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The Role of Culture in Social Development Over the Life Span: An Interpersonal Relations Approach

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Abstract

This article aims to illustrate the role of culture for individual development throughout the life span. First, theoretical approaches how culture affects the ontogenesis is presented, starting from early anthropological to recent eco-cultural and culture-informed approaches. Then, culture-specific conceptualizations of development over the life span are discussed, focusing on development in childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. Finally, we concentrate on selected areas of social development and report on recent studies on subjective theories, transmissions of values, and intergenerational relations. These studies are discussed as aspects of a more extended interpersonal relations approach to development within culture.

Introduction

This paper is based on several assumptions. The first is that human development starts before birth and ends with death. Therefore, a life span perspective is needed. The second assumption is that human development takes place in a given cultural context; it is affected by culture and it affects culture. Culture and human development are constantly interacting. Therefore, a culture-inclusive life span view of human development is taken here. Such a view is still not common in developmental psychology which has mainly been advanced in Western cultures.

Historically, human development was seen as taking place in infancy and childhood, thus assuming that further development is not very interesting. Most personality characteristics (e.g., intelligence, social competence) were seen as fully developed by young adulthood without undergoing significant changes thereafter. With more refined empirical studies on human development it became obvious that individual behavior can significantly change until very old age (Baltes, Staudinger, & Lindenberger, 1999). Therefore, an important issue of modern developmental psychology is to study stabilities and change of human development over the life span.

Changes in human behavior over the life span include biological processes (e.g., hormonal production in puberty; biological changes in old age) which are interrelated with socio-cultural factors (e.g., changing social roles and "developmental tasks"; see Havighurst, 1972). The nature-nurture dichotomy has been shown to be implausible not only from a biological perspective on development (Lewkowicz, 2011) but also from a developmental psychological approach (Shonkoff & Philips, 2003). However, the role of the individual person who actively constructs his/her development in specific socio-cultural contexts has not gained sufficient attention in developmental research. The neglect of culture in present developmental research is astounding since even a historical perspective on changes of developmental tasks in a society such as the United States, clearly demonstrates significant differences among various cohorts. For example, the period of adolescence is extended, or the beginning of adulthood is no longer characterized by establishing a family, and leaving one's parents' house since marriage and parenthood is no longer a normative event in the life of an adult. Thus it is problematic to define a specific developmental age by reference to chronological age (i.e., the actual time-span from birth to a given date). The biological, the psychological, the social and finally the functional age, which comprises the formerly mentioned three aspects, need to be taken into account (see Katz, 2010). Regarding the role of culture in development, social age is most interesting here. Social age is defined by expectations of the socio-cultural group which role a person should play at a certain chronological age. The social meaning of age groups can change according to the "social construction" of age and development. In different cultures, similar life events might thus be defined as normative or non-normative, depending on the general expectations of society (see also Baltes, Reese, & Lipsitt, 1980). For example, studies on cognitive development demonstrate significant cohort differences related to effects of different schooling in different historical periods in the United States (cf. the Flynn effect; e.g., Flynn, 1984). These and other findings have

challenged traditional developmental methodology and have resulted in refined research designs combining cross-sectional, longitudinal, and time-lag methods (sequential testing) in order to disentangle effects of age, cohort and historical period (Baltes, 1968; Schaie, 1965). However, cross-cultural methods are rarely used. Another example in the same line of reasoning is that longevity, which is a result of scientific and medical advancement, occurs for an increasingly larger proportion of older adults and offers new options for development over the life span in technologically advanced modern societies. Accordingly, very old age has become a new phenomenon in developmental psychology which simply cannot be accounted for by a social constructionist view but is obviously affected by interactions between biological conditions and culture (Baltes & Smith, 1999).

Modern developmental psychology now goes far beyond infancy and childhood, and includes studies on adolescence, adulthood, and old age. Even intra-cultural comparisons based on data from different historical periods point to the impact of culture and of changing socio-cultural norms on development (Kagitcibasi, 2007). This also demonstrates that the conceptualization of human development, the areas of research in developmental psychology, and the understanding of development over the life course has changed significantly during the last century. Thus, a historical view of human development can demonstrate the influence of the socio-cultural context on the theorizing and research on human development. The question arises whether and in which ways human development itself undergoes changes in shifting socio-cultural contexts. However, a major shortcoming of developmental psychology is the neglect of culture in human development studies. Therefore, the present chapter deals with cultural issues in human and in particular social development over the life span.

Theoretical Approaches on Social Development in Culture

Given the relatively long tradition of conceptualizing relations between culture and psychology, the low importance of culture-inclusive studies in developmental psychology is especially surprising. Wilhelm Wundt, the founder of modern psychology, extensively elaborated on culture's effect on human behavior. Also, at the beginning of the 20th century, early anthropological research demonstrated relationships between culture, socialization practices, and child development. In his classic ethnographic study, Radcliffe-Brown (1964) analyzed observational data on Andaman Islanders in 1904; Malinowski (1922) studied Trobriand Islanders during the First World War. Since that time, cultural anthropology in the United States began to bloom. The famous "Culture and Personality School" emerged, partially initiated by Franz Boas. It was further advanced by Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, both searching for "patterns of culture" and their relation to personality characteristics. After the decline of the "Culture and Personality School," the "hologeistic" (whole world) approach followed. It was assumed that economic conditions influence child development. Barry, Bacon, and Child (1967) compared agricultural societies to hunting and fishing societies. In agricultural societies children learn more compliance, nurturance, and responsibility and less self-reliance and initiative as

compared to hunting and fishing societies. The authors base their conclusions on the analysis of data from 100 societies (from the Human Relations Area Files), which is characteristic of hologeistic approaches.

The underlying idea of these studies was that the socio-economic and cultural context gives rise to specific socialization conditions which influence the developmental outcomes of the child. In this simple eco-cultural model a direct influence of culture on the child was assumed. This was in contrast to the search for universals based on the assumption of biological factors influencing development. The underlying question was whether biological factors ("nature") or environmental factors ("nurture") are more influential. This question has dominated studies in developmental and cross-cultural psychology for many years.

A major problem of these early anthropological studies was the underlying assumption that relationships between context (socialization conditions) and developmental outcomes (personality characteristics) are unidirectional: the cultural context was seen as influencing child behavior. Little attention was paid to the processes underlying the influences, such as biologically-rooted conditions for learning in relation to influences of the environment and in relation to the needs and the ability of the child, or the individual differences with respect to ways the child internalizes cultural values or develops specific competences.

In the meantime, more refined theorizing has modified this simple eco-cultural model of development. Whiting and Whiting (1975) in their famous Six Cultures Study and more specifically Bronfenbrenner (1979) differentiated between various levels of contexts (e.g., micro-, exo-, and mesolevel), assuming that they are interrelated, and they affect and are affected by the individual development.

Different from the eco-cultural models (the simple and the refined), Super and Harkness (1997) suggest that the child grows up in a developmental niche which consists of three components: Physical and social setting, customs and child-rearing practices and caretaker psychology (i.e., parents' cultural belief systems).

Following the reasoning of Vygotsky (1978), development is understood as guided participation in cultural activity. Cultural values and parental beliefs are seen as part of the developmental context which can be changed by activities of the child. Direction and processes of relevant influences are not specified in this model.

Both the eco-cultural model and the model of the developmental niche have strengths and weaknesses which let us assume that an integrative model may be more fruitful (Trommsdorff, 2007; Trommsdorff & Dasen, 2001). Such an integration may be possible when taking into account context variables such as the socio-economic system, religion, the family system, and so forth with respect to their specific meaning for the relevant caretakers and the children.[1]

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[1]   As an example for these multiple perspectives on adolescent development in culture see Trommsdorff and Chen (2012).

Thus, the subjective representations and value orientations of the individual caretakers, their socialization practices, the child`s personality, and the quality of relations between the child and the caretakers become important. This integrative model of social development assumes that according to the meaning system of the context, human social development can follow different pathways. On the one hand, we have the developmental pathways of "symbiotic harmony" that refer to a continued striving for relatedness in parent-child relations from childhood over adolescence to adulthood in Eastern cultures, and on the other hand we have "generative tension" that refers to the specific processes of relationship renegotiation which are seen as typical in intergenerational relations in Western cultures (see Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000). These developmental pathways refer to the development of parent-child relations in cultures valuing interdependence versus independence (e.g., Japan compared to the US). Whereas in cultures of interdependence, relatedness is emphasized throughout development over the whole life span (while not ignoring autonomy), but in cultures of independence the focus is on the development of autonomy while not ignoring relatedness (Rothbaum & Trommsdorff, 2007).

Also, with respect to the question of which is more important, "nature" or "nurture," more refined studies starting in infancy and even before birth take genetic and environmental conditions and their interrelations into account (Plomin, 2000; Rowe, 1994). Typically, in behavior genetic research, interaction processes between mothers and their infants are observed over time, including measures of genetic factors, temperament, and various personality variables. This research and longitudinal studies on twins as compared to adopted children have demonstrated that empirical evidence does not show simple unidirectional influences of environment on developmental "outcomes." Instead, the active construction of development by the child has to be taken into account. Also, mutual interrelations between the individual and his/her environment build up even before birth (during pregnancy) and give rise to differential developmental paths (e. g., regarding resilience; Radtke et al., 2011).

The present approach starts from a specific conceptualization of culture, namely as a complex of variables which influence development, socialization and behavior of individuals but which are in turn also influenced by the human behavior (cf. Trommsdorff, 2007). The cultural context is seen here to provide certain options and restrictions for development, depending on cultural values and culturally shared ideas about desirable developmental outcomes and preferences for behavior (Trommsdorff, 2007; 2012a). At the same time it provides a shared meaning system, which allows the individual person to internalize certain cultural values and to develop adaptive competences (Trommsdorff, 2012b). The developmental outcome is affected to a certain degree by the given context depending on its meaning for the person and the person`s active modification of the context during his or her own development. Thus, possible universalities of human development which are based on biological processes may function in different ways according to the given cultural context and the related proximate contexts (e.g., the family) according to its respective cultural and subjective meaning.

While our perspective might be rather assigned to a cross-cultural approach – in contrast to a cultural psychological approach – we hold that both views have to be integrated in order to study social development of individuals in a comprehensive way. An integrative approach should, thus, not only account for differences between individuals of different cultural groups, but it should also consider the uniqueness of each individual's developmental pathway and biography within a culture (Zittoun et al., 2013). To summarize, one may see social development and context as being related to each other in ways that optimize the respective "goodness-of-fit" in a life-long process for each individual.

Culture-Specific Conceptualizations of Social Development at Different Stages of the Life Span

In considering culture-specific conceptualizations of social development over the life span, an initial noticeable approach is to search for culture-specific values of childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age. For example, in some cultures, **childhood** directly leads to adulthood without transitions such as the developmental stage of adolescence. In these cultures, children are continuously prepared to take adult roles, including having children of their own, as soon as their physical maturation allows (Greenfield, 2010; Super & Harkness, 1997).

Furthermore, the developmental tasks related to the different developmental stages obviously differ among cultures, and they can change in one culture over time. For instance, in some cultures children are free from any adult responsibilities. They are viewed as being part of heaven and God as historically was the case in Japan (Kojima, 1986). In other cultures, children are seen as economic resources for the parents and the family (Trommsdorff, Kim, & Nauck, 2005; Trommsdorff & Nauck, 2005). In Western societies, children are regarded as separate or independent and are conceived of as partners to their parents, or as little adults being responsible for what they are doing and making decisions for themselves; they are conceived of as having certain rights for which they receive institutionalized support. Early in life they acquire the need to be strong-willed and self-determined, as is the case in many industrialized Western cultures (Kuczynski, 2003).

Another example is **adolescence** which, as stated above, in some cultures simply does not occur because of the obligation to take over adult roles right after physical maturation. The end of childhood and beginning of adolescence is characterized in some cultures by extended (gender specific) rituals, separation of male adolescents from the family and integration in to the male peer group headed by an adult male leader. In other cultures, due to the increasing role of education, adolescence is a separate and sometimes difficult developmental stage which is extended relative to other developmental stages. It has also been proposed that – as the transition from adolescence to adulthood takes much longer today than in the past – a new stage of life can be described, namely emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Certainly, this life stage is more characteristic of

industrialized societies and can serve to illustrate the impact of the socioeconomic context on the structuring of the life span of individuals. Such cultural differences have been recently documented by Arnett (2012). Here, adolescence is characterized by a more or less prolonged "moratorium" which should allow the adolescent to develop a sense of identity in order to be able to fulfill adult roles later on. Some studies support the view that this period is characterized by "storm and stress" and emotional insecurity, contradicting other studies which did not find empirical support for the notion of adolescence as a period of crisis. A dominant view has been that adolescence is characterized by individuation as adolescents are striving for autonomy and independence from parents and for achieving developmental growth through relatedness with peers. However, cross-cultural studies show culture-specific relations between parents and their adolescent children and the adolescents' preference for independence and autonomy (Mayer & Trommsdorff, 2012) or the adolescents strategies of balancing the needs of autonomy and of relatedness towards parents (Albert, Trommsdorff, & Sabatier, 2011).

Adulthood is usually characterized by establishing a family, taking responsibilities as parents, and becoming active members of society (e. g., in economic production; in political institutions). However, cultures differ with respect to conceptualizing adulthood and related developmental tasks of adults; for instance, as far as responsibilities of adult children for their ageing parents are concerned (Schwarz, Albert, Trommsdorff, & Mayer, 2005). Also, social changes affect the gender role, and thereby have an impact on the family system including the conditions for child care and parent-child relations (e.g., Rehel, 2014).

The concept of **old age** is related to different age groups in different cultures, presumably depending on the "normal" life expectancy in a specific culture. As stated earlier, in many industrialized societies development over the life span is now extended into very old age. This is brought about by technological and social changes which give rise to increasing longevity as well as related changes in the roles of women and men, family systems, and developmental conditions such as health and well-being. Therefore, the concept of old age comprises different meanings in different cultures. Certain cultures pay a high degree of respect to the elderly who are conceived of as possessing "natural" legitimate authority and wisdom, and who are taken care of by the family. In contrast, in modern urbanized societies the nuclear family prevails and independence is highly valued; here the elderly prefer to be independent, relying on their own resources and/or the social welfare system. However, even among rather individualistic societies, differences in the preferences and ideas about intergenerational solidarity have been found (e.g., Hank & Buber, 2009; Motel-Klingebiel, Tesch-Römer, & von Kondratowitz, 2005). These studies have demonstrated higher norms of family obligations and intergenerational responsibilities for old age support in Southern European countries compared to Northern European countries. This again affects development over the life span and the related cultural context. For instance, culturally shared preferences might influence – and be influenced by – the availability of public care facilities.

Selected Aspects of Social Development in Culture in a Life Span and Interpersonal Relations Perspective

In the following, we will focus on a few selected areas which are of special importance for the study of human social development in culture from a life span perspective and interpersonal relations perspective. We will first discuss the role of culture for both the caretaker and the child, including goals and practices and their culture-specific meanings as parts of the developmental niche. Second, we will focus on the question of how the "developmental outcome" occurs; we will focus here on the intergenerational transmission of values as outcome, including the role of the relations between caretaker and the child as the socio-emotional basis for the process of transmission. Third, we will report on the interdisciplinary cross-cultural Value-of-Children study which aims to contribute to a better understanding of social development over the life span and has served as the basis for the development of the culture-informed model of intergenerational relations (Trommsdorff, 2006).

The Role of Culture for Caretaker and Child

Subjective theories and values of caretakers

Subjective theories of caretakers are often conceived of as ethno-theories reflecting the values of the respective culture; they influence the developmental goals (, e.g., characteristics that the child should develop) and the developmental time table (age at which the child should achieve certain abilities). Also, the behavior of the caretaker varies according to the caretakers' subjective theories (Goodnow, 1995). Therefore, cultural differences in such developmental theories and goals often occur (Friedlmeier, Schäfermeier, Vasconcellos, & Trommsdorff, 2008; Park, Trommsdorff, & Lee, 2012; Rosenthal & Roer-Strier, 2001; Trommsdorff, Cole, & Heikamp, 2012). These culture-specific theories, goals, and practices are part of the "developmental niche" of the child (Super & Harkness, 1997) influencing the child's development.

Our own cross-cultural studies on ethno-theories of German, Brazilian, and Korean caretakers have shown that caretakers' child-rearing goals depend less on their personal characteristics but rather on the norms and values of the society the caretakers are living in (Friedlmeier et al., 2008). Usually, caregivers' child-rearing goals and practices are part of the general goal to foster the development of qualities and attitudes which are needed to fulfill certain roles in the society successfully, or more specifically, in their relevant social subgroup.

For example, Japanese mothers believe in harmonious relations and emphasize cooperation, compliance, and empathy, while German mothers prefer the developmental goals of independence and individuality, therefore enforcing their child`s autonomy. In the case of conflict, Japanese mothers as compared to German mothers empathize with their child's needs and attribute their child's behavior to positive factors ("child is only a child") (Kornadt & Trommsdorff, 1990; Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003). Japanese mothers`

sensitivity fosters the establishment of a very close emotional bond with their child. On this "secure" basis the child can control negative emotions more successfully than is the case for German children (Friedlmeier & Trommsdorff, 1999; Trommsdorff & Friedlmeier, 1993, 2010).

These differences coincide with cultural values of social orientation in Japan and individuality in Germany. They are related to the individualism-collectivism dimension on the cultural level (Hofstede, 2001) and to differences in self-construals on the individual level (independence versus interdependence; cf. Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Also, these results are in line with several cross-cultural studies showing that the preference for independence is more pronounced in individualistic cultures while the preference for interdependence is more relevant in social-oriented cultures even though intra-cultural differences exist. A strict dichotomy suggested by these concepts (autonomy/relatedness; individualism/collectivism; independence/interdependence) is too artificial (Greenfield, 2010; Trommsdorff, 2012a). For instance, studies on changing societies (in transition from traditionality to modernity) show that both dimensions may be integrated (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Park et al., 2012). It can be assumed that the need for both autonomy and relatedness characterizes human development throughout the life span and allows for adaptation to social change and changing developmental tasks with cultural differences regarding their respective priority (Rothbaum & Trommsdorff, 2007).

Culture-specific perceptions of parenting

However, not only do the caretakers' beliefs and values differ between cultures, but cross-cultural research has also shown that the "same" parental goal or the "same" childrearing practice may have very different meanings in different cultural contexts. For instance, "independence" as a developmental goal may have the meaning that the child can take care of the younger siblings or the household duties without the help of the adult caretakers. Or, "independence" goals may mean that the child makes decisions on his/her own (e.g., with respect to choosing professional training or a marriage partner). The goal of "independence" can thus be related to the needs of the family or of the child (as a separate entity). Also, child-rearing practices have a different meaning depending on the cultural context. In Japan as a group-oriented culture, adolescents believe they are rejected by their parents when parents` conformity demands are missing and independence is demanded (Trommsdorff, 1995). This is in striking contrast to adolescents in Germany as an individual-oriented culture. They rather feel rejected in the case of parental conformity demands (Trommsdorff, 1995). However, in addition to these cultural specificities one may recognize a universal relationship: when parents` behavior is consistent with the general cultural values, children are more inclined to feel accepted and able to accept such parental behavior as is the case in a harmonious parent-child relationship.

Parent-child relations in a cross-cultural perspective

A central precondition for a harmonious relationship can be seen in attachment (e.g., secure, insecure, avoidant) which also constitutes a basis for interpreting the relation between oneself and the environment ("internal working model"). Relatively few cross-cultural studies have demonstrated universalities in the function and structure of attachment for child development and culture-specificities in the caretaker's behavior such as sensitivity (van IJzendoorn & Sagi, 1999). Our own studies show that measurements of mothers' sensitivity should include culture-specific functions, e.g., proactive and reactive behavior of mothers when interactiing with their child (Friedlmeier & Trommsdorff, 1999; Park et al., 2012; Trommsdorff et al., 2012; Trommsdorff & Friedlmeier, 1993, 2010). Several studies have also focused on the intergenerational transmission of attachment quality; however, it seems that parent-child congruence might not be the only outcome of this process as complementarity between different attachment styles of parents and children has also been found (see Lubiewska, 2013, for an overview).

Only a few cross-cultural studies on the relations between caretakers' beliefs, childrearing, and child development in different cultural contexts have been carried out. The notion of bi-directionality in parent-child relation dynamics (Kuczynski, 2003; Kuczynski, Marshall, & Schell, 1997) has rarely been taken into account in cross-cultural research. Systematic analyses of cross-cultural studies on parenting and child development show that bi-directionality is just one possible facet of the parent-child relation dynamic which can occur to a greater or lesser degree in certain cultures and can change in degree over the life span (Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003). One conclusion of these studies is that the relationship context (and its culture-specific meaning) has to be taken into account in order to understand bidirectional processes between parents and children, and its effects on child development.

Transmission of Values as a "Developmental Outcome"

The transmission of parents` developmental goals to the child has to be studied, because cultural values do not only affect parents` developmental goals and child-rearing practices but are also visible in values, beliefs, and behavior as part of the developmental outcomes of the next generation (Trommsdorff, 2009). .

The process of intergenerational value transmission

The intergenerational transfer of value orientations in families is subject to contextual, socio-developmental, and relational influences which are also termed as *transmission belts* (e.g., Schönpflug & Bilz, 2009). These factors can foster or hinder the transmission of values between family members.

The bulk of research of the last few years has focused on *relational* aspects that play a key role in the process of transmission, focusing on the effects of relationship quality and family climate (Roest, Dubas, & Gerris, 2009), parenting (Knafo & Schwartz, 2003; Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2004; Rohan & Zanna, 1996) or the role of emotions (Albert &

Ferring, 2012) as transmission belts. Studies in this line of research have often drawn from the two-step model of internalization brought forward by Grusec and Goodnow (1994) to explore how characteristics of the parent-child relation might impact the two steps that are deemed crucial for successful value transmission: 1) the offspring's accurate perception of a parental message and 2) the acceptance of this message by the offspring. Schönpflug (e.g., Schönpflug & Bilz, 2009) has added a further component in her filter model of transmission, arguing that the parental motivation to transmit a certain value might be equally important to encourage transmission.

As stated previously, parental goals and practices as well as the perception of these goals and practices by their offspring might differ cross-culturally. On this account, several studies have focused on cross-cultural comparisons of the effects of relationship quality or of parenting – as moderators or mediators – on parent-child value similarities. In a study comparing families with adolescents in Germany and France (Albert, 2007), positive aspects of the adolescent-mother relationship such as intimacy (i.e., self-disclosure) and perceived admiration, as reported by adolescents, enhanced adolescent-mother similarity only in Germany. Also, maternal acceptance was a mediator of the transmission of an interdependent orientation only in Germany; however, in both German and French families, maternal control mediated the transmission of collectivistic (family-related) values. Regarding adolescent-mother relations in the USA and Romania, Friedlmeier and Trommsdorff (2011) found that mothers and adolescent children shared similar collectivistic values when adolescents did not feel strictly controlled (i.e., maternal control was perceived by adolescents as low) in both countries; interestingly, a culture-specific direct effect of perceived maternal control on adolescents' individualistic values was found as well; namely, American adolescents were more individualistic if their mothers were perceived as more controlling, whereas a link in the opposite direction (although not significant) was found for Romanian adolescents. Apart from cross-cultural comparisons between countries, several further studies have examined relational aspects of intergenerational value transmission in the context of migration. For instance, Schönpflug (2001) has studied parenting as a moderator for the transmission of general values in Turkish families living in Germany and Turkey. She reported a stronger transmission of collectivistic values in son-father dyads when empathetic parenting was high and rigid-authoritarian parenting was low. Phalet and Schönpflug (2001) compared the process of intergenerational value transmission in Turkish families living in Germany with Turkish and Moroccan families living in the Netherlands. In the migrant families in both countries, the transmission of collectivistic values between parents and adolescents was mediated by parental conformity goals. Country-specific findings were reported in that only in Germany an intergenerational transmission of achievement goals was found. In a further study comparing adolescents from Russian migrant families with non-migrant families living in Israel (Knafo, Assor, Schwartz, & David, 2009), differences in the effects of certain parenting techniques on intergenerational value transmission were found. More precisely, adolescents' acceptance of parental values was enhanced by a parenting style supportive of autonomy and reduced by love withdrawal only in non-migrant Israeli families, whereas no effect of parenting on adolescents' acceptance of parental values was found for

Russian immigrant families. In sum, the reported studies found more similarities than differences between cultural groups, but they pointed also to culture-specific meanings and functions of certain parenting variables in the value transmission process. Comparing the transmission process in culturally more distinct contexts could possibly provide even clearer results. However, such studies have been rarely carried out so far.

The role of the socio-cultural context for intergenerational value transmission

Recently, research has started to focus more on the role of the *socio-cultural context* for intergenerational transmission of values in the family. In this regard, direct and indirect effects can be distinguished.

Direct context effects. Firstly of all, the socio-cultural context might have a direct influence on both parents' and their children's values. Boehnke (2001) introduced the term *Zeitgeist* to describe this influence, which he defined as the "current modal value climate" in a society; others have adopted the notion of *cultural stereotype* (e.g., Barni, Ranieri, & Scabini, 2012; Roest et al., 2009b; introduced by Cronbach, 1955) or simply speak of *shared social conventions* (Knafo & Schwartz, 2003). The influence of the *Zeitgeist* – as an empirically measurable variable – on value orientations of both parents and their children might thus be tested directly[2]. In fact, several recent studies have successfully distinguished between stereotype and unique similarity between family generations, demonstrating that at least a part of intergenerational value similarity can be explained by a shared value climate (e.g., Barni et al., 2012; Roest et al., 2009b).

Second, the socio-cultural context might also provide similar living conditions for children and their parents that influence the value orientations of both by producing similar needs and resources. As a typical example one might suggest the effect of status inheritance, meaning that children grown to adulthood might become part of the same social class as their parents (Glass, Bengtson, & Dunham, 1986). In a similar vein, Barni and colleagues (2012) found a higher value similarity between grandmothers and parents compared to parents and adolescents. This similarity vanished to a great extent when separating stereotype from unique similarity. Thus, a large part of the high similarity between grandmothers and parents was due to a shared cultural stereotype or due to similar living conditions in adulthood. Evidently, needs of (grand)parents and adult children might be more similar to each other than those of adolescents and parents. Therefore, when comparing the transmission of values between generations in different stages of life, such socio-developmental aspects have to be considered as well (see also Trommsdorff, Mayer, & Albert, 2004).

Indirect context effects. Family relations are embedded in a certain socio-cultural context that provides specific conditions for the transmission process. In this sense, relatively loose vs. rather tight cultures have been described where society might be more

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[2] Here, it should also be acknowledged that in different subgroups of the society there might be a specific *Zeitgeist*, such as in immigrant groups compared to host culture (e.g., Vedder, Berry, Sabatier, & Sam, 2009) or regarding groups of adolescents compared to the group of their parents (e.g., Barni et al., 2012).

or less tolerant regarding the endorsement of specific values and more or less strict regarding sanctions of behavior that deviates from social norms (Gelfand et al., 2011; Triandis, 1989). In line with this, socialization contexts can be characterized as somewhat broad vs. narrow (Arnett, 1995), the former context leaving parents more freedom of choice regarding which values they should transmit (or not) compared to the latter context that imposes certain constraints on families. It should be noted that the looseness-tightness dimension has to be distinguished from individualism-collectivism. Although one could be tempted to assume that individualistic cultures are characterized by a higher tolerance for value diversity, the very value of individualism might be less negotiable than expected. In fact, when exploring the role of the sociocultural context for the intergenerational transmission of values, the content of transmission and its specific valence in this context have to be taken into account.

From a theoretical point of view, one could postulate that values that are consistent with the culture-specific developmental pathway might be transmitted more effectively than other values (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003; Rothbaum et al., 2000). Several empirical studies support this assumption. For instance, Knafo (2003) reported in a study on value transmission in Israel that adolescents who visited school contexts that promoted values consistent with parental values (compared to low fit contexts) perceived their parents' values (as measured by the PVQ, Schwartz et al., 2001) more accurately and were more accepting of these values. Also, these families showed high parent-adolescent value congruence. Interestingly, in these families, parents and children not only had fewer value conflicts but they also discussed less about their values. In these high fit contexts, several socialization agents may thus transport the same message that has an impact on the children's value systems and ensures intergenerational value similarity, thereby reducing the transmission effort that has to be made by parents.

In contrast, Boehnke, Hadjar, and Baier (2007) have demonstrated a stronger parent-adolescent value similarity for those families that did not conform to the typical values of their sociocultural context. Thereby, they focused on hierarchic self-interest as a core value in modern societies. They propose that families that do not adhere to the general *Zeitgeist* communicate more compared to others about their value orientations, and they might therefore have a more distinct effect on the value orientations of their children. Also, focusing on the ten general value orientations as measured by the Schwartz Value Survey (Schwartz, 1992), Boehnke (2001) reported stronger similarities between German University students and their parents regarding those values that were less highly appreciated by the parents (such as hedonism, stimulation, power and tradition) compared to values that were more highly endorsed by them on average. A similar effect was demonstrated in our own cross-cultural study (Albert, Trommsdorff, & Wisnubrata, 2009), which compared intergenerational value similarities in two different cultural contexts that could be distinguished by their different adherence to individualistic vs. collectivistic values – Germany and Indonesia. Here, a stronger parent-child similarity (as measured by correlations between maternal and adolescents' values) was reported for Indonesian compared to German families as far as individualistic values are concerned. Whereas these values were highly shared in German families regarding mean agreement

levels (both with regard to importance ratings and homogeneity within the German sample), they were less clearly endorsed by the Indonesian sample as a whole. How can the stronger intergenerational similarities be explained that occurred for values that are less highly cherished within society? Parents may have a greater opportunity to express their personal ideas about values that are not common in a society and there might be a greater freedom to transmit personal preferences when no clear cultural norms and social conventions exist (see also Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). As Barni, Knafo, Ben-Arieh, and Haj-Yahia (2012, March) put it, in a value homogenous context families might provide a source of socio-cultural stability – here, little investment on the part of the family is needed to ensure transmission – whereas in a more value heterogeneous context the transmission of values that are specific to the family may be more successful, the family serving as source of socio-cultural change.

Regarding the direct and indirect effects of the socio-cultural context on intergenerational value similarities, two questions remain: firstly, how does a certain *Zeitgeist* or cultural stereotype develop and secondly, what are the stabilizing factors that make it prominent and more or less durable in a society? We propose the following explication: Value orientations that reflect the public opinion are transported via the media (such as tv, newspapers, internet), peers, schools or work contexts and are carried into families by parents and children. They might be discussed among family members, and subsequently be integrated into the family's value system. As often assumed, the family as primary socialization agent might thus have the lion's share in the process of value transmission; first by its unique effect on value orientations regarding family specific preferences, and second by reinforcing certain (but not all) culturally held values in line with the current value climate in a society (see also Mayer & Trommsdorff, 2012). Still, more research is needed to understand why some families share more values intergenerationally than others, and why some values persist in society and others not; These are questions that might be particularly interesting in societies that promote value diversity.

Methodological issues – variable-centered vs. dyad-centered approaches

When interpreting the effects of the sociocultural context as a condition for transmission, one should bear in mind the method of analysis used – variable-centered vs. dyad-centered (see Albert et al., 2009; Roest, Dubas, Gerris, & Engels, 2009b). A variable-centered approach focuses on single values and their similarities between parents and offspring. Results describe the whole samples of parents and offspring and do not refer to similarities between specific dyads. As the relative position of both parents and offspring in their respective group of parents and offspring is considered, results depend also on the sample distribution. Therefore, when focusing on a single value orientation in a variable-centered approach, in groups that are more homogeneous with respect to the adherence to this specific value, weaker similarities between family members could be due to lower variance in the sample (see also Hoge, Petrillo, & Smith, 1982; Roest et al., 2009b). Conversely, a higher variance in the sample might – at least partially – explain higher

correlations between parents and children in values that are not clearly prescribed in a society. Instead, in a dyad-centered approach, each dyad is regarded separately and independently from the sample distribution (Roest et al., 2009b). In this kind of analysis, parent-child similarity is often studied in terms of congruence between value profiles, thus considering the whole value system instead of single values. A higher congruence between parents and their offspring in more homogeneous contexts is conceivable, because most members of this context might share similar value hierarchies.

The implications of intergenerational value transmission

Beyond focusing on conditions and processes of intergenerational transmission, one should also look at the outcomes of transmission. What is "successful" transmission and what are its implications for intergenerational relations and well-being? Few studies have concentrated on these issues. In a recent study, Hadjar et al. (2012) examined the meaning of intergenerational value similarity regarding the 10 Schwartz values (Schwartz, 1992) for adolescents from migrant and minority families compared to majority families living in Germany and Israel. Their results showed that similarity between adolescents and their parents might promote well-being as far as families from the majority culture are concerned, whereas for adolescents' well-being from migrant or minority families, a low distance of their families' value orientations from the modal societal value climate seems to be more important. Albert, Ferring and Michels (2013) have focused on the role of intergenerational value similarity for intergenerational solidarity in migrant and non-migrant families living in Luxembourg. Their findings suggest that shared values regarding obligations and responsibilities toward family members are highly important for positive and supportive intergenerational relations; however, a relative similarity in values that allows for change between generations seems to be more important for intergenerational solidarity than absolute transmission. This is in line with claims by Barni, Rosnati and Ranieri (in press) who proposed in their theoretical approach to intergenerational transmission that continuity (instead of mere similarity) of values may be more important for intergenerational relations.

To summarize, at least four factors have to be dealt with when studying the transmission of values: (a) what kind of intergenerational relation and in which cultural context allows for the most effective transmission, (b) what types of values are best transmitted in a specific cultural context, and (c) in which age groups and generational constellations can transmission best be observed? – Asking these questions again points to the idea of "goodness-of-fit." More specifically, cross-cultural studies are needed to test whether the transmission of values between parents and children can be improved when related goals and behavior are in accordance with the prevailing cultural values and the needs of the interacting generations and when the intergenerational relationship is emotionally warm and close.

Value of Children and Intergenerational Relations

Research on cultural contexts, caretaker's ethnotheories, developmental goals, and practices may permit an understanding of how cultural values are transmitted to the next generation, affecting the child's development. This is the underlying idea of our present ongoing study on "Value of Children and Intergenerational Relations" (Trommsdorff, 2001; Trommsdorff & Nauck, 2005, 2006, 2010) which, however, goes one step further since it studies the relations between culture and development over the life span and across several generations. The starting point for this study was the original "Value of Children" (VOC) study in the 1970s. This large international study aimed to explain the conditions for differences in fertility and population growth throughout the world (Arnold et al., 1975). Differences in fertility have for a long time been seen as a result of economic conditions: Parents of low economic status were assumed to prefer a larger number of children (and prefer sons) because of economic needs and they were assumed to gain economic support by the children until old age. However, the economic value of children does not explain why children are born when families enjoy a high economic status. Other values besides the economic value of children should be relevant for the decision to have a child. Such values can be related to the intrinsic pleasure to have a child, or to take the responsibility for the development of a new human being, or to expect an intimate companion for later life.

While some research on parental ethnotheories has explicitly studied relations to child-rearing (e.g., Super & Harkness, 1997), this was less the case in the original research on the VOC which was mainly interested in explaining child-bearing (fertility). In a few studies, the economic and motivational conditions for child bearing have been related to the quality of child-rearing. For example, studies by Hoffman (1987) and Kagitcibasi (1996) in the context of VOC have demonstrated significant positive correlations between high economic value of children and high conformity oriented parenting. The next necessary step should be to study the function of parenting for the development of the children in different cultural contexts. Further, from a life span perspective later stages in the parent-child relation (as well as relations between non-adjacent generations, such as grandchildren and grandparents) have to be taken into account.

Our modified study on "Value of Children and Intergenerational Relations" is aiming to fill the respective deficits (Trommsdorff, 2001). Starting from an eco-cultural and developmental approach, a model is being tested which includes (1) the cultural values and socio-economic factors as **contextual factors**, (2) the **person variables** such as individual beliefs, attachment, and value orientations, (3) **the relationship variables** with respect to the child (including preferred child-rearing practices and investments in the child) and the parents (including given support). The relationships among these three aspects (context, person, parent-child relationship) are being studied for three (biologically related) generations: adolescents, mothers, and grandmothers. Originally, six cultures were included in the study (Germany, Israel, Turkey, Republic of Korea, China, and Indonesia), however, more researchers from all over the world have joined the project and a large data set (N = 16.461 participants) is now available from nineteen different countries

in four continents (Trommsdorff & Nauck, 2005, 2006, 2010). In these studies we have found significant differences in the value of children between different cultures and also between the generations (of mothers and grandmothers). For example, Indonesian as compared to Japanese, Korean, or German mothers still express a higher economic and social value of children without necessarily having a lower intrinsic-psychological value of children (Mayer & Trommsdorff, 2010; Trommsdorff & Mayer, 2012; Trommsdorff, Zheng, & Tardif, 2002). Multi-level analyses take context, person, and relationships into account (Mayer & Trommsdorff, 2010). A major milestone of the project was to disentangle the effects of adolescents' VOC on their intended number of future children at the cultural and the individual level. With regard to cross-cultural mean differences in the preference for utilitarian/normative and emotional VOC, the expected pattern of preferences was found with the former being higher valued by adolescents from countries with a lower economic development, but no differences between countries on the latter dimension. Interestingly, however, multi-level analyses showed that whereas emotional VOC was positively related with intended number of children at the individual level across cultures[3], there were neither individual- nor cultural-level relations between utilitarian/normative VOC and the intention to have children (Mayer & Trommsdorff, 2010).

Also cultural differences exist with respect to gender preference. However, it seems much too simple to only attribute these differences to an economic value. Instead, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions of ancestor worship can be much more important (Mayer & Trommsdorff, 2012; Sabatier, Mayer, Friedlmeier, Lubiewska, & Trommsdorff, 2011). Gender preference can even go into the opposite direction: Japanese mothers no longer prefer sons (as was the case some decades ago) but they rather prefer daughters; they expect their daughters to be emotionally close companions for their old age (Makoshi & Trommsdorff, 2002).

With regard to intergenerational relations at later stages in the life span, the current project has provided further insight into the culture-specific meanings of different aspects of the intergenerational relationship quality (Trommsdorff & Mayer, 2013), as well as the links between intergenerational solidarity and reciprocity with life satisfaction of adult daughters and their ageing mothers (Schwarz et al., 2010; Schwarz & Trommsdorff, 2005; Schwarz, Trommsdorff, Zheng, & Shi, 2010; Trommsdorff & Schwarz, 2007).

We are, in short, attempting to gain insight into universal and culture-specific processes of development over the life span, and to shed light on the transmission of values over several generations (see also previous section). The goal of these studies is to improve our understanding of interactions between individual development, intergenerational relations, and social change. This is in line with a culture-informed model of intergenerational relationships across the life span, which considers parent–child relationships as embedded in the socioeconomic and cultural context (Trommsdorff, 2006).

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[3]   The positive relation between emotional VOC and intended number of children was attenuated for higher values of emotional VOC. Also, it was less strong in cultures with high utilitarian/normative VOC.

Conclusions

This article has highlighted some advantages and difficulties related to a life span developmental cultural psychology. The method of comparing psychological phenomena in different cultural contexts allows for the testing of universalities and for taking into account culture-specific aspects of these processes. The opportunity to overcome an ethnocentric bias is therefore offered along with the chance to disentangle otherwise confounded variables. One may especially control the effects of certain contextual conditions which can be theoretically assumed to affect development (e. g., socio-economic structure, cultural values, and family system) without however being able to fully account for the complexity of the context. Still, one may select those contexts which represent the most relevant theoretical variables.

Two more aspects on the relation between culture and development should be mentioned. First, socio-cultural conditions and changes affect human development. Second, human development affects the socio-cultural context and may contribute to cultural stability and change. Both sides have to be taken into account (Trommsdorff, 2000, 2007). For example, changes in adolescent and adult development on account of changing gender roles have affected the family system and in the long run affect the demographic structure of the population. This in turn will affect developmental options for the younger and the older generation, and at the same time this will affect socio-economic changes including the rise of new social institutions (e.g., care systems for the elderly), changing intergenerational relations, and related changes in individual development. Thus, the study of human development over the life span taking into account the cultural context may contribute to a better understanding of the relations between complex individual behavior and culture.

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Questions for Discussion

1. What is the advantage to study life span development from a cross-cultural perspective?

2. How is culture related to parent-child relations?

3. How are cultural values transmitted to the next generation?

4. What are factors that foster or hinder transmission of values between generations?

5. What is the role of the sociocultural context for the transmission process?

6. How can the intergenerational transmission of values be studied?

7. Why is the intergenerational transmission of values important a) for society and b) for families?

8. Is the dichotomy between autonomy and relatedness reasonable, and what is its relevance for development in culture?

9. Give examples of a universal and a culture-specific phenomenon in development?

10. What are typical developmental tasks in different stages of the life span and how do they vary along different cultural contexts?

11. How can cross-cultural differences in fertility be explained?

Further Reading

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Links to Current Relevant Research Projects

http://www.psychologie.uni-konstanz.de/en/trommsdorff/research/value-of-children-in-six-cultures/description-of-study/
http://www.share-project.org/
http://oasis.haifa.ac.il/

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