, 1980), but most studies did not attempt to pinpoint the effect with the "Nazi cohort," investigate any convergence of this cohort with others in subsequent years, or put the findings into the context of the age-period-cohort debates.

Only a few studies focused directly on post-Nazi or post-fascist cohort effects. Though they provided support for a cohort or period-cohort interpretation, they still tended to be inconclusive. Boynton and Loewenberg (1973, 1974) discussed age differences in support for Nazism, monarchy, and democracy in West Germany over time from the early 1950s. They found initial differences and subsequent convergence between age groups, but since they did not explicitly aggregate by cohort groups, their findings made precise conclusions a little difficult. I re-examined some of the same, and some additional data with different methods and partly reconfirmed Boynton and Loewenberg's findings, but the support was somewhat fragmentary and incomplete (Weil 1981, 1982). Age was explicitly recoded into cohort groups with time-series data, and some indications were found of higher support by the "Nazi cohort" for Hitler or a new Nazi party in the early 1950s (but not later). But the statistical significance was marginal, especially when other variables were controlled for. However, clear cohort effects did emerge by the middle or late 1960s for a number of liberal values - but not for regime preference. Taken together, these findings did not provide strong evidence for cohort effects resulting from the Nazi regime. And in an analysis of a 1968 Italian survey, Barnes (1972) found virtually no effects of a fascist generation on affect scores on various objects (left, right, religious), party identification, policy preferences, or ideological self-placement. But there were slight cohort effects visible among better educated, especially among those socialized early in the fascist period (see Klingemann and Pappi 1972, for a similar finding in West Germany). Noting that fascist influence may not have survived the postwar period until 1968, he wrote, "It is probable

that extensive resocialization has taken place. The disruptions and discontinuities of the war and postwar period undoubtedly facilitated this... In highly stable systems such as the United States and Great Britain, the effects of the Great Depression are visible in partisan identification even today. In periods of rapid change and dislocation, however, the socialization experiences of youth may not provide secure guides to action and thus may be superceded" (Barnes 1972, p. 56).

However, in an article published several years ago (Weil 1987), I demonstrated that strong cohort and period-cohort effects could be identified in post-Nazi West Germany by using more appropriate indicators measured at an appropriate historical period. The present paper extends this research by comparing the post-Nazi period in West Germany to the post-Communist period in eastern (and western) Germany. The following section describes the data used in this study; the second following section describes the post-1945 findings (see Weil 1987 for statistical analysis); and the third following section analyzes surveys conducted since 1989.

THE DATA: SOURCES AND INDICATORS

The data reported on here were collected as part of several research projects on the development of popular support for liberal democracy in European countries and the United States, focusing on countries that were formerly non-democratic. Only German data will be discussed and analyzed here. Most of the data prior to 1989 were assembled from survey archives and publications. Many of the post-1989 data come from surveys commissioned by the author.

For the archival data, an attempt was made to locate and organize a quite extensive body of opinion survey data. Several steps were taken to assure the most comprehensive possible location and acquisition of data, of which the most important were these. First, major published sources of survey results were searched for relevant items. This includes compilations from survey organizations themselves (especially the Allensbacher Jahrbücher and the regular publications of the International Gallup Poll), journals specializing in opinion surveys, and previous, related studies. Second, several archives (the Roper Center Archive, the ESRC Data Archive in Essex, and the Zentralarchiv in Cologne) were visited and searched by the author and commissioned to search their holdings for relevant items. And third, in the course of several research visits (the academic years 1978-79, 1984-85, 1991-92, and several shorter stays), a number of survey organizations were visited, their archives searched, and data

acquired (primarily the Institut für Demoskopie in Allensbach and Gallup's Emnid Institut in Bielefeld). The data located in this search were assembled and organized using data-base programs on microcomputers. An effort was made to obtain a number of original data sets for secondary analysis, mostly from the Roper archives in this case, but very considerable reliance was placed on published or archived bivariate tables (breakdowns), for reasons of cost and because in some cases, the original data no longer exist.

For the post-1989 period, two surveys were commissioned by the author and conducted in eastern and western Germany by the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach in September 1991 and December 1992. The Allensbach Institut also included questions for the author in an April/May 1990 survey in eastern Germany. The raw data sets are being analyzed by the author. In addition, detailed break-down tables were available for an Allensbach survey in eastern Germany in February/March 1990 (only months after the fall of the Berlin wall) and for an EMNID survey in eastern Germany in September 1990. Marginals and break-downs for many other surveys since 1989 have been examined on a less systematic basis and provide background for the interpretations given here.

The dependent variables were selected partly on the basis of the archival search, and partly on the basis of extensive validation analysis. For the post-1945 period, eight survey questions were thought to be especially appropriate, and their full texts (translated into English) are given in Appendix A. Dimensional testing for the 1951-1979 period in West Germany (described in detail in Weil 1981) suggested several conclusions. (1) It is possible to identify a "Regime Form" dimension or factor, running from preference for a Nazi regime to preference for a democratic, parliamentary regime. (2) The items in Appendix A that could be tested (items 2, 5, 7, 8) tend to group with each other in this factor, but questions explicitly about the old Nazi regime load higher than general questions about democratic institutions. And (3) this factor is distinguishable from several others (especially conflict understanding/tolerance and partisanship), and is only moderately correlated with them. The remaining variables in Appendix A (items 1, 3, 4, 6) could not be entered into these tests because the original data no longer exist, but they seem thematically so similar to those tested that they have been used as valid indicators below. Another reason to take these variables as valid indicators is that opinion change on these questions tended to parallel a great many other, similar questions (time-series data for

most other questions were not as satisfactory as for those reported here: see Weil 1981 for a fuller discussion). On most indicators, sympathy for the old Nazi regime declined - and support for the new democratic regime symmetrically rose - by about one percentage point per year over the whole post-war period. And in the majority of cases, the most rapid change came before the end of the 1950s and reached consensual levels by the mid-1960s. Dimensional testing for post-1989 data has not yet proceeded as far, but preliminary indications suggest that certain questions are more central to the question of regime change.

Cohort is defined in terms of the historical period in which the respondent reached "political maturity," arbitrarily set at age 21: since Germany has had so many regime-forms in this century, the cutting points easily suggested themselves as before 1918 (the Second Empire), 1918 to 1932 (the Weimar Republic), 1933 to 1948 (the Nazi regime and its aftermath), 1949 to 1965 (the Bonn Republic until the Grand Coalition), 1965 to perhaps 1985 (when the Soviet hold on eastern Europe began to weaken under Gorbachev's policy of perestroika), and since 1985. In the surveys used here it was not always possible to use these cut-points precisely since age was already aggregated into several-year groups, but in most cases the imprecision is not great.

Two final technical points must be made regarding the analyses below. First, all percentages and tables are based on full samples, with the non-responses and don't-knows included in the percentage bases, unless otherwise indicated. And second, the question formulations of time-series data are always identical, with minor exceptions clearly indicated.

ANALYSES

West Germany after Nazism

According to the hypotheses developed here, the effects of Nazi socialization should be detectable for some time after the transition to democracy, but not indefinitely, in certain opinions of the generations raised under Nazi control. In terms of the models discussed, this constitutes a period-cohort effect, since a phenomenon is visible in a given cohort over time, but also shrinks over time.

A graph of such a phenomenon should have a characteristic shape, just as age effects or age-period effects should produce graphs with different characteristic shapes. Let us make the simplifying assumptions that the effect we are looking for is restricted to one cohort or age group and that the time period is longer than the age- or

cohort span (see the arguments in the sections above). If we graph opinion by cohort, with separate curves for each year and with the cohorts held in a constant position vertically (not staggered), then we should get graphs for the different possible effects like those in Figure 1, which can be described as follows:

Figure 1 About Here

1. A period-only effect should produce flat curves across cohorts, parallel for the different years. See Figure 1a.
2. An age-only effect should produce curves with a peak or valley moving across later cohorts over time, but otherwise with the different years superimposed on each other. See Figure 1b (the years are not completely superimposed in the figure for the sake of legibility).
3. A cohort-only effect should produce curves with a peak or valley remaining on one cohort and with the different years superimposed on each other. See Figure 1c (the years are not completely superimposed in the figure for the sake of legibility).
4. A period-age effect, with the age effects shrinking over time, should produce parallel curves for the different years, with a peak or valley moving across later cohorts and also growing smaller with subsequent years. See Figure 1d.
5. A period-cohort effect, with the cohort effects shrinking over time, should produce parallel curves for the different years, with a peak or valley remaining on one cohort and also growing smaller with subsequent years. See Figure 1e. This is the hypothesized effect.

In the present case, then, we should expect to find inverted U-shaped curves across cohorts shortly after the regime change, with the cohorts socialized under Nazism expressing residual adherence to the Nazi regime and lagging in support for a democratic regime, relative to younger and older cohorts. This should give way in later years to a flattening out of the curve across cohorts - together with a rise over all cohorts of rejection of Nazism and support for democracy. Such a set of curves would leave little room for a life-cycle interpretation.

Figures 2 through 9 About Here

This is just the pattern we find for most of the variables, shown in Figures 2 through 9. During the first post-Nazi decade, the "Nazi cohort" was a good deal more pro-Nazi on many variables, but this pattern virtually disappeared thereafter. Data for these variables begin in 1951, but a number of surveys conducted in occupied western Germany in the late 1940s show the same pattern (see Merritt and Merritt (1970, pp. 100, 171, 176, 240). The young at that time were more likely to give anti-democratic answers on a scale (1946), to say that National Socialism was a good idea badly carried out (1947), to be more pessimistic about the future after the fall of the Nazi regime (1947), and to give more anti-Semitic answers (1948). The Merritts reported a quantitative difference for only one of these surveys from the 1940s (whether Nazism a good idea), but it was in line with the data from the 1950s. In general, the sooner after 1945 the survey was conducted, the greater was the generation gap between the "Nazi cohorts" and the rest of the population. But a decade after the war, after the mid-1950s, the "Nazi cohort" had almost completely caught up with the rest of the population in their rejection of the old regime and support for democracy.

To some extent, as suggested earlier, it may depend on how central to the theme the dependent variable is whether such an effect emerges. And the results provide striking confirmation for this supposition. The most pronounced effects appear on the most direct expressions of approval of the former Nazi regime: "There was more good than evil in Nazism" (Figure 2), "if not for the War, Hitler would have been one of the greatest German statesmen" (Figure 3), "would vote for a man like Hitler again" (Figure 4), "an authoritarian or Nazi regime is the best for the Germans" (Figure 5), and "would favor an attempt by a new Nazi party to come to power" (Figure 6).

As one moves away from the core issue, the effects weaken. Thus, similar patterns appear on some - but not all - questions of disapproval of the new Parliamentary institutions: "the Parliament in Bonn is only fair or poor as the representative of the people" (Figure 7), and "Parliament is not needed" (Figure 8). The cohort effects on these questions are somewhat less pronounced or more irregular than on the direct questions about Nazism. On the former question there is even a partial reversal of the cohort pattern in the early 1980s. Here, although a "Nazi-cohort" effect is still visible, the younger cohorts also express higher levels of disapproval of Parliament. But this result does not justify concluding that the post 1965 generation is less liberal democratic. A wide variety of other studies shows that on most questions, this cohort expresses more, rather than less, adherence to democratic institutions and liberal values (e.g., Kaase 1971; Weil 1981, 1982; Bürklin 1980). For this reason, it probably makes more sense to interpret the post-1965 cohort's low level of support as an expression of a critical attitude: that the Bonn Parliament is not living up to its purportedly democratic ideals. This critical orientation toward performance among the young is also well documented (see, e.g., Weil 1985b).

The pattern is somewhat weaker again for the question whether there should only be one party (Figure 9). Here there appear to be several historical cohort patterns. In the 1950s, the younger cohorts are monotonically more in favor of a one-party system. The curve as a whole falls over the course of the late 1950s and early 1960s, but the younger cohorts move quickest, and the curve flattens out. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the younger generations have moved decisively ahead of the old in the rejection of anti-democratic opinions, and the curve of preference for a one-party system now slopes downward across the younger cohorts. But by the late 1970s, the older cohorts catch up with the younger in rejecting one-party government, and the curve flattens out again with only negligible percentages of respondents of any cohort giving anti-democratic responses. These curves for a multiparty system bear a relation to those previously examined, since the younger generations apparently show the effects of Nazi socialization early in the Bonn Republic. However, they do not support the hypotheses as well as the other curves because (a) not only the "Nazi cohorts", but also the youngest cohorts give the highest anti-democratic opinions in the 1950s. That is, the curve is not U-shaped, but rather monotonic. And (b) the shift away from this initial pattern comes about five to ten years later than for the other variables we have examined. On the other hand, one could still interpret these curves as period-cohort

and socialization effects: the post-war cohorts showed less adherence to anti-democratic values during their youth than the older cohorts, and thereby demonstrated more flexibility in adopting the positive values of the new regime. Again, then, a question that only obliquely concerns Nazism reveals a similar, but less clear, cohort pattern to questions directly about Nazism.

Taken together, these results provide striking support for all four aspects of the central hypothesis. First and second, they show that a sufficiently (a) impressive and (b) concentrated historical event - Nazism - produced effects concentrated in the cohort that came to maturity at that time. The "Nazi cohort" showed greater residual support than did older or younger cohorts for the Nazi regime and weaker support for the new democratic regime shortly after the transition. There were no signs of independent life-cycle effects. Third, the results show that this cohort effect was superseded by the influence of subsequent historical events, for after the initial period the "Nazi cohort's" views converged with those of other cohorts. One can argue that this pattern reflects the overcoming of this cohort's Nazi socialization by the influence of the subsequent democratic regime. And fourth, the results suggest that in order to measure such cohort or period-cohort effects, one must use the most appropriate indicators: questions about Nazism or Hitler produced the clearest patterns, while questions about closely related matters (parliamentary institutions) produced less clear patterns. The first set of variables relate directly to the substance of the "Nazi cohort's" socialization; the second set relates less directly.

However, there was no variation on the first two aspects of the hypothesis. The Nazi regime was a "strong" and temporally concentrated event, but no other regime change was examined. It would be useful to introduce some variation on these points.

Eastern Germany after Communism

The fall of the Berlin Wall and eastern Germany's transition to democracy provide an opportunity to consider the lasting effects of another regime in the same country (albeit a different region). According to the four corollaries to Mannheim's hypothesis, we should expect to find weaker cohort effects in eastern Germany after 1989 than in West Germany after 1945. First, the communist regime in East Germany arguably constituted a "weaker," less intensive historical experience than did Nazism. Repressive as the communist regime may have been, it nevertheless did not practice

genocide, maintain massive concentration camps, or lead the country into an aggressive, expansionistic world war. Second, the communist regime lasted longer than Nazism: it was less concentrated in time and affected more cohorts. Thus, it is less likely to produce a distinctive "spike" in the cohort curve. Possibly, as more time passes, a "step function" will emerge in the cohort curve, distinguishing cohorts socialized under communism from future cohorts socialized under democratic conditions. On the other hand, sketchy evidence suggests that Honecker's regime became increasingly unsuccessful by the mid-1980s in socializing East German youth in pro-regime socialist values (see Spiegel Spezial 1/1991, pp. 91-2; Noelle-Neumann 1991b, pp. 242-3). It is possible that (a) a step-function (or a "plateau") may already be visible distinguishing those successfully socialized under communism from those unsuccessfully socialized (and those socialized prior to communism), or (b) a gradually sloping cohort curve may exist which is difficult to distinguish from life-cycle or period effects. Third, it may be more difficult to find appropriate indicators to measure the persisting effects of communism than it was for Nazism. As we have seen, vaguer referents produce less sharp cohort effects. Compared to Nazism, communism was much less focused on the person of the leader, the German nation and the German people. Communism was more faceless, international, and oriented to an abstraction (class inequality). Moreover the cold war between communism and capitalist democracies provides a much less concrete referent than the Nazi's "hot" war. On the other hand, and fourth, opinion surveys were conducted of the eastern German population almost immediately upon the transition to democracy. Unless further archive research turns up age-breakdowns for the late 1940s, the earliest evidence of which I am aware stems from five to six years after the fall of the Hitler regime. As we have seen, cohort effects were often still strong, but they may have been even stronger immediately after 1945. Data from a few months after the fall of the Berlin Wall may reveal cohort effects that will disappear in subsequent years. But again, because the communist regime may have begun to fail to win the support of the population since the mid-1980s, measurements from the early 1990s may already be too late to detect strong cohort differences.

According to these hypotheses, we should again find inverted U-shaped curves across cohorts, with the cohorts socialized under the communist regime expressing residual support for communism and lagging in support for the democratic regime. But according to the same hypotheses, these inverted U's should be flatter and broader

because the generating event was "weaker" and longer-lived, and perhaps because the indicators cannot be as tightly focused on the former regime.

For the most part, this is the pattern we find - although it is perhaps even weaker or more blurred than expected. But before examining support for the old or new regimes, it will be useful to consider Germans' perceptions of general and economic conditions since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Initially, as surveys indicate (data not shown here), easterners believed that conditions had improved somewhat since the communist period, and they were very optimistic that this improvement would continue. They were also very happy about German unification. By contrast, westerners believed that things had declined for them, and their optimism about future improvements was muted. They were also initially quite happy about unification, but this evaluation began to decay after about a year (beginning in early 1991). By the winter of 1991-92 perceptions in both parts of Germany took a decided turn for the worse and continued to slide through the end of 1992. Back in the 1980s, about 40 percent of westerners believed that "conditions in Germany are cause for concern." This worried view began to rise sharply in both the east and the west, and by the end of 1992, over 80 percent of Germans in both the east and the west agreed with it. Fueling this pessimism was a series of disturbing developments that followed reunification: the beginning of an economic recession with growing distress in the East and anxiety in the West, a crippling public-sector strike, a rise of neo-Nazi activity, right-wing rioting, attacks on foreigners and minorities, substantial extreme-right protest voting, governmental paralysis on the question of political asylum - but also at the same time, massive pro-democratic demonstrations to protest extremism.

Figures 10 through 14 About Here

These growing concerns affected different cohorts or age groups differentially in eastern Germany, as shown in Figures 10 through 14. In the 1990 surveys, older easterners held only slightly more negative opinions than their younger compatriots. However, in the September 1991 survey, east Germans in the 45-60 age group were most pessimistic about the coming year, worried about their personal economic situation, unable to see much improvement since the old regime, concerned about conditions in Germany, and worried about German unification. It might be noted that this age group was most vulnerable to the increased lay-offs and forced early

retirements caused by business failures in the East. Younger workers could hope to find new work if the economy picked up, and workers over age 60 were more prepared for retirement, but older middle-aged workers believed they were unlikely to find work again. By the December 1992 survey, however, the 45-60 age group was less distinctive. Pessimism rose throughout the population, and in some cases, the oldest group became most worried. These findings about general and economic conditions may well reflect life-cycle effects rather than cohort effects because lay-offs affected older middle-age workers disproportionately. However, this possibility cannot be tested with age-period-cohort models over this short one-plus year period. Yet this finding should be kept in mind as we examine presumptive cohort differences in regime support: it may be that the patterns actually reflect economically-driven life-cycle effects. This possibility has not been empirically tested at this writing.

Figures 15 through 25 about Here

Figures 15 through 25 show cohort or age differences on a variety of political cultural questions, beginning with opinions about the former communist regime, continuing through questions about democracy, political freedom, and Nazism, and concluding with interest in politics. We have just seen that the 45-60 age group was often most pessimistic or worried about general and economic conditions. But this age group also represents the cohort that came to political maturity at a time when the communist regime's socialization efforts were perhaps most successful, roughly during its first decade and a half of existence (from 1953 to 1967).³ The next youngest cohort (the 30-44 age group) also came to political maturity at a comparatively successful period, prior to the onset of perestroika (from 1968 to 1982). Indeed, when U-shaped curves emerge, these two cohorts most often express positive sentiments toward the values of the communist regime and negative sentiments toward the values of the current democratic regime.

Thus, they were most likely to say that communism or socialism were good ideas that were badly carried out (Figure 15), that another regime form would be better than the present democracy (Figure 16 in 1991), that current problems cannot be solved

³That is, those who fell in this age group in the 1991 survey became age 21 in these years.

with democracy (Figure 17), that members of the German parliament do not represent the interests of the people (Figure 18), and that the parliament is not especially trustworthy (Figure 19 in 1991). Likewise, they are most likely to say that one cannot speak freely in Germany today (Figure 20 in 1991). And these cohort patterns in the east are not mirrored in the west, where there was no recent transition to democracy. However, the eastern patterns are generally nowhere near as pronounced or consistent, year to year or indicator to indicator, as were cohort effects in West Germany following the Nazi regime. Cohort effects do not appear at all for a number of similar indicators that are not shown here. And the cohort effects are reversed for two indicators that should measure attitudes toward the old regime well. The two cohorts socialized under communism were most likely to agree with the slogan, "Never again socialism" (Figure 21), and to believe that conditions in East Germany were not bearable, that they absolutely had to be changed (Figure 22). I can think of no clear cohort explanation for these latter findings. Finally, a question about the historical Nazi regime elicited cohort effects that seem traceable not to the communist regime, but rather, to the Nazi regime (Figure 23). Cohorts who came to political maturity prior to 1945 appear to be more sympathetic to Nazism in both eastern and western Germany - but more in the west.

One final question produced U-shaped age or cohort curves, whether one is interested in politics or not (Figures 24 and 25; similar results, not shown, were obtained for other questions of political efficacy and apathy). Lack of interest in politics is sometimes interpreted as an indication of withdrawal from, or rejection of, the current regime. Low interest in politics following a regime transition is often interpreted in this fashion (e.g., Almond and Verba 1963, Merritt and Merritt 1970). Thus, we should find that those who were socialized under communism are most alienated from the new regime and express least interest in politics. However, precisely those age groups in the east are most likely to express interest in politics; and the same age groups in the west mirror this pattern exactly. Despite the U-shape, this pattern does not seem to reflect cohort effects. On the contrary, it is commonly found in western democracies that political interest and engagement increases over the life-cycle until the onset of old age, when it falls off again. Figure 25 shows that this pattern has persisted in West Germany for twenty five years or more. Thus, these U-shaped curves probably reflect the most unambiguous life-cycle effects in the present data. But since the east and west parallel each other here as on no other indicator, this is perhaps the exception

that proves the rule. The inverted U-shaped curves for regime support in the east generally have no parallel in the west. The eastern patterns are probably cohort effects, even if they are weaker than those in the west after 1945. After all, this weakness was predicted by the hypotheses.

SUMMARY

In recent years, there has been a marked preference for cohort and period-cohort accounts of generational differences as against life-cycle accounts; but clear and unambiguous empirical support for these accounts has been rare. Such support is found in the present case. Perhaps the main reason for the especially clear findings here is that the phenomena studied are particularly well suited to measuring the effects. Mannheim's arguments imply that (1) the historical causes of generational consciousness (cohort effects) must be sufficiently strong, (2) the generating event or change must be sufficiently brief or rapid, (3) the cohort effects will persist only unless or until subsequent historical events overtake the earlier ones, and (4) indicators of cohort effects must be relevant to the historical events that generated them. All four of these conditions are truer in the present case than in most past studies. In most other cases, the historical events were not as impressive, or the indicators were not as relevant; and in at least a few cases (e.g., Barnes 1972), cohort effects were measured historically too late, after subsequent events had already overtaken the earlier ones. And finally, the historical period has often not been longer than the age or cohort spans, which has made it difficult to know whether all three are not moving "in parallel."

The present study compared German cohorts socialized by the Nazi regime after 1945 and cohorts socialized by the East German communist regime after 1989. The results showed that the "Nazi cohort" lagged initially in embracing the new West German democracy after 1945 (or 1949, when the Bonn Republic was established). This was most likely due to the socialization and propaganda they experienced under the Nazi regime. And their subsequent convergence with the views of other cohorts was most likely due to the performance of the new democratic institutions - and, of course, the economy and the constellation of international relations. This pattern is consistent with Mannheim's argument: there is a balance for those socialized under another regime between memories of the old regime and the experience of the new. If the past appears rosy by comparison, then support for the new regime may lag for a

long time and legitimation problems may develop. But if the present and future appear better, then generational "convergence" may be rapid.

Similar cohort patterns were visible in eastern Germany in the three years since the fall of the East German communist regime and the reunification with the democratic West German regime. However, the patterns were weaker. This difference was predicted and perhaps explained by the same four aspects of Mannheim's theory that were used to explain the strong West German results after Nazism. Since arguably, (1) East German communism was a "weaker" generating event than Nazism, (2) it was more spread over time, (3) it is harder to ask focused questions about communism than the personalistic Nazi regime - and despite the fact that (4) attitudes were measured almost immediately after the fall of the regime - cohort effects were not as strong in post-1989 eastern Germany as in post-1945 western Germany.

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Appendix A. Texts of Dependent Variables (English Translations)^a

1. When you consider everything, was there more good in the ideas of National Socialism or more evil? (More good, More evil, Don't know) [Source: OMGUS]
2. Everything which was built up from 1933 to 1938, and much more, was destroyed by the war. Would you say that, if not for the war, Hitler would have been one of the greatest German statesmen? (Yes, No, Other answer, Don't know)
3. If, as in 1933, there were again an opportunity to vote for or against a man like Hitler, how would you decide? (For, Against, Don't know) [Source: EMNID]
4. Which form of state is best for us Germans? (Open answers: coded Nazi or Authoritarian, Democratic, Monarchical, Other, No answer) [Source: EMNID]
5. Suppose a new National Socialist party tried to come to power. How would you react? Here are some possible answers:
 - I would greet and support such a party.
 - I would greet it, but wouldn't do anything in particular for it.
 - I wouldn't care.
 - I would be against it, but wouldn't do anything in particular.
 - I would do everything I could to prevent such a thing.
 - No answer.

[1951 variant: Supposing a new party - that is similar to the NSDAP - tried to come to power in West Germany, what would be your attitude toward it? (Card with alternatives - same as above)] [Source: OMGUS]
6. What do you think of the Bundestag in Bonn as the representative of the people? (Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Don't know) [Source: EMNID]
7. If one considers it entirely from the practical side, do we really need a Parliament in Bonn with all those representatives, or would things be all right without it? (Could do without, Need, Don't know)
8. Do you think it is better for a country to have one party in order to have the greatest possible unity, or several parties so that the different opinions can be freely represented? (Several parties, Not more than two or three parties, One party, No parties, No opinion)
9. Do you look forward to the next twelve months with hope or fear? (Hope, Fear, Skepticism, Undecided)

10. Generally speaking, what do you think of the present economic situation in Germany? And what do you think of your own present economic situation? (Good, Part Good, Part Bad, Bad, Undecided)
11. If you think back to the time when Germany was still divided, what do you generally think of the situation at that time? Tell me according to this ladder: Zero would mean that the situation in our part of Germany was very bad, and 10 would mean that the situation here was very good. Which number best expresses what the situation here was like back then? What is the situation like at the present time? Which number best expresses the present situation in our part of Germany?
12. Do you find that conditions in Germany today are cause for concern, or wouldn't you say that? (Cause for concern, No cause for concern, Don't Know)
13. Is the German reunification more an occasion for joy or concern for you? (Joy, Concern, Undecided)
14. Do you consider Communism [Socialism] to be a good idea that was badly carried out? (Yes, No, Undecided)
15. Do you believe that the democracy that we have in Germany is the best form of state or is there another form of state which is better? [Variant: excludes "which we have in Germany"] (Best Form of State, Another Better, Undecided)
16. If someone says, "We can solve the problems we have in the Federal Republic with democracy," would you agree or not? (Agree, Disagree, Undecided)
17. Do you believe that the representatives in Bonn first and foremost represent the interests of the populace or do they have other interests which are more important to them? (Interests of People, Other Interests, Undecided)
18. Please look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them. Is it a great deal, quite a lot, not very much, or none at all? [Parliament]

19. Do you feel that one can express his political opinions freely in Germany today, or is it better to be careful? (Can Speak Freely, With Restrictions, Better to be Careful, Undecided)
20. If someone demanded, "Never again socialism," would you agree or not? (Agree, Disagree, Undecided)
21. In your opinion, were the conditions in the DDR during the last years really quite bearable for the people there, or would you say that there absolutely had to be a change? [*In eastern Germany: When you look back to the last years in the DDR - were conditions there really quite bearable or would you say that there absolutely had to be a change?] (Were quite bearable, Absolutely had to change, Undecided)
22. A question about Hitler and National Socialism: Some say, if you disregard the war and the persecution of the Jews, the Third Reich was not so bad. Others say, the Third Reich was a bad thing no matter what. What is your opinion? (Nazism a Bad Thing, Nazism Not So Bad, Undecided)
23. Generally speaking, are you interested in politics? (Yes, Not Especially, Not At All)

^aNotes on Sources

Unless otherwise noted, surveys stem from the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach. Other survey sources are:

EMNID = EMNID [German Gallup] Informationen.

OMGUS = Office of Military Government, U.S. (American occupation forces in Germany after World War II).