

Theory and Method in the Comparative Study of Values

Critique and Alternative to Inglehart

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This paper critically reviews Ronald Inglehart's recent comparative work on value change in modern societies. It is argued that Inglehart's central thesis – value change seen primarily as a consequence of technological development and economic growth, leading to the spread of secular-rational and self-expression values – is materialist, unilinear, and comparative-static. The example of religious secularization is used to show an alternative comparative approach which takes into consideration institutional characteristics of states and societies. Two aspects of Inglehart's methodology are investigated: his measurement of 'traditional vs. secular-rational' and 'survival vs. self-expression values' and his treatment of units and levels of measurement. It is shown that his scales are heterogeneous collections of items, that his classification of the countries into 'cultural zones' is not very consistent, and that he is unaware of the distinction between the macro and micro levels of analysis. Comparative data on national identity and pride are used to show the importance of this distinction. Three general requirements of comparative research are outlined in the concluding section.

Introduction

Ronald Inglehart's theory of value change in modern societies has become one of the most influential approaches in present-day sociology and political science, both among scholars specializing in this topic and in general textbooks and intellectual discussions. His strengths are: continuous work on the same theme for three decades; a coherent and seemingly powerful theoretical concept; an empirical database which is unique in its size and comprehensiveness, and interesting, new empirical results. The findings prove the significance of culture and values in general, and of religion in particular, as continuing important elements of modern societies (see Inglehart, 1977, 1990, 1997; Inglehart, Nevitte and Basanez, 1996; Inglehart and Baker, 2000).

Yet, I aim to show in this paper that Inglehart's work contains significant weaknesses, including doubtful theoretical assumptions, poorly defined concepts and scales, and problematic methodological procedures. This discussion is focused on two of Inglehart's most recent works (Inglehart,

1997; Inglehart and Baker, 2000).¹ I will discuss this work in three steps:

- his general theory of value change and its relation to economic and social change;
- his concepts and scales of different 'values'; and
- methodological aspects of his classification of countries and level of analysis.

This critique is guided by an alternative approach which focuses on:

- a distinction between universal values and the concrete value orientations of people;
- the situational and institutional embedding of values; and
- a consideration of the different levels of analysis.

I will exemplify this alternative approach by presenting a different conceptualization of the relationship between societal contexts and religious values, and by showing the relevance of the distinction between the micro and macro levels of analysis for the case of national identity and pride.

A Materialist Theory of Social Change

Inglehart's first and central assumption is that value change is primarily a consequence of changing technological and economic-material factors. The chief witness is Karl Marx: 'Modernization theory's most influential proponent, Karl Marx, claimed that economically developed societies show the future to less developed societies' (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 19). The fact that neither Marx' prophecy of a proletarian revolution nor his prediction of the decline of religion have come true, nor will do so in the future, invalidates his central thesis: 'Nevertheless, a core concept of modernization theory seems valid today: industrialization produces pervasive social and cultural consequences, from rising educational levels to changing gender roles. Industrialization is seen as the central element of a modernization process that affects most other elements of society.' In this spirit Inglehart (1997: 67) considers that 'Socioeconomic change follows coherent and relatively predictable patterns' and that '... economic development has systematic and to some extent, predictable cultural and political consequences' (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 29).

The empirical findings seem to corroborate this thesis very well: 'The value systems of rich countries differ systematically from those of poor countries'; societies with a high GNP per capita and/or a high percentage of workers in agriculture are clearly distinct from less developed societies in terms of the value scales 'survival/self-expression' and – somewhat less strongly – in the dimension 'traditional versus secular-rational' (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 29f); and 'Having attained high levels of economic security, the populations of the first nations to industrialize have gradually come to emphasize Post-materialist values' (Inglehart, 1997: 325).

Contrary to these presuppositions, I will argue here that Inglehart misinterprets the theory and prognoses of Marx; puts forward only rather crude, sociologically weak general theses; and is unable to prove empirically the validity of these theses.

In the following section, I will concentrate on the first and second issues.

Determinants of Value Change

As everybody with some basic knowledge of Marx will know, he was in no way concerned with a catch-

all concept like 'industrialism'. Marx's central concept was 'capitalism', which itself was conceived as being composed of two levels: the *productive forces*, including a certain technical knowledge, a division of labour, and a qualified workforce; and the *production relations*, including the social relations (ownership and class relations) steering (inhibiting or furthering) the development of the productive forces, power relations at the workplace and in society, legal regulations of markets and production processes, and systems of government and political domination. Marx maintained that production relations are the ultimate determinant of the development of the productive forces and the cultural superstructure (*Überbau*) – ideologies and values – and not vice versa. The interests of classes and of economic and political élites are of central concern; in order to enforce their interests, and to make them look more ethically grounded and acceptable to the (dominated) population at large, the dominant classes elaborate ideologies which legitimize their actions.

In Inglehart's theory, this relationship is strongly simplified. It is not social groups who, out of their interest, and in consideration of technical-economic changes, invent and develop ideologies ('values'); rather it is the bare technical-economic conditions which 'produce' certain kinds of values: 'Marx emphasized economic determinism, arguing that a society's technological level shapes its economic system' (Inglehart, 1997: 9). According to his second main thesis, the *socialization hypothesis*, the value orientations of women and men are largely determined by the economic circumstances in which they live during their formative years, in childhood and adolescence (see also Inglehart, 1977). Thus, we must say – despite many contrary assertions (Inglehart, 1997: 8ff.) – that Inglehart's is a paradigmatic case of a materialist theory, implying a direct causation of ideas by material circumstances. In this vein, he openly admits that his first thesis – the *scarcity thesis* ('One places the greatest subjective value on those things that are in relatively short supply') – 'is similar to the principle of marginal utility in economic theory' (Inglehart, 1997: 33).

Inglehart's general thesis concerning value change – the transition from materialist to post-materialist values – must also be called into question from the viewpoint of more recent socio-economic

trends. A series of authors have argued that the modern 'consumer society' has not brought with it a decreasing relevance of material goods and services for men and women, but rather the reverse. This is a consequence of several trends. First, rising incomes make more money available to everybody for 'free consumption'; secondly, the immensely increased variety of industrial products and services arouses continually new human needs and desires; thirdly, the massive expansion of free time enables the use of many more goods and services for pleasure than ever before (Zahn, 1960; Weber, 1979; Baechler, 1975; Bell, 1973; Haller, 2000b). One of the main virtues of the Protestant bourgeois ethic, thriftiness (Weber, 1965), becomes outdated and replaced by consumption on credit as the main new principle, strongly stimulated by ever-present advertising in the modern mass media.² In advanced societies with excess capacities of production, the creation of a corresponding demand and need for consumption becomes a priority (Galbraith, 1967), and is enhanced by status competition with others which can never be fully satisfied (Schoeck, 1966; Hirsch, 1976).

The theoretical-conceptual weakness of Inglehart's approach also becomes evident when we look at his central concepts. The concept of 'industrialization' (as well as its twin concept 'modernity'), for instance, covers a whole bundle of characteristics, including the level of technical development, the sectoral and occupational division of labour, the development of knowledge, standards of living, and even patterns of thinking and values! (Sills, 1968). Thus, it seems to be a poor instrument for developing specific hypotheses about the determinants of value change from traditional to modern societies.

Unilinear, Directed Change of Values?

Inglehart proposes that value change is a direct consequence of technological and economic development. This thesis implies that it occurs in a fixed, linear way: 'Economic development leads to specific changes in mass values and belief systems' (Inglehart, 1997: 69), and 'tends to propel societies in a roughly predictable direction: industrialization leads to occupational specialization, rising educational levels, rising income levels, and eventually brings unforeseen changes – changes in gender

roles, attitudes toward authority and sexual norms, declining fertility rates; broader political participation; and less easily led publics' (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 21). In spite of Inglehart's repeated assertion that modernization does not follow a linear path, that it is probabilistic, not deterministic, and the mention of a 'feedback mechanism from culture and values to economic change' (Inglehart, 1997: 67), he does propose a unilinear, monocausal theory of change. In this regard, he is following an old tradition in philosophical-historical thinking and sociological theorizing.³

Inglehart's theory is unilinear and monocausal because of two assumptions:

1. The main determinant of change, the level of technological and economic development, is a quantitative dimension which displays more or less continuous progress and increase since the beginning of industrialization;
2. Despite all his limitations and exceptions, Inglehart posits a direct relationship between economic development and value change, particularly in the transition from a lower to a higher form of economic-industrial society. So, the transition from industrial to postindustrial society 'leads to a growing emphasis on self-expression', and the corresponding rise of overall societal wealth leads to a shift of values 'from an overwhelming emphasis on economic and physical security toward an increasing emphasis on subjective well-being and quality-of-life' (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 22); in short, the change goes from materialistic to postmaterialist values (see also Inglehart, 1977, 1990, 1997).

At least three kinds of objections can be made to such a theory:

1. The values of any society are complex; value change, therefore, cannot be conceived of as occurring only on one quantitative-linear axis.
2. His theory does not include the possibility of a reverse effect, namely, of values on economic development and even on technological progress and its utilization.⁴ Such a hypothesis – which accords with Max Weber's protestant ethic thesis – has in fact been proposed by several authors, particularly in contributions to the new theory of economic growth (Romer, 1986; Lucas, 1988; Jones, 1995). These have argued that the successful economic development of

- nations depends on a culture which values competition, innovation, and technical progress, on capital formation, and on educational values of achievement and perseverance (Kunz, 2000; see also Granovetter and Swedberg, 1992).
3. His theory does not take into consideration the relation of values to the situation and the context within which they become relevant.

This third aspect will be dealt with in the next section. Before that let us characterize Inglehart's general view of social change.

Comparative-static, Descriptive Approach

Given the primary focus of Inglehart's work on value change, it might seem strange to allege that his approach is a comparative-static one. Yet, closer inspection shows that this is the case. His main thesis is based on a kind of ideal–typical confrontation of three generic types of society. These types are called (following Bell, 1973): 'preindustrial, agrarian society' in which life is a 'game against nature'; 'industrial society', in which dependence on nature becomes diminished due to technical progress and the systematic organization of work – in this type of society, 'the role ascribed to religion and god dwindled', while materialistic ideologies and secular interpretations of history came to the fore; in 'post-industrial society', the third and present stage, services become dominant and life is 'a game between persons', with communication and the processing of information becoming the main activities in the world of work. In this society, the potential for autonomous decision-making is increased, thereby leading to growing emphasis on values of individual judgement and self-expression, and given the high levels of economic well-being and security, increasing emphasis on subjective well-being and quality-of-life (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 22).

Thus, Inglehart's main interest is not in examining how industrialization and economic development as continuous processes lead to continuous change in values, but in showing that there exist three different patterns of relations between technological, industrial, and economic structure, on the one hand, and values, on the other; the supposed 'ideal types'⁵ are called pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial societies. In this

approach he in fact follows Parsonian structural-functionalism, although he does not quote Parsons (Parsons and Shils, 1951: 204; Parsons, 1966; for a critique see Willi, 1966, and Haller, 1999: 234ff., 2000c). But even if we were to go along with Inglehart's 'structural' comparison between the three types of societies, serious problems must be noted.

First, in looking at present-day societies around the world with highly different levels of economic development, Inglehart is not in fact comparing traditional agrarian societies with industrial and modern postindustrial societies. Countries which today have about three-quarters of their populations in the rural or agrarian sector (like most sub-Saharan African societies, Bangladesh, India, China, etc.: see UNDP, 1994) cannot be equated with past agrarian societies, particularly in the area of values. In, say, Europe, India, China, or Japan at the end of the Middle Ages, the role of an independent farmer was the central occupation of society and granted economic security and social prestige. In nearly all present-day countries of the Third World, agricultural production is carried out either in large estates or on millions of small farms which often barely provide subsistence. There are wide inequalities within the agriculture of the less developed societies and between it and the 'industrialized' agriculture of the First World (see *World Development Report* 1990).

Values: Multidimensional and Embedded

In this section, I will first discuss how values are defined and distinguished; then I will look more closely at the relationship between values and the context within which they become relevant, taking the examples of postmaterialism and religiosity; finally I will show that two of the items used by Inglehart – happiness and national pride – are not related to economic development in a linear way and are much more complex than he supposes.

Different Levels in the Analysis of Values

Values can be defined as guiding images of social action which denote some of these as socially desirable and 'good', others as 'bad'. Thus, values include an element of desirability and an ethical–moral

component, differentiating different forms of human conduct and of objects to which humans strive, as 'better' or 'worse', as acceptable or unacceptable. So what is a concrete value and how many values can we distinguish? This is a question open to much debate and we cannot say that it has a definite answer (see Parsons and Shils, 1951; Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Sills, 1968: vol. 16; Rokeach, 1973; Spates, 1983; Klages, 1984). I think, however, that two things are important here:

1. There are different *levels of generality* at which we can speak about values; at an increasing level of generality the number of values will probably become smaller;
2. The lower the level of observation, the more closely are values related to concrete *social situations and circumstances*; it is at this level that valued patterns of behaviour are most strongly contested. Seen from the substantive point of view, values do not form a wholly coherent and integrated system but should rather be conceptualized as a 'toolkit' (Swidler, 1986), as a 'collection of stuff that is heterogeneous in content and function' (DiMaggio, 1997: 267).

Following Popper's (1973, 1994) distinction between the social world and the world of values and his concept of situational analysis (Farr, 1985; Hedström *et al.*, 1988; Haller, 1999: 598ff.), we can distinguish between three corresponding kinds of values:

1. *Universal values* are those very basic human values that are known in any literate civilization and have been proposed both by great thinkers in human history and founders of the major world religions. We can think here of values like equality and freedom, justice and respect. These ideas exist and persist in an 'objective sense': they are, for instance, written down in books which would be preserved even if all men and women on earth were to die (Popper, 1973; DiMaggio, 1997: 272). It is evident that much of what is labelled as 'value change' in empirical research, is only a change in the relative importance which is attributed to these basic values in different societies and epochs (Hillmann, 1986; Prisching, 1986).
2. *Societal values* or *value orientations* can be seen as more 'concrete' values, valid in a specific societal context and actually held by certain groups or

populations. An example is the value of 'equality', which in principle was known already in ancient times, but became more and more generalized through time, both in content (equality of opportunity, equality of treatment of men, etc.) and in coverage (equality between estates, between men and women, between hetero- and homosexuals, etc.: see Dann, 1975).

3. *Situational value orientations and norms, guidelines, and prescriptions* are related to the concrete application of values to social behaviour in specific circumstances. In order to implement full gender equality, concrete prescriptions and measures are required such as, quota systems for political offices, affirmative action for women, norms against sexual harassment and the like. There is a sliding transition from value orientations of this kind to the attitudes usually captured in survey research. Attitudes toward specific objects (persons or patterns of behaviour) may contain some evaluative or normative elements, but they also contain more idiosyncratic individual preferences and wishes.

Societal and situational values are not 'relative' and different from society to society. Rather, all contain both a universal element and a reference to concrete social circumstances, or they include a weighting between two or more conflicting values or a consideration of the consequences which a certain action will have. They are closely related to a practical 'ethics of responsibility' (*Verantwortungsethik*) which Weber (1973) contraposes to an absolute 'ethics of principles' (*Gesinnungsethik*). This is also related to the problematic of ascribing a particular social act to ethical principles or norms (Lepsius, 1988): It is much more difficult to follow such principles if the behaviour required does not correspond to one's advantage than when it is neutral in this regard or even brings some individual profit (see also Blossfeld and Prein, 1998: 6ff.).

The central tasks of a sociological analysis of values include, first, the definition and operationalization of the relevant dimensions of values as clearly as possible, both in terms of the level of analysis and in substantive terms; and second, the development of concrete hypotheses about the relation between those values and the changing social circumstances within which they are embedded.

Looking concretely at the two central dimensions of values which are distinguished in Inglehart's work, it turns out that neither their definition and empirical measurement nor the hypotheses relating them to the relevant social circumstances correspond to these demands. As I will show in the following section, Inglehart's 'values' consist of rather heterogeneous items in substantive terms; they do not measure specific values, value orientations, or normative prescriptions. So it is not surprising that a frequent and typical conclusion of researchers who have applied Inglehart's 'post-materialism' scale is that 'there are indeed some differences between materialists and post-materialists' but that they are generally small and often not in the direction suggested by Inglehart (Mastekaasa, 1983: 156).

Effects of the Economic Situation

In Inglehart's view, 'materialistic' values should not only decrease over time, but should also be dependent upon the concrete economic situation at a given time. This is because in the most widely used four-item operationalization of 'postmaterialism' the priority which the respondents attach to the political aim 'fight against inflation' is included as one of two items indicating 'materialistic values'. Several studies have shown that the current economic situation clearly affects responses to this item. If this indicator is substituted by a statement related to unemployment ('creating more jobs' as a political priority), the percentage of respondents classified as 'materialists' changes significantly. Clarke *et al.* (1999: 637) conclude that 'much of the shift from materialist to postmaterialist values recorded by the Euro-Barometer surveys since the early 1980s is a measurement artifact'. The same conclusion has been drawn in several German and other studies (Klages, 1984; Boeltken and Jagodzinski, 1985; Duch and Taylor, 1993; Klein and Pötschke, 2000).

We can show that in several other areas there are no long-term trends towards postmaterialism but rather an up and down movement of materialist and non-materialist ideas. First, the social sciences themselves show no decline in interest in economic-material factors and trends. In the 1970s and 1980s, the whole discipline of economics and – within it – monetarist and economic theories

became more influential. A second indication was the massive shift of young students towards work-oriented academic subjects, such as business administration, and away from subjects such as sociology and political science. A third fact in this period was the shift of public political attitudes toward the centre and right in many Western countries, exemplified by the electoral victories of Ronald Reagan in the USA and Margaret Thatcher in Britain. In a certain sense, the whole process of European integration since that time has been inspired primarily by 'materialist' values such as economic growth, market deregulation, business concentration, consumerism and the like (Korpi, 1996; Haller, 2000a).

Religiosity: an Alternative Typology

Let us now look more closely at the values which are of central concern in Inglehart's most recent article (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). The first dimension is called 'traditional versus secular-rational values'. Looking at the items that are used to measure this dimension, we can see that they are related mainly to religion. In a factor analysis of five items, the two loading most strongly are 'believed importance of god in life', and the necessity for children 'to learn obedience and religious faith'; when this dimension is correlated with other items, seven out of the eight items correlating most strongly are related to religious beliefs and participation (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 24, 26).

Two conclusions can be drawn from these facts. First, it would be much more precise to denote this scale in a way related more closely to its content, for instance as 'religious–non-religious', rather than the very general term 'traditional–secular-rational'. Secondly, if we reinterpret the scale in this narrower, but more precise way, the findings obtained can be interpreted much more unambiguously. Inglehart's interpretation is that the traditional–secular-rational dimension is associated primarily with the transition from agrarian to industrial society, and with economic development in general. Looking both at his descriptive presentation of results and at his regression analyses, it turns out that the empirical evidence for this interpretation is quite weak. In the regression analysis, independent variables like *historic religion* and *former communist country* are clearly stronger predictors than GDP/per capita

or percentage employed in industry (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 30, 38, 39).

Inglehart and Baker (2000: 29; see also Inglehart, 1997: 93, 98) give a figure which illustrates the 65 societies mapped within the two-dimensional space of his central value dimensions. Here, it turns out that the dimension 'traditional–secular-rational' is only weakly and inconsistently related to the level of economic development: we find 'traditional societies' both in the poorest and in the richest groups of countries (e.g. Bangladesh and USA are both traditional), while the secular societies also differ widely in their levels of development (e.g. Estonia and Sweden). It seems unsatisfactory to denote the 'untypical' cases (in particular the rather low position of the USA in the traditional–secular dimension) merely as 'exceptions', as Inglehart does.

If we were to follow the guidelines of the alternative approach to value change sketched out above, we would look primarily at the situational-institutional context that is most relevant for religious values: namely, the relationship between state and society on the one hand, and religion and the church on the other. A first relevant aspect here concerns the question of how a certain religion is structured in terms of its religious doctrine, the distinction

between priests and the laity, and the organizational structure of the church hierarchy (Troeltsch, 1912; Weber, 1966, 1979). Religious beliefs and participation are highest today in those societies where historically the churches and clergy have been in close contact with the laity and the whole society ('people's churches'), while it has declined strongly in societies where a certain religion and hierarchically structured church was imposed on the population from above ('state churches': see Höllinger, 1996). The second aspect concerns the comprehensiveness of the welfare state in terms of the functions it fulfils for the population. Religious communities fulfil not only spiritual and ritual functions for their members, but also a variety of social and even political functions (see also Casanova, 1994; Beyer, 1994). These include care for poor, sick, and old people; educational and cultural functions; the development of critical views of tendencies to power concentration in the economic and political spheres (e.g. 'liberation theology' in Latin America); and – in some cases – the preservation of a national language and culture over the generations.

Generalizing these ideas, we can postulate the existence of three patterns of relationships between state, society, and religion (see Table 1). In the first

Table 1. *Three general types of relationship between religions/churches and states and an alternative explanation of different levels of religiosity in different societies*

Types of state and civil society	Relation between state, society and church/degree of 'religiosity'	Concrete countries in Inglehart's comparisons
Comprehensive welfare states or strongly integrated 'civil societies'	Comprehensive state renders superfluous or replace religions communities/very low religiosity rather low or intermediate religiosity	Protestant Scandinavian countries (strong welfare states) Secularized society with religious ritual communities (Japan) Ex-communist orthodox East European and Asian countries Catholic and Protestant European welfare states (former 'domination churches': e.g. Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain) 'People's churches' (Poland, Ireland)
Weak welfare states or states with 'liberal' welfare state regimes	Religious communities important 'complementary institutions' to the state/as high religiosity	Competitive denominational structure: Churches as significant bases of societal communities (USA, India)
Weak states and civil societies	Religious communities as partial substitutes of the weak state/ rather high religiosity	Developing countries (South America, Africa, South-East Asia)

group, there are either well-integrated, culturally homogeneous societies (like Japan) or culturally homogeneous societies with a strong welfare state. Here, a comprehensive welfare state which is highly trusted by the population fulfils all the basic educational, cultural, and social security functions reasonably well and thus renders superfluous religious communities and churches. The Nordic welfare states clearly fall into this group. Another case here is Japan, which is one of the most homogeneous countries of the world in linguistic and cultural terms (even if quite different religious traditions have been absorbed), and also shows a high level of social integration. Thus religions are called on by the population only for ritual functions (Tsurumi, 1979). We can say that in this case a strong state (or civil society) substitutes for most of the functions which historically have been fulfilled by churches and religions.

Further cases within this type are some small, well-integrated post-communist societies of East Europe (Estonia, Latvia, the Czech Republic, and East Germany). Here, the devaluation of religion and the higher reliance on the state in all spheres and life situations is an inheritance from state socialism. A little bit higher – but in absolute terms still quite low – on the dimension of religiosity are the other ex-communist states; most of them are less developed and internally more heterogeneous. The strong anchoring of the churches in the respective societies, the weak differentiation between the parish priests and ordinary people and the close identification of ‘Russianness’ and Orthodoxy, however, prevented the total elimination of religiosity by communism (Lane, 1978). Finally, in this group we find the Catholic and Protestant European countries; in most of them, either Protestantism (England and parts of Germany) or Catholicism (Austria, France, Italy, and Spain) have historically been imposed from above as ‘state religions’. Today, most of these countries also have quite well-developed welfare states leading to a considerable decline in religiosity.

A second general type of relationship between church, society, and state can be characterized as a ‘complementary relationship’. Here, church membership and religious participation fulfil specific, important social functions that are not carried out by the state. In the United States, with their variety

of ethnic groups and immigrants from around the world, membership of a religious denomination has always been an important element of social and cultural integration. Among some sub-groups, such as the Catholics, this function has even become stronger in recent times (Greeley and Hout, 1999). In Ireland (and Poland) the Catholic church has historically been the institution which most strongly preserved the idea of the nation among the population for centuries because the dominant foreign nation (England) had another ‘state church’ (Anglican Protestantism). A third case in this group, which closely resembles the following group, is India, where there are many religions or denominations that are particularly important for social and cultural integration, since in this huge but poor and weak state, the political community is unable to provide for its people adequately.

A third type of relationship between religion, society, and state is given in those cases where a weak state is unable to provide the poor population with the most basic provision in terms of education, work, health, and social security. Thus, people in these countries are ‘traditional’ not only because they are still relatively ‘agrarian’, but also because it is quite rational for them to seek out a lot of practical help, as well as spiritual support, in religious communities where they can meet other people who are trustworthy and helpful in situations of material, social, and personal-psychological need.

Looking at Inglehart’s findings from such a historically and institutionally grounded point of view, there remain no ‘exceptions’ for which we must find *ad hoc* explanations. Rather, all 65 countries can be classified more or less unambiguously. In particular the United States, with its high level of religiosity, no longer constitutes an exception. More generally, it can be argued that religion is not dying out today. On the contrary, it is re-emerging in many regions of the world and in many new forms, such as new religious movements and sects, new forms of popular religion, and so forth (Wuthnow, 1982; Greeley, 1993; McGuire, 1998; Riis, 1998; Höllinger, 1999). From this point of view, the rather low level of religiosity in the Scandinavian countries cannot be seen as representing the only ‘modern’ pattern, sooner or later to be followed by all other countries of the world. Rather, it may be not

American religiosity but European secularization that is the exception (Crouch, 1999: 99).

‘Survival vs. Self-expression Values’, Happiness, and National Pride

Let us show, finally, that some of Inglehart’s other items and scales contain serious flaws. This has already been noted by several critics in connection with the basic and very widely applied four-item index of ‘postmaterialism’.⁶ Here, let us take a closer look at the scale labelled ‘survival versus self-expression values’. Inglehart and Baker (2000: 24) use five items for the construction of this scale. These items, however, constitute a very heterogeneous collection. Let us look more closely at them.

The first item seems to capture the dimension of ‘security/survival’: ‘Respondents give priority to economic and physical security over self-expression and quality of life.’⁷ However this ‘item’ is ambiguous for several reasons. First, it posits an alternative that will be meaningless to many respondents. Nobody whose personal security and life were under threat would give priority to self-expression over his/her survival. A general, alternative decision-situation like this constructs an unreal hypothetical situation. Secondly, physical security and economic security are not at all the same: unemployed people in Scandinavia are very secure in physical terms, while a very rich, powerful, and economically secure man in, say, Brazil, South Africa, or even the United States, might lead a rather insecure life in physical terms.

The second item – ‘personal happiness’ – does not cover a value at all, as may also be true for the fifth item (Trust in people). The third (Readiness to sign a petition) and fourth items (Homosexuality is never justifiable) may be related to values other than self-expression (perhaps political interest or tolerance).

Also the additional items referred to by Inglehart and Baker (2000: 27), which show clear positive associations with the scale of ‘survival/self-expression’, constitute a bewildering array. Some of them are related to social tolerance (rejection of foreigners, homosexuals, prostitution, criminals, etc.); some to gender roles (men are better political leaders, women should concentrate on having children, etc.); some on attitudes towards the role of government and the environment; some, here

again, do not tap values at all (financial dissatisfaction, bad health, fatalism, etc.).

I would suggest as a more appropriate designation of this scale the term ‘civic sense’, implying high values of tolerance, high participation in social and political affairs, and a high level of trust in other people as opposed to a closed mind, rigid norms, and a reliance on state protection. An inspection of Inglehart and Baker’s (2000: 29) mapping of 65 societies onto the two-dimensional space representing the survival–self-expression and traditional–secular-rational continua, mentioned above, shows that such an interpretation makes some sense. On the left-hand side, which has the lowest values for ‘civic sense’, we find the ex-communist, orthodox countries, especially the most crisis-laden (Russia) and least developed (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Azerbaijan); next to them lie the other ex-communist countries in Central Europe and Asia (China and Taiwan), and the countries of the Third World. On the right-hand side of the map, we find the Catholic European and South American countries, followed by the Protestant countries; the highest ‘civic sense’ is shown by a few advanced Protestant countries (Sweden, Netherlands, New Zealand, and Australia).

Similar ambiguities arise if we look at other items in this scale. Let us consider two of them in more detail. In both cases we can infer from other research that they are not correlated in a linear way with economic development as Inglehart’s theory predicts. The first is ‘personal happiness’, which has been investigated in many countries and – in some of them – over long periods of time. In a summary of studies in about two dozen countries, Ruth Veenhoven (1992) shows that there is only a weak correlation between the level of development of a country and the percentage of people declaring themselves as ‘very happy’. This proportion shows no linear increase over time where data are available. In a comparison of about ten European and ten non-European countries, Alex Inkeles (1989: 103f.) concludes that ‘the propensity of the people in different nations to see them selves as happy or unhappy is remarkably stable’, which in his view justifies the description of such tendencies as ‘national character traits’. Thus, we can observe very little secular ‘value change’ going on here.

Strong ambiguities must also be noted for the second item, namely 'national pride', used by Inglehart as an indicator for the dimension 'traditional versus secular-rational values'. We can refer here to another, large comparative survey. In the 1995 survey of 'National Identity' of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), carried out in two dozen countries around the world, the dimension of national pride was captured not by one single item, as in the World Values Survey; rather ten different dimensions of national pride were recorded, including pride in the way democracy works, the nation's economic achievements, its influence in the world, its social security system, its art and literature, its history, and so forth.⁸ Here, quite meaningful variations of specific aspects of pride with the structural-institutional context of the respective countries can be observed. Pride in economic achievements seems to be correlated clearly and positively with GDP/head; pride in social security is highest in the well-developed welfare states; pride in the way democracy works is very low in the post-communist countries, and so on. There is some positive correlation of overall pride with the level of economic development, but it is in no way linear and there are many exceptions: Ireland and Bulgaria, for instance, show a much higher, and Germany, Italy, and Japan a much lower level of pride than we would expect from a linear relationship with level of economic development.

Thus we must conclude that the use of one single item for a complex dimension like 'national pride' is strongly misleading and the analyses based on it can be seriously flawed.⁹ It is of utmost importance for international comparative research to ensure the validity and reliability of the indices and scales used. The scales used in the Inglehart and Baker essay are wholly insufficient from this point of view. Moreover, no statistical measures, reliability coefficients or the like are presented to show if the scales are homogeneous and reliable.

Units and Levels of Analysis

The issue of an adequate methodology for empirical research is of central concern for social analysis in general and for comparative research in particular. The progress of the social sciences in the last 100 years has been achieved to a considerable degree

through the development of new methods of research, such as sampling, interviewing, and statistical data analysis. In comparative research, these issues become more directly relevant since the contexts to be selected are not self-evident (such as one's own nation-state) nor can the equivalence of the indicators in the different countries be presumed (Dogan and Pelassy, 1984; Harkness, 1998; Teune, 1990; Scheuch, 1990). Comparative research, however, also offers unique opportunities in this regard (Berthoin-Antal and Dierkes, 1992).

In this section, I will investigate one further methodological issue that is central to comparative research: namely, the issue of adequate units of analysis. In particular, two problems will be dealt with: first, the classification of societies into larger groupings or types; and secondly, the issue of the adequate levels of analysis.

Classification of Countries

One of the main problems in comparative research concerns the question of how many countries should be included in a comparison. Some decades ago, there were only two possibilities: either to limit the number of countries to very few so that enough variables were available for each of them or to include many countries but to be satisfied with very few (mostly statistical) variables for each case. Both approaches are unsatisfactory, the second because it tends to produce artificial results, the first because there are too many variables and too few cases for testing causal models (Dogan and Pelassy, 1984; Ragin, 1987; Scheuch, 1990; Teune, 1990; Kuechler, 1998). The impressive progress of comparative survey research as well as of the facilities for the analyses of large data-sets have done much to overcome this forced choice since the 1980s. As in the case of the Eurobarometer, the World Values Survey, or the International Social Survey Programme, we now have vast quantities of data for each single country in surveys covering 30 to 70 countries.

This huge proliferation of data, however, does not relieve the researcher of creative theoretical thinking. Rather, the contrary is the case. Besides the problem that the enormous methodological progress of quantitative sociology may lead to an impoverishment in theoretical terms (Sørensen, 1998), new methodological issues arise that must be

solved. One of them is how to compare in a meaningful way large numbers of countries.¹⁰ One obvious strategy is to subsume the many countries into fewer, relatively homogeneous groups or types and focus the comparisons and interpretations on them. Such a strategy is applied by Inglehart, who introduces the concept of 'cultural zones' (referring to Huntington, 1996) and groups the countries into eight such zones. Two ambiguities are clearly evident in this procedure.

First, what is the criterion for the definition of a cultural zone? Language and religion are considered important here, but several other criteria also feature. Let us first look at the designation of the eight 'cultural zones' (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 29): (1) Ex-communist zone; (2) Protestant European zone; (3) English-speaking zone; (4) Latin-American zone; (5) African zone; (6) South-Asian zone; (7) Orthodox zone; (8) Confucian zone. Looking at this classification, we can see that at least four different criteria have been used: (1) Religion (zones 7 and 8); (2) language (zone 3); (3) political history (zone 1); (4) regional location (zones 4, 5); (5) a combination of religion and region (zone 2). From an epistemological point of view, it would be no problem to use more than one criterion variable for developing a new index. The problem arises, however, when one uses different criteria for different categories of only one index. This is evidently what Inglehart does: several of his 'cultural zones' are only residual categories that were probably invented because some countries did not fit into an unambiguous classification, say, by religion or language.

A second, striking characteristic of this methodological procedure is the allocation of the single countries into zones. Inglehart does this by drawing quite intricate and winding lines and curves and forming compound areas in the figures showing the location of the countries on the two-dimensional plot of survival–self-expression and traditional–secular-rational values. By this procedure, he is able to classify most of the countries into more or less coherent 'zones'. But anybody working with similar scatter diagrams and trying to develop a meaningful and parsimonious classification would proceed in a different way, by combining those countries into adjacent groups.

Inglehart's somewhat arbitrary classification procedure has to do with his rather vague and all-

embracing definition of 'culture'. There is no explicit definition of 'culture' in Inglehart and Baker (2000), except for hints about the importance of religion and language as components of it. In Inglehart (1997: 15) culture is defined as 'a system of attitudes, values and knowledge that is widely shared within a society' and it is also referred to as 'the subjective aspect of a society's institution: skills that have been internalized by the people of a given society'. Then again, when writing about the importance or effects of culture, Inglehart has in mind something very broad: 'Thus, position in this two-dimensional space reflects a multidimensional reality – and this remarkable socioeconomic-cultural coherence reflects the fact that a society's culture is shaped by its entire economic and historical heritage' (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 32). But how can we understand this or the following sentence in the same paper (p. 34): 'English-speaking culture has a strong and significant impact on the traditional/secular-rational dimension'? How can culture have an effect on values since values in all sociological accounts are seen as a central element of culture itself?

Levels of Analysis

In recent years it has become more and more evident that comparative sociological research has to be very careful about the level of analysis at which it is carried out. If we compare the attitudes of populations in different societies and try to investigate the effect of macro-structural characteristics of whole nations, such as GNP/head, as well as the effect of micro-variables, such as a person's age or education, on those attitudes, we have to distinguish carefully in our statistics between these two different kinds of effects (see e.g. Blalock, 1984; Kreft *et al.*, 1990; DiPrete and Forristal, 1994). The necessity for a clear distinction in this regard has been outlined recently in contributions to theoretical thinking in sociology (see, e.g. Coleman, 1990; Esser, 1993: 112ff.; Engel, 1998; Haller, 1999: 603ff.).

It seems that Inglehart has not taken note of these developments. Most of his variables are indicators at the macro-level as is the characterization of the countries by values (taking the mean values of the surveys on individuals in the several countries). Also most of his analyses are carried out at the

macro level, and a few also at the individual level (or combining both).

Looking closely at Inglehart's analyses and findings from this point of view, serious problems are evident. Central for his theoretical arguments are his regression analyses of the value dimensions 'traditional-secular-rational' and 'survival-self-expression' on the variables economic development, occupational structure, education, and historic religion.¹¹ It turns out that the economic variables (GDP/per capita, per cent industrial and service sector) and the religious variables (historically Catholic, Protestant, or Confucian) have considerable effects. All in all, a much higher percentage of variance in values (40–80%) is explained than is usually the case in sociological research. Inglehart's basic model can be summarized quite simply in the following thesis: industrialization leads to general changes in values, but the different religious heritage of the 'cultural zones' results in differences in the progress of these, but not in a uniform manner throughout the world.

At least two general objections must be raised to this simple model. First, to consider only survey data could mean to suggest that the 'typical' or 'dominant' values of a nation can be inferred from such data alone. This is true only in part; when speaking of the overall global or dominant values of a nation, we also have to take into consideration the statements of official representatives, government programmes and declarations, presidential speeches, national values and goals expressed in constitutional texts, and so forth (see also Spates, 1983; Namenwirth and Weber, 1987). The investigation of the degree of cultural and value homogeneity of a society is itself a central task of comparative research. A society with a high level of cultural integration looks quite different from another one where social and political groups with differing values compete with each other. The strategy of inferring the 'typical' or 'dominant' values of a society from aggregations of survey findings is also problematic because the distribution of values might be very different in different nations (see Haller, Mach, and Zwicky, 1995 for an empirical study proving this thesis).

The second methodological problem in this regard concerns the 'ecological fallacy': a significant correlation or effect at the aggregate level need not

imply that the same effect will also exist at the individual level. This problem can be illustrated with findings from the ISSP-95 survey on 'National Identity'. One item battery in this survey was developed in order to investigate if we can in fact distinguish between different concepts of 'nation' and 'nationhood' in different countries, namely 'state nations', 'culture nations', and 'ethno-nations' (Kohn, 1955; Smith, 1991; Haller, 1996). The argument is that in the first phase of nation-building, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Britain, France, and the United States, the nation-state was established primarily 'from above', as a deliberate political strategy; the state 'created' the nation and its homogeneous culture by introducing comprehensive education and language, national political symbols, and so forth. Everybody who immigrates to such a nation can become a true member of this state-nation if s/he is willing to learn its language and respect its laws and institutions. The second type of nation is called a 'culture nation', a term that refers to countries like Germany and Italy whose political unification was achieved only in the second half of the nineteenth century. There, it is said that the spur for national unification was primarily based on the common language and culture which had been in existence for long time: intellectuals, historians, philosophers, and literary writers played a significant role in the awakening of national self-consciousness in these countries. The third type of nation, the ethno-nation, is said to exist in East Europe, where the fight for national unity and independence has lasted for more of the last century (until 1989/90). Here, in addition to language and culture, the ethnic dimension plays a part, that is, the (believed) community through common ancestry.

In the ISSP-95 survey, seven items were asked in order to grasp what the respondents in the different countries thought were central elements for being a member of their nation (see Table 2). The seven items were combined into four general dimensions related to the theoretical concepts outlined before. Then, correlations between these four items were carried out both at macro and the micro (individual) level. The findings show that there is a significant difference at the micro and macro level (see Figure 1): At the individual level, all four dimensions correlate strongly and in a statistically significant level; at the aggregate level, there is a high intercorrelation

Table 2. *Items used for capturing the character of a 'nation' in ISSP-95 and hypotheses concerning the ideal–typical concepts of 'nation'*

How important do you think each of the followings is to being truly [British]?	Ideal–typical concept of nation
... to have [British] citizenship	State nation
... to respect [Britain's] political institution and laws	
... to be able to speak [English]	Culture nation
... to be a [Christian]	
... to have been born in [Britain]	Ethno-nation
... to have lived in [Britain] for most of one's life	
... to feel [British]	Emotional nation

between the concepts of the emotional, culture, and ethnonation, but these three concepts are uncorrelated (or not significantly correlated) with the concept of 'state nation'. Thus, the theoretical distinction makes sense only at the macro level: in countries like Sweden, Norway, the United States, Canada, and Australia, a 'state nation' concept is much more prevalent than, for instance, in Spain, Poland, Hungary, or Japan. We could probably also refer to official documents from these countries, and to declarations and writings by their elites where this difference in the concept of one's own 'nation' will appear. The population at large, however, evidently does not make this distinction at

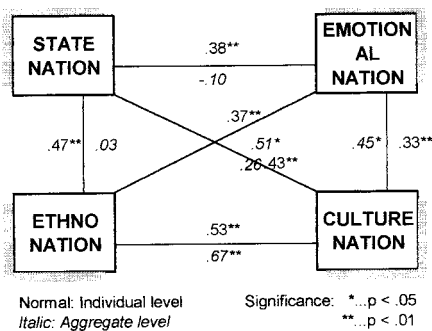
all. In all nations, political, cultural, and ethnic elements are seen as indispensable for being a true member of the nation. This is confirmed by a factor analysis of the scale where in most countries only one factor results.

Thus, we must conclude that it can be misleading to investigate values and their change only at the macro level. We must specify in particular how actors and structures at the macro-level affect actors and structures at the micro-level and vice versa (Coleman, 1990: 5ff.; Mohler, 1989; Haller, 1990; Blossfeld and Prein, 1998). Even the most simple model of the relation between industrialization and value change must distinguish between actors/events on the one hand, and structures/values on the other, as well as between different levels of analysis. Let us briefly discuss these distinctions.

First, the explanation of value change makes it necessary to take into consideration the role of historical actors and events. The importance of the latter has also been shown by Inglehart's own findings. So he notes, for instance, that people in communist societies were exposed to 'powerful campaigns to eradicate religion', that 'economic and political collapse has had a substantial impact' (Inglehart and Baker, 2000: 44, 45). It seems clear that there is general agreement with these conclusions.

We should look at such unique, short-term events and changes, however, not only as aberrations of history or as singular events. Even if they might be exceptional in history, they are often quite typical and they can have far-reaching consequences; thus, they should become objects of general sociological assertions. It is not difficult to give examples of how this can be done. It has been argued, for instance, that revolutions and their character – bourgeois or proletarian, from above or from below – exhibit many similarities at different times and places (Arendt, 1963; Moore, 1966).

In similar vein historical macro-actors are important. A macro-actor is a politician who makes a far-reaching historical decision; in comparative research on social change, we can look at such singular actors from a sociological point of view. Here, we can develop types of political, religious, intellectual, and other personalities and, thus, make general statements about singular historical figures from the sociological point of view. So, it was no accident



Source: ISSP-95 'National Identity'.

Figure 1. *Correlations between different concepts of national identity at the individual and aggregate level*

that in the first stage of the overthrow of the communist regimes in East Europe and the rise of new nations critical intellectuals played a strategic role, but that they were mostly succeeded by old, experienced politicians in the later stages (Haller, 1996; see Scheff, 1994 for an analysis of Hitler's strategies in this regard).

The twofold distinction – actors/events versus structures/values, and micro- versus macro-level – enables us to grasp more clearly which effects are occurring in value change. At least four kinds of effects have to be distinguished (see also Münch, 1982; Wright, 1985):

1. *Macro-to-macro effects* or processes of *direct shaping* are involved if a 'public personality', a 'macro-actor' takes an important decision which directly affects macro-structures or institutions. This is the case when a Prime Minister or a Parliament (as a 'collective actor') enacts a law which changes the action frame for many people or when an outstanding intellectual figure or religious leader develops new ideas or values and – as a consequence – initiates corresponding social changes.¹²
2. *Macro-to-micro effects* or processes of *indirect shaping* (political steering) are involved if the actions of macro-actors influence the actions of many individual persons. It is a basic sociological wisdom that such actions very often have consequences that were not intended and that new institutional arrangements often have quite distinct effects from those that were intended. The far-reaching plans for health reform of the US President Bill Clinton failed because the attitudes of the Americans are fundamentally liberal and opposed to a true public health system (Haller, Höllinger, and Raubal, 1990; Haller, Mach, and Zwicky, 1995). In spite of far-reaching educational reforms in many countries and a massive educational expansion in all countries, there has been little change in the vertical inequality of educational opportunity in the recent decades (Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993).
3. *Macro-to-micro effects* or processes of *structural determination or limitation* are involved when either macro- or micro-structures set limits on or broaden the ranges of action that are possible for individual actors at the micro level (for a review see Schooler, 1996). The idea that social

structures can have double effects is also expressed in agency theory, which posits that culture both constrains and enables individual action (Bourdieu, 1977; Archer, 1982; Giddens, 1984).

4. *Micro-to-macro effects* or processes of *pluralistic adaptation* occur if thousands of individuals adapt their thinking and behaviour so that in the end the macrostructures become transformed. An example is the question of whether the publication of data on sexual practices will undermine general moral principles (as is often argued by conservative writers: see Schelsky, 1955; Ericksen, 1999).

The effects that Inglehart aims to explain in his article can be subsumed under type (3), structural determination. He maintains that values change as a consequence of a transition of the economy from agriculture and industry to services, as a consequence of rising incomes, and so forth. Two problems are involved in this kind of analysis, however. First, in practice he investigates a kind of spurious macro-to-macro effect. If in a society the proportion of people with high incomes increases, this has the effect of increasing the overall secular-rational orientation of that society only if individuals change their value orientations with rising income (effect (3): structural determination) and if no change in the relevant macro-structures occurs (effect (1): direct shaping). I have argued above, however, that the latter effect exists, that is, a highly productive post-industrial economy needs more 'materialistic' consumers than a developing industrial society.

Concluding Remarks

In this concluding section, the three general principles by which this paper has been guided will be made explicit: the relevance of theoretical assumptions; the problem of the definition and measurement of concepts; and the distinction between different levels of aggregation and analysis. The principles outlined here are not new, nor do they exhaust the problems that have to be considered in comparative research (see Rokkan, 1969; Ragin, 1987; Jowell, 1998; Kuechler, 1998; Harkness, 1998). They refer mainly to the type of large-scale, standardized

international survey such as the World Values Survey or the International Social Survey Programme.

Principle One: Comparative research needs to start with an explicit theoretical focus even more than research within one nation does.

In comparative research, where fascinating differences between countries often emerge, the researcher is constantly tempted to invent *ad hoc* explanations. Given the complexities of comparative research, however, the chances are high that the differences found have more to do with the methods employed than with 'real' differences between the countries compared. Problems of the equivalence of concepts and items in different cultures and languages, problems of different sampling designs (especially in countries with little survey experience), problems of response and acquiescence tendencies, and so forth (see Jowell, 1998) can produce many differences in the marginals. Starting with a clear and unequivocal theory or hypothesis is probably one of the best forms of insurance against inductive *post hoc* generalizations that are so widespread in comparative research.

Which kinds of theories or hypotheses are most adequate in comparative research? Clearly, it makes sense to use data from different countries to test very general hypotheses; comparative research is used here to prove the validity of general laws under different circumstances; the contextual differences between the countries are not considered relevant *per se*.

The kinds of hypotheses that seem most challenging and productive in comparative research are those that concentrate on contextual, institutional differences between countries. Perhaps there is no fundamental difference from the strategy mentioned before: in hypotheses of this kind, some general assumptions about certain social processes must be included (see also Blossfeld and Prein, 1998: 5ff.). In this case too it is essential to specify some clear and definite causal mechanisms which then can be tested empirically. If this is not done, another danger of comparative research may be encountered, namely that of confounding a descriptive, maybe even ideal-typical, account of complex historical-societal contexts in a 'culturalist' manner, without a true sociological explanation.

Principle Two: The comparative researcher should be aware (1) at which level in the hierarchy of

values – universal, societal, or situation-specific – he or she wants to grasp the values and (2) in which substantive area of values – work, family, societal, political, etc. – s/he will focus.

No single study need necessarily capture the values considered at all three levels of generality, from the most general, universal level, to the most concrete, situation-bound value orientations, norms, and prescriptions. But it is essential that the researcher is aware of this distinction and of the level at which his or her research is focused.

The simultaneous collection of information on values at the most general and at intermediate and lower levels of generality seems especially promising against the background of the Weberian approach followed here, which aims at the investigation of the cultural meanings of human behaviour in different spheres and the degree of integration or conflict between them. De Tocqueville's study of *Democracy in America* (1969) was a seminal work for this approach since Tocqueville tries to show throughout the book how the Americans and their institutions were guided by the principle of equality – with all its positive and negative consequences.

Most items and scales used in international comparisons today are located at an intermediate level of generality. Here, the main task of the researcher is to ensure that the items used have an unequivocal meaning. This is not the case for many items which, at face value, appear as quite clear and useful. It is essential, from this point of view, that researchers from many different countries and cultures are involved from the beginning when new instruments (items, questions, or scales) for comparative surveys on values, value orientations, and attitudes are developed.

If we consider values at the lowest and most concrete level, the researcher must be aware of the influence of context on the items used. Here we found one of the most obvious weaknesses of Inglehart's widespread scale of 'post-materialism'.

Principle Three: (1) The comparativist should be aware that the selection of units is an important decision with many theoretical and methodological consequences; and (2) s/he is free to choose which unit to select but must be aware of the theoretical and methodological implications of

the selection of this specific unit or level of analysis.

At least three different kinds of macro-analysis must be distinguished in comparative research:

1. The *supernational level*, comprising groups of societies or nations. There are different designations of the units at this level, such as 'families of nations' (Castles, 1993); 'culture zones' or 'culture areas' (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart and Baker, 2000); 'civilizations' (Huntington, 1996); 'cultural circles' (Haller, 1990); 'macroregions' (Rokkan, 2000); or 'welfare regimes' (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Common to these concepts is the idea that there are groups of nation-states that share significant characteristics (say, language, religion, types of welfare state, etc.). Considering such groups of nations, the task of the comparativist becomes easier for several reasons: results can be presented in a more parsimonious way since, instead of describing the results for each single country we can limit parts of the description to these groups; comparisons between the single countries within such groups of nations make it easier to detect specific causal mechanisms since only a few characteristics vary; case-studies can be carried out selecting only one country per group knowing that the situation will be similar in other countries of the group.
2. By far the largest part of all present-day international comparison is carried out at the *level of the nation-state* which is usually considered as a 'society'. In most cases, this selection may be based on practical considerations: Most of the available official statistical data and most surveys are based on nation-states as their units. I have argued that it makes sense to work at this level, since most nation-states have a long cultural and political history and have hence developed something like 'national cultures'. It would be strongly misleading, however, to take it for granted that all existing nation-states are similar in this regard. Depending on the historical 'age' of a nation-state and its size, huge differences exist.
3. It becomes obvious from this point of view that it would often make more sense in comparative research to look at *sub-national, territorial, or regional units*. The selection of such units is straightforward

in countries with a strong federal tradition (such as Germany, Switzerland, or the United States), a selection with might be coupled with definite ethnic-national subdivisions (such as in Spain, Belgium, Russia, Canada, or India). Besides of the problem of the small sizes of national subsamples, there seems to be no obstacle to working at this level in international comparisons of survey results; it is surprising how little use of this possibility has been made so far.

Notes

1. I am not the first to criticize Inglehart's approach. Since his early publications, his work has attracted many critical comments, indicating a considerable and continuing sense of unease (see e.g. Flanagan, 1982; Mastekaasa, 1983; Jagodzinski, 1981, 1984; Suhonen, 1985; Hillmann, 1986: 114ff.; Klages *et al.*, 1992: 12–28; Clarke *et al.*, 1999; Davis and Davenport, 1999; Klein and Pötschke, 2000). Since Inglehart had changed neither his approach nor his methods, and since his work – despite its evident weaknesses – continues to be quoted around the world, I think it is imperative to review it critically again and again.
2. These trends have been empirically proved in German time-series studies by Noelle-Neumann (1978) and Klages (1981, 1984). Among cohorts, satisfaction with income has *decreased* between 1961 and 1985, not increased, as Inglehart's theory would suggest (see Strümpel and Scholz-Ligma, 1988).
3. For a short overview of these traditions, their critique and sociological relevance see Namenwirth and Weber (1987: 242f.) and Lorenz (1997).
4. In Inglehart (1997: 7ff., 216ff.) this effect is taken into account explicitly. It is evident, however, that it has (1) been introduced only *post-hoc* since it does not follow from his two central theses (the scarcity hypothesis and the socialization hypothesis); and (2) there is no direct measurement of the central cultural variable – religion – in his model.
5. They are, in fact, not 'ideal types' in Weber's sense, which would imply that each of them can be characterized unambiguously by specific institutional characteristics.
6. One further serious objection was the use of the item 'Preference for 'law and order'' as an indicator of materialism. This item is related more to the political situation of a country than to its level of economic development (Flanagan, 1982).
7. This may not be a single item but an index or scale, although this is not made clear by the authors.

8. The data-set and variables are described in Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung, ISSP-1995: National Identity, Codebook ZA Study 2880, Cologne, Germany, 1998.
9. From this point of view, the strategy of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) seems superior to that of the World Values Survey. In the ISSP project every year only one quite specific topic is surveyed, and the whole project group (including, in 2000, 33 countries with 1 to 3 social scientists from every member country) carefully develops and discusses multiple measures for the central concepts. Outlines of the principles of the ISSP Project are given in Kuechler (1987, 1998), Davis and Jowell (1989), Jowell (1998), Uher (2000), and in the Codebooks of the ISSP-Surveys, Central Archive, University of Cologne, Germany (Internet: www.za.uni-koeln.de/data/en/issp). The *World Values Studies*, on the other hand were originally designed only for Western countries and many of the item batteries have American roots.
10. This is also a serious resource problem since the collection of the data is quite expensive and a considerable amount of time is required to develop the instruments, coordinate the surveys, and produce 'clean' sets of data.
11. Tables 4 and 5a in Inglehart and Baker (2000: 33, 39).
12. It has often been stated that the demand for freedom for the former communist countries of Eastern Europe by Polish-born Pope Paul II significantly contributed to the collapse of those regimes.

Acknowledgements

Thanks for helpful comments on a first version of this paper are due to James Davis, Andrew Greeley, Franz Höllinger, Wolfgang Jagodzinski, Walter Müller, and three anonymous reviewers for the *European Sociological Review*. The paper was presented at a public lecture at the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research on 7 July 2000.

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Manuscript received: January 2001.