ISJP

International Social Justice Project • Arbeitsgruppe für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland

Internal and External Attribution of

Poverty

Germany 1991 - 2006

Working Paper No. 132

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März 2007

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Introduction

Fifteen years after the German unification, factual changes in institutional settings are achieved, although the economic and social burdens of the transformation process still last. While people in the West still render financial support to the East, people in the East suffer from sparse infrastructure, indicated by increasing unemployment- and poverty-rates. Besides these socio-economic downturns, the subjective aspects of the transformation process – the adjustment of the people themselves – are widely discussed in the public and scientific discourse. Terms like the "inner wall" are used to indicate a long-lasting cleavage in the attitudes, belief systems, and values between people living in former East and West Germany. Analysing social and political attitudes, scientific studies investigated long-lasting differences between East and West Germany. Though the question – if the "inner wall" is caused by the *situation*, *e.g. structural* differences in the living conditions, or serves as an indicator for *cultural* effects due to Soviet- or liberal market *socialisation* – still poses challenges for further research (Meulemann 2002, Wegener 2003).

Regarding the institutional transformation process together with the overall structural deficits predominantly in the East, we will focus in our study on the perceived legitimacy of the actual distribution system. In terms of social justice research, we will analyse in particular different attribution patterns of poverty in East and West Germany (Kluegel et al. 1995), asking for changes and determinants of the perceived legitimacy of the distribution over the last fifteen years. In this context, it seems of great relevance whether structural or cultural factors are crucial in explaining the attitude towards the distribution system – especially for further predictions about the largely promoted assimilation process between East and West Germany. The attribution of poverty to internal causes e.g. to the moral commitment of the individual indicates an overall consent to the (liberal) market distribution system; whereas external reasons for poverty express some kind of disapproval with the capitalist system – leaving room for further investigation of governmental support and dominant/challenging belief systems.

The German Transformation Process

The collapse of communism called for a multidimensional transformation process. Whereas most of the East European states were left to themselves, political as well as economic institutions of West Germany were transferred and adopted by East Germany. For this reason, East Germany enjoyed large support of the federal government: besides financial inputs from the West, East Germany were immediately covered by the Western social security system and supported technically e.g. in terms of the transfer of administration personnel with Western training (Wegener et al. 2000). Still, the simultaneity of the transformation of political, economic and social systems, and their interaction caused enormous stress especially for people living in East Germany (Rose & Harpfer 1994). Labelled as a "closed" transformation, people living in the East, had not only to adopt Western political and economic institutions, but were also confronted with different ideological convictions, ideas and belief systems expressed e.g. by a reduced role of government and a liberal market as the main distribution mechanism.

People living in former East and West Germany were given different life chances by ideologically diverging political constitutions (Meulemann 2002). Whereas people in the West were socialized within a system which is still characterized by a social market, a representative parliamentarian system, pluralism of beliefs/ideas, leaving people with a lot of options and responsibilities (also bearing risks) – people in the East lived within a totalitarian system which took care of the peoples' social security, employment and welfare, simultaneously leaving no space for individual development and free choice. An inefficient economy controlled by the government, a one-party system, and the hegemony of Socialism as well as only basic supply with goods by the government mainly characterizes the system of former East Germany.

Speaking in terms of social justice research, Lane (1986) points to two diverging systems of distribution – political justice vs. market justice – which characterize well the differences between former East and West Germany. *Political justice* describes the legitimate distribution of goods by political institutions, whereas the term *market justice* implies a fair distribution by the market – even though social inequalities may result. Distributing goods by the principles of need and equality, political justice mainly judges the *outcome* of distributions – while market justice rewards merit and achievement, focusing on the *process* of distribution. These different kinds of distribution systems also influence the perceptions and feelings of the people themselves. While people living in a system of market justice may gain a feeling of self control over their social position, being rewarded for their merit and achievement – the distri-

bution of goods by political rules leaves people without any control over their situation causing feelings of fatalism (Wegener 1992).

Attitudes and Belief Systems in East and West Germany

Speaking of inherited routines, normative principles as well as cultural preferences, the proper functioning of institutions depends not only on its accurate transfer and adoption, but also on a suitable value foundation. For this reason, recent research focused not simply on the factual changes in East Germany, but also on the internal "subjective" transformation of the people. Perceptions and attribution of social inequality, social justice beliefs, life satisfaction, self identification as well as policy support and actual confidence in governmental institutions built the heart of studies on social change, social justice and the overall research on the transformation process (Wegener 2003; Liebig & Wegener 2000; Wegener et al. 2000; Krause & Habich 2000; Pollack 1998; Noll 1998; Kluegel et al. 1995; Rosar 1998; Kuechler 1998; Meulemann 1998, 2002; Wagner 1997).

The Attribution of Poverty

Regarding social inequality, "legitimizing ideologies and beliefs can serve to reconcile (the) dissonance by providing rationalizations for inequality" (Glaser 2005: 258). Also known as system-justifying beliefs, the attribution of inequality in particular the perceptions of the people and their explanations for the poor can be regarded as important measures for the legitimacy of the social system. As Kluegel et al. (1995) mention, "perceptions of the rich and the poor provide a vehicle for studying how the public evaluates existential marcojustice" (Kluegel et al. 1995: 179) strongly affecting the attitudes towards inequality related policy. Consequentially, disapproval of the distribution system is assumed to correlate highly with the support of government intervention to reduce inequality (known as "egalitarianism" in social justice research). Focusing on the attribution of poverty in capitalist societies under the principles of market justice - those who believe that the system operates in a just manner would rather attribute poverty to the shortcomings of the individual than to the flaws of the system. Speaking with Lane, "if one believes that outcomes are attributed to one's own acts that the self is to be credited or blamed for one's own fate - one does not invoke justice sentiments. (...) this sense of controlling one's own destiny in the market, but not in politics, leads to more of a sense of political injustice than of market injustice" (Lane 1986: 385). Therefore the attribution of poverty to the flaws of the economic system calls for governmental intervention, disapproving with the principles of market justice.

Although studies on the perceptions and attitudes of people experiencing the transformation process claim all together long-lasting discrepancies in the belief systems between East and West Germany, the contributing determinants are widely discussed in the literature. Arguing within the *socialization hypothesis*, dissimilarities are due to specific historical and cultural developments in both parts of Germany. Different attitudes refer to differences in socialisation – therefore considering attitudes as long-lasting and stable. Another widely discussed approach argues in terms of *structural* differences, explaining diverging attitudes between East and West Germany by rational self-interest. Known as the *situation hypothesis*, attitudinal differences are reflected by specific interests driven by still diverging social and economic living conditions in East and West Germany. As living conditions in East and West Germany assimilate, so will the attitudes between both parts of Germany (Wegener et al. 2000; Wegener 2003).

The Cultural Approach

A classical approach within cultural theory is called the *dominant ideology thesis*, arguing for a relatively consistent ideology within each society shared by virtually all of its members (Kluegel et al. 1995; Kluegel & Smith 1986; Wegener 1992). Socialized either by cultural norms and values or institutional settings, the dominant ideology is uniformly held by the more and less privileged. Spread by the ruling class, the dominant ideology – also known as *system-justifying beliefs* – sustains the hierarchical order, legitimating inequality under capitalism (Glaser 2005). Within capitalist societies, characteristic elements of the dominant ideology are the principle of equal opportunities as well as the belief in the individual responsibility of each person for his/her own fate (Kluegel & Smith 1981). Therefore, speaking of the legitimacy of the social system, poverty is caused by the people themselves – justifying an unequal distribution of resources.

→ Arguing within the dominant ideology thesis, individualistic causes of poverty are widely supported within capitalist societies.

The Structural Approach

Apart from cultural theory, the *structural approach* focuses on the overall living conditions influencing beliefs about social inequality. Taking the social position of the individual as well as the overall economic conditions into account, structural factors may highly influence political and social attitudes (Rose & Harpfer 1994). Besides rising unemployment and poverty due to structural deficits, individual characteristics such as income, educational achievement, and social mobility may have some impact on be-

liefs in social inequality, particularly on attributions of poverty. Guided by feelings of deprivation, low status groups express their discontent with the distribution system explaining poverty due to external causes, which have been referred to in the literature as existential or *challenging beliefs*. Therefore, structural beliefs are more "concrete" 'pragmatic" 'experiential' and 'existential'" (Kluegel 1989), whereas dominant ideology beliefs are related to cultural as well as institutional indoctrination.

→ Arguing within the structural theory, low social standing as well as a worsening of the overall economic conditions will contribute to a rising approval of the social attribution of poverty.

The Split-Consciousness Theory

Empirical social justice research proved that people may prefer two differing ideologies at the same time. Known in the literature as the *spit-consciousness theory*, Kluegel and Smith (1986) proposed that both (a) a dominant ideology as well as (b) challenging beliefs can coexist with each other. Therefore, beliefs about inequality are driven by two broad influences: they are the product of (a) the inculcation of dominant-ideology beliefs, as well as (b) everyday, stratification-related experiences (challenging beliefs). Empirical studies verified the existence of both dominant as well as challenging beliefs associated with the legitimacy of the distribution system - meaning in comparative terms that capitalist societies with a strong evidence of challenging beliefs are characterized by a lack of legitimacy of the distribution system.

→ Arguing within the split consciousness-theory, internal as well as social/external attributions of poverty form independent factors, with low correlation between these factors.

The Social Psychological Theory

Social psychological theory supports the macro-level theories stated above. Taking individual motives and cognitive processes into consideration, social-psychological theory joins marco-level theory in predicting that individualistic explanations of poverty prevail in capitalist societies. Self-evaluation, status attribution as well as just world beliefs assume that the poor are responsible for their own fate. Concentrating on the human nature, the predictions should hold for capitalist as well as post communist states (Kluegel et al. 1995; Della Fave 1980, 1986).¹

¹ See Castillo & Schneider (2007) for a more differentiated view of microlevel-processes on the attribution of poverty and wealth.

Hypotheses

→ Following the spit consciousness theory, we expect to find two independent factors for the attribution of poverty, ascribing poverty to (1) internal aspects of the individual himself as well as (2) external factors e.g. the failing of the economic system, for East and West Germany.

Regarding West Germany as a capitalistic regime, following assumption derives from the above stated theoretical considerations.

→ We expect high approval of the internal attribution of poverty in West Germany, whereas the external attribution needs to be regarded as challenging belief.

Therefore we assume an overall approval of the internal attribution in West Germany, whereas the external attribution highly depends on the social standing of the individual. In this context, we need to consider the *relational* view we have on poverty attribution, focusing on the differences between East and West Germany over time – without taking other countries into consideration. In comparison to the highly controlled economic as well as social system of the soviet regime, (West) Germany needs to be regarded as a capitalist regime following the characteristics of market justice systems (stated above). However, in comparison to the United States, Germany needs to be regarded as a relatively far-reaching welfare state. The federal government has taken an active role in providing basic goods for individuals. Therefore, in comparison to the US, Germany needs to be regarded as an overall egalitarian regime, whereas individualistic beliefs serve as "secondary justice ideologies" (Wegener & Liebig 1995: 259; Kluegel et al. 1995).

Regarding East Germany, we cannot exactly differentiate between dominant and challenging beliefs. Speaking with Wegener and Liebig (1995): "In societies where other cleavages besides class boundaries are pronounced, as is true of East Germany in its present transition phase, it is interesting to see that the structure of primary and secondary justice ideologies is less clear" (Wegener & Liebig 1995: 259). For this reason we do not suspect to find evidence for the split consciousness thesis regarding poverty attribution patterns in East Germany – not in so far, that structural effects mainly explain internal attribution, whereas the institutional socialization can be called mainly responsible for explaining external attribution patterns. At the same time, it seems problematic to deduce the attribution of poverty from the promoted egalitarian ideology. Kluegel et al. (1995) mention, that even socialist regimes explained poverty as

the result of the individual failure of the poor themselves, justifying its political failures in creating an "equal" society.

→ Taking the above mentioned aspects into consideration, we still assume a high and wide spread approval of the social attribution of poverty in East Germany, whereas internal explanations are much less preferred.

Due to the fact that egalitarian values were widely spread under the Soviet regime and the responsibility for equal distribution was borne by political institutions, it still seems reasonable to suspect particularly older generations – which were socialized within/by the communist regime – to favor external attribution patterns. Considering the transformation process, our assumptions strengthen by taking the difficulties of the transformation process into account.

In terms of explaining *differences* in the attribution patterns *between East and West Germany*, the question needs to be raised whether differences in the perceived legitimacy of the distribution systems are due to structural or mainly cultural aspects. Besides considering structural and cultural influences as separate from each other to explain differences between East and West Germany, a combination of both seems likely – in so far as the socialisation might have an influence on the perception of the economic conditions as well as the evaluation of one's own social standing within the community.

Arguing within the *cultural* approach, following differences derive from the assumptions stated above:

→ Due to the fact that political justice ideologies largely promoted egalitarian norms which persisted among the public of all post communist countries, we expect East Germans to ascribe poverty rather to social/external failings than to internal causes in contrast to their West German counterparts who largely explain poverty within internal causation patterns.

Regarding the process of transformation, it is questionable, how far we can go in assuming that socialization-processes of the soviet regime are still relevant for next/growing up generations. For this reason, we need to examine the differences in attribution patterns between generations in East Germany.

Arguing within the *structural* approach, we need to consider the differences between East and West Germany regarding the infrastructure as well as the economic and so-

cial conditions. Although large structural advancements have to be recorded e.g. in terms of high productivity rates, large deficits regarding the infrastructure still exist predominantly in the East (Pohl 1998). Increasing unemployment and poverty are the inevitably outcome. Speaking with Rose and Haerpfer (1994) "If unemployment is rising, then individuals may react negatively, even if they are not currently unemployed or fearing unemployment" (Rose & Haerpfer 1994: 8).

→ For this reason, we also expect larger approval of the external attribution patterns in East than in West Germany.

Considering the individual living conditions, we assume that the social position of the individual has an influence on the attribution of poverty for East and West Germans. In how far we need to expect differences in the perception and evaluation of the personal socio-economic position due to the environmental as well as institutional settings will be the task of the following analyses.

Regarding changes in attribution patterns from 1991 to 2006, following assumptions can be deduced by the above stated theoretical findings.

→ Due to the high impact of the transformation process, we expect to find evidence for larger changes in the attribution of poverty in East than in West Germany.

In addition, we argue that the overall economic-performance (on the macro-level), which has been worsening over the last years in particularly in East Germany, has at least some effect on the evaluation of the distribution system.

→ We expect an overall increasing approval of the external attribution of poverty seems reasonable due to high unemployment and poverty rates, most likely perceived as external insurmountable obstacles.

Salient changes might be acknowledged for East Germans, "the losers of the transformation process".

Arguing from a micro-structural perspective, we expect to find evidence for assimilation between East and West Germany. Although people in the East are more affected by unemployment and lower income, the overall economic wellbeing has largely improved in East Germany since unification.

→ Within structural theory, we need to assume that the overall assimilation of living conditions between East and West Germany causes an approximation in poverty attribution between both regions.

Cultural theory regards values and norms as stable and long-lasting (Wegener 2003). In so far, regarding the differences between East and West Germany, we argue that due to the largely promoted egalitarian norms under the communist regime and the "structural promoted individualism" in West Germany, both countries differ widely in the amount of political intervention and kind of poverty attribution (see cultural theory above).

→ Assuming that cultural factors dominate in the attribution of poverty, we expect to find time constant differences between East and West Germany.

Data and Methods

The analyses are based on cross-sectional time-series data of the International Social Justice Project (ISJP) for the following years: 1991, 1996, 2000 and 2006, focusing on the comparison between former East and West Germany. Based on stratified probability samples, 11,254 people (in total) at the age of 18 to 65 participated in the project in Germany (4,195 for East Germany and 7,059 for West Germany). In detail, the samples cover 1,019 analysable cases for East Germany and 1,837 for West Germany in 1991 (Alwin & Wegener 1995); 1,137 cases for East Germany and 987 for West Germany in 1996 (Christoph et al. 1998); 1,324 cases for East Germany and 1,891 for West Germany in 2000 (Hauss et al. 2001); 715 cases for East Germany and 2,344 for West Germany in 2006 (Legewie 2006). The respond-rate of each time-sample reached from x% to x%, guaranteeing representative results for East and West Germany. The core-questionnaire was used at all four time points, mainly focusing on general beliefs in social justice including information about the social demographic situation of all participants.

From the core-questionnaire, following items were selected to represent the two dimensions of poverty attribution. Asking for different reasons "why there are poor people in Germany today?", the participants had to choose on a scale from 1 (very often) to 5 (never) the impact of each of the following items: lack of ability or talent, loose morals and drunkenness, lack of effort by the poor themselves, prejudice and discrimination against certain groups in Germany, lack of equal opportunity and the failure of the economic system.

A maximum-likelihood factor analysis with varimax-rotation was carried out to extract the expected two dimensional attribution pattern – assuming that both factors are independent of each other. $Table\ I$ shows the results of the factor analysis for both regions within the given time-period. As expected, the first factor reads like the external or social attribution-dimension, including "prejudice/discrimination", "lack of opportunity" as well as the "failure of the economic system" as reasons for poverty. The second factor can be regarded as the internal causation of poverty by covering explanations such as "no ability/talent", "loose morals and drunkenness" as well as "lack of effort". Testing for differences between East and West Germany as well as between the different time samples, the factor analyses state low deviations within the given factor structure.²

Table I: Factor-scores for poverty attribution in Germany (all years)

Item: Reasons for poverty in Germany	Extern	Intern	Uniqueness
Lack of ability or talent	-0.08	0.46	0.78
Loose morals and drunkenness	0.02	0.58	0.67
Lack of effort	-0.08	0.76	0.42
Prejudice and discrimination	0.61	0.07	0.63
Lack of equal opportunity	0.84	-0.06	0.30
Failure of the economic system	0.55	-0.15	0.67
Explained variance	1.39	1.16	

N = 10276; Maximum Likelihood Factor Analysis; varimax-rotation; Share of explained variance: 0.43; Log Likelihood (2 Faktoren): -21.32; Likelihood-Ratio-Test independent vs. saturated: chi2(15) = 9989.38; Prob>chi2 = 0.0000; 2 factors vs. saturated chi2(4) = 42.62 Prob>chi2 = 0.0000; BIC: 1 factor: 4020.90; 2 factors: 144.25; 3 factors: 138.56; correlation b/w factors: -.04;

Analysing whether structural or cultural effects determine the differences in poverty-attribution between East and West Germany within the given time-range (1991-2006), following independent variables of the ISJP data are used: age, sex, income-quartiles (equivalised net household income)³, level of education (casmin), (actual) unemployment experience, the evaluation of one's own social standing, as well as the two justice ideologies – egalitarianism and individualism⁴. Whereas the equivalised net household income together with the reported education serves as an indicator for the objective socio-economic position of the individual, the perceived social status is expected to give more psychological insights into – what is called – the self attribution error. More detailed information about cultural effects on poverty attribution is likely

² The results of the factor analysis are (with small deviations) in line with the results of previous research (Kluegel et al. 1995; Stephenson 2000, Christoph 2000).

³ The quartile groups are based on the equivalised net household income, which is measured over the whole net household income (including all welfare contributions) adjusted for household size and composition using the new OECD-equivalence scale. To keep the sample-size high an additional dummy-variable is created/built covering all cases with no income information.

⁴ The measurement of both justice ideologies follows the criteria of Stark et al. 2005.

to be given by the two justice ideologies – individualism and egalitarianism – which are expected to represent the dominant ideologies of either East or West Germany (see Wegener 2003; Liebig & Wegener 2000).

Starting with what Wegener (2003) calls the short-term change approach: we first look at the differences in attribution between East and West Germany over time whether the legitimacy of the distribution system has changed from 1991 to 1996, from 1996 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2006 in both regions. Examining the means of the factor scores over time - both regions in relation to each other - we are able to test our prediction about the direction and the amount of change in the belief systems for East and West Germany (over time). Furthermore, it will be of great relevance, to find either (a) tendencies of assimilation, (b) a continuing division or (c) a widening gap in the legitimacy of the distribution system for former East and West Germany. If we find evidence for (a) assimilation, the cultural effect/ the socialisation of the former soviet-system seems to loose its impact over time - indicating that people in East Germany are adjusting to the new political and economic institutions accepting the underling justice beliefs and distribution principles. If instead (b) parallel change patterns are discovered, it will seem likely that cultural/socialization factors have a timeconstant effect on poverty attribution (East-West-difference), although structural effects, e.g. overall living conditions, independently (from the cultural background) influence the poverty-attribution in East and West Germany. Finally, (c) an increasing distance in the attribution patterns of East and West Germans will indicate a tremendous cultural effect. In this regard, the socialisation in different political as well as economic settings will be responsible for the perception and interpretation of the environment as well as for different attributions of the socio-economic position (Meulemann 2002).

After getting a first impression of the differences between East and West Germany in poverty-attribution patterns, we will gain more detailed information about the predictions made by structural and cultural effects on poverty attribution by multivariate-regression models in line with a modified variant of the residual variation approach (Wegener 2003). As Wegener (2003) has outlined in his paper on justice ideologies in East and West Germany – referring to Galtung (1982) – , the cultural effect will be visible by looking at the remaining unexplained variation, after testing what effects structural determinants have on the attribution patterns of individuals living in either East or West Germany. "Only if there is variation remaining unexplained when comparing the two parts of Germany, i.e. variation that cannot be attributed to structural factors, we conclude that this variation may be ascribable to the influence of 'culture'" (Wegener 2003: 221). Analysing the legitimacy of the distribution system, we will

modify this approach by adding a cultural component via two justice ideologies - individualism and egalitarianism – arguing, that these ideologies serve either as dominant or challenging beliefs in East and West Germany and are part of the cultural setting of both countries. Although Wegener (2003) as well as Liebig and Wegener (2000) argue that justice ideologies are mainly explained by structural components and can be regarded as what they call "rational values", individualism as well as egalitarianism are widely discussed in the literature as differing belief systems of either the Western or the Eastern culture. Controlling for structural effects we only expect to discover "cultural" effects in terms of justice ideologies, if they explain - independently of the social structure - part of the variance of the attribution patterns. Technically, the residual variation approach is implemented by hierarchical regression models. We first test for East-West differences over time in poverty attribution, adding all (objective) structural variables in a second model, searching also for generational differences. After including the subjective interpretation of the social standing - testing for additional explanatory power of subjective measurements - we will turn in a forth model to cultural determinants measured by justice ideologies.

Results

The Dynamics of Poverty Attribution

Regarding the dynamics in poverty attribution between East and West Germany, we compare the mean factor-scores of the two poverty attribution patterns over time. First of all special attention needs to be drawn on the fact that we are dealing with cross-sectional data. Looking at the differences in time between two regions, developments might appear to be linear, although they are only shortcuts of the attitudes within the society every four to fife years.

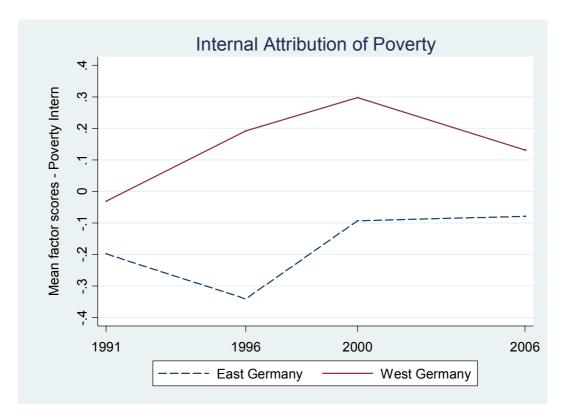
Bearing these considerations in mind, we turn first to the differences within East and West Germany. As expected, Figure 1 and 2 indicate a preference for internal attribution patterns in West Germany, whereas the external attribution of poverty is much more favoured in East Germany.

Looking at the internal poverty attribution over time, Figure 1 indicates an increase within the internal attribution patterns in West Germany from 1991 to 2000, with a small decrease between 2000 and 2006. Testing for significance, time changes prove positive. Regarding East Germany, similar tendencies are observed compared to the West, however, an exceptional disapproval of the internal poverty attribution is discovered in 1996. This strong disapproval of the internal attribution going hand in hand

with the strong approval of the external attribution might be an indicator for the structural setbacks East Germans had to experience in the mid nineties. After a period of fast economic upswing, rising unemployment and poverty as well as a decrease in productivity promoted feelings of frustration within the East German society in the mid nineties. In so far as East Germans experienced and sensitised to the structural causes of poverty, the exceptional high disapproval of internal as well as agreement with external attribution patterns for poverty seem reasonable.

Regarding the differences in the dynamics of the internal poverty attribution between East and West Germany, we discover high variances. Explaining the strong disapproval of 1996 by structural as well as emotional aspects, we still discover a constant gab between East and West Germany with slow assimilation tendencies, pointing towards socialisation effects.

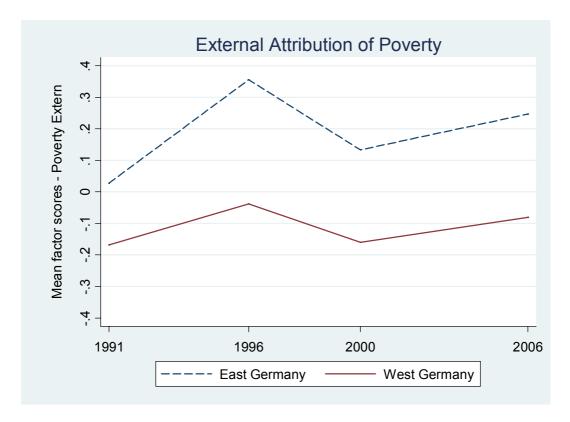
Figure 1: Differences in the dynamics of the internal poverty attribution between East an West Germany, 1991-2006



Regarding the external attribution of poverty over time, figure 2 shows large variances within time for East and West Germany. However, exceptional large changes in attribution patterns are to be discovered for East Germany. Whereas a large increase in 1996 was followed by a (large) decrease in 2000, again a medium increase has been discovered in 2006. (All time changes prove significant.) The similar variance-patterns between East and West Germany might indicate the consequences of macro-structural effects e.g. the economic and social conditions within the society (see Wegener & Liebig 2000). However, the constant gab between East and West Germans point to cul-

tural differences in the attribution of poverty. Comparing the gab of 2006 with the one of 1991, tendencies of an increase in the divergent attribution patterns can be discovered, pointing to cultural effects in the perception and interpretation of structural changes.

Figure 2: Differences in the dynamics of the external poverty attribution between East an West Germany, 1991-2006



In sum, the results illustrate a widened gab between East and West Germany in the attribution of poverty, most likely indicating cultural differences between East and West Germany. However, the very similar variances in the attribution patterns between East and West Germany indicate a dependence on poverty judgement regarding structural macro-phenomena e.g. the overall living conditions. Comparing the mean scores of 2006 with 1991, we notice an overall increase in the internal as well as external poverty attribution in East and West Germany. Although an increase in the internal attribution pattern can be regarded as an increase in the legitimacy of the distribution system following market justice principles, the simultaneous increase in the external attribution particularly in the East points to a growing illegitimacy of market justice distribution procedures in the East.

The Residual Variation Approach

Following the *Residual Variation Approach*, we focus more closely on the question if rather cultural or structural factors cause divergent patterns in poverty attribution between East and West Germany.

Regarding both regions within one model, we find evidence for a structural causation of almost all of the time-differences in **internal** attribution patterns for East Germany compared to West Germany in 1991 (Table 2). Although 1996 still needs to be regarded as an exceptional finding, attribution patterns of East Germany in 1991, 2000 and 2006 do not significantly deviate (anymore) from the approval of internal attribution patterns in West Germany 1991. However, assimilation between East and West Germany seems unlikely due to changes in attribution patterns in West Germany. Socio-economic factors like unemployment and low income can be seen as dispositional for a disapproval of internal causation patterns. Whereas people with a high perceived social standing favour internal attributions more likely than their lower counterparts, high education lowers the probability of agreement to the internal explanations of poverty. Looking at cultural factors, the results prove generational effects, indicating differences in socialisation patterns. Younger Generations seem to favour individual causation patterns of poverty more than older ones. They remain stable after controlling for justice ideologies. Whereas egalitarianism seems to have only a small negative impact on the internal attribution of poverty, individualism strongly influences the approval of internal causation patterns - explaining four percent of the remaining unexplained variation.

Regarding the determinants of **external** attribution patterns, the results prove wide variations in time for East Germany whereas West Germany remains highly time constant (with one exception in 1996). However, structural effects do not seem to explain much of the time variations between East and West Germany for external attribution patterns. The only aspect, structural causes seem to explain, is the difference between East and West Germany in 1991. Nevertheless, the predictions of socio-economic characteristics are in line with the results stated for internal attribution patterns. Unemployment, social standing as well as the actual income influence highly the approval of external attribution patterns. Considering generational differences, the results prove an overall increase of external attribution patterns for younger generations – similar to the results of internal attribution. Taking both justice ideologies into account, the analysis discovers strong positive (egalitarianism) and negative (individualism) effects for both justice ideologies, explaining seven percent of the remaining variance.

Table 2: OLS Regression of internal and external poverty attribution, 1991-2006

	Internal				External			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
West 1991	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
West 1996	0.21 (5.98)**	0.21 (5.84)**	0.20 (5.60)**	0.21 (6.03)**	0.13 (3.35)**	0.09 (2.50)*	0.11 (2.84)**	0.11 (3.14)**
West 2000	0.32 (10.66)**	0.31 (10.27)**	0.30 (9.92)**	0.27 (9.06)**	-0.01 (0.27)	-0.04 (1.35)	-0.03 (0.88)	0.03 (1.06)
West 2006	0.19 (6.78)**	0.16 (5.58)**	0.17 (5.63)**	0.18 (6.42)**	0.05 (1.61)	0.00 (0.14)	0.00 (0.11)	-0.01 (0.18)
East 1991	-0.12 (3.39)**	-0.06 (1.59)	-0.03 (0.85)	0.03 (0.91)	0.16 (4.05)**	0.07 (1.65)	0.03 (0.74)	-0.10 (2.47)*
East 1996	-0.36 (10.40)**	-0.32 (9.22)**	-0.32 (9.01)**	-0.25 (7.27)**	0.48 (12.83)**	0.42 (11.22)**	0.41 (10.99)**	0.31 (8.42)**
East 2000	-0.08 (2.58)**	-0.04 (1.27)	-0.03 (0.79)	0.03 (0.93)	0.30 (8.62)**	0.22 (6.29)**	0.20 (5.71)**	0.11 (3.15)**
East 2006	-0.09 (2.23)*	-0.07 (1.85)	-0.05 (1.14)	0.03 (0.70)	0.39 (9.23)**	0.31 (7.20)**	0.27 (6.34)**	0.17 (3.99)**
Gen. – 1934		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Gen.1935-44		0.01 (0.39)	0.01 (0.19)	0.01 (0.29)		0.04 (1.38)	0.05 (1.65)	0.05 (1.62)
Gen.1945-54		-0.05 (1.70)	-0.05 (1.74)	-0.04 (1.30)		0.07 (2.14)*	0.07 (2.19)*	0.05 (1.74)
Gen.1955-64		-0.02 (0.76)	-0.02 (0.68)	0.01 (0.23)		0.13 (4.36)**	0.13 (4.28)**	0.10 (3.55)**
Gen.1965-74		0.08 (2.54)*	0.08 (2.73)**	0.09 (3.11)**		0.14 (4.40)**	0.14 (4.21)**	0.13 (4.05)**
Gen.1975 –		0.17 (4.55)**	0.17 (4.83)**	0.18 (5.03)**		0.09 (2.32)*	0.08 (2.01)*	0.07 (1.75)
Voman		0.02 (1.08)	0.01 (0.86)	0.04 (2.17)*		0.13 (7.44)**	0.14 (7.77)**	0.10 (5.87)**
Casmin 1		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Casmin 2		-0.01 (0.34)	-0.12 (1.26)	-0.09 (3.85)**		-0.07 (3.02)**	0.05 (1.94)	0.05 (2.04)*
Casmin 3		-0.07 (3.08)**	-0.03 (4.79)**	-0.02 (1.13)		-0.01 (0.25)	-0.04 (1.89)	-0.03 (1.38)
Jnemployed		-0.19 (5.38)**	-0.14 (3.89)**	-0.12 (3.43)**		0.22 (6.04)**	0.16 (4.21)**	0.13 (3.57)**
ncome quintil 1		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
ncome quintil 2		0.08 (2.87)**	0.05 (1.98)*	0.05 (1.82)		-0.07 (2.57)*	-0.04 (1.48)	-0.03 (1.18)
ncome quintil 3		0.09 (3.32)**	0.05 (1.86)	0.05 (1.78)		-0.15 (5.19)**	-0.10 (3.37)**	-0.09 (3.14)**
ncome quintil 4		0.19 (6.45)**	0.12 (3.98)**	0.09 (3.06)**		-0.26 (8.38)**	-0.17 (5.33)**	-0.11 (3.73)**
No income inf.		0.13 (4.59)**	0.09 (3.09)**	0.07 (2.56)*		-0.17 (5.50)**	-0.11 (3.67)**	-0.07 (2.42)*
Social standing			0.05 (8.67)**	0.03 (6.20)**			-0.07 (10.72)**	-0.05 (7.80)**
Egalitarianism				-0.04 (2.92)**				0.20 (15.04)*
ndividualism				0.25 (18.57)**				-0.21 (14.54)*
Constant	-0.06 (2.61)**	-0.15 (4.50)**	-0.38 (8.91)**	-0.34 (8.14)**	-0.14 (6.03)**	-0.09 (2.62)**	0.21 (4.55)**	0.14 (3.08)**
Observations	9002	9002	9002	9002	9002	9002	9002	9002
R-squared	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.12	0.04	0.06	0.07	0.13

Absolute value of t statistics in parentheses; * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Although the results indicate a large influence of structural as well as cultural effects in poverty attribution, no differentiation in the strength of determination between East and West Germany can be derived. Is seems possible that overall cultural factors due to different socialisation processes – illustrated by generational and ideological effects – show different results for East and West Germany. Looking at separate models for East and West Germany, we expect to find evidence for structural as well as cultural differences explaining poverty attribution.

Table 3 shows separately the models for the internal attribution of poverty for East and West Germany. In reference to 1991, high variations in time still prove for West Germany, whereas East Germany only significantly deviates in its internal poverty attribution in 1996. Regarding structural characteristics, the result present small deviations between East and West Germany. Whereas unemployment largely explains disapproval of internal attribution patterns in East Germany, socio-economic security in terms of income ... predicts highly the internal explanation in West Germany. For East Germany a strong disagreement with internal explanation patterns is also influences by a high level of education. Culturally speaking, high generational differences can be discovered for East Germany. Younger generations show much higher approval of internal attribution patterns than their older counterparts. Considering the two justice ideologies, individualism highly predicts the internal attribution of poverty in both regions, whereas egalitarianism proves only significant for East Germany. This result is not surprising, in so far as individualism highly correlates with the internal attribution of poverty. Regarding egalitarian beliefs, evidence is found for the split-consciousness theory in West Germany due to the fact that egalitarianism does not influence the internal attribution of poverty. In this regard it needs to be mentioned that the internal attribution does not prove as the dominant ideology for West Germany, indicated by the dependence on structural characteristics, similar to external attribution patterns (see Table 4).

Turning to the explanation of **external** attribution patterns, the results point out a high variation in time for East Germany, whereas West Germany is rather time constant – with one exception in 1996 (*Table 4*). While unemployment again proves as highly influencing for East Germany, the individual income position as well as the perceived social standing influence the external attribution in both regions. In terms of cultural effects, we do not find evidence for generational differences in East Germany, although, regarding West Germany, strongly increasing approval of the external attribution of poverty is discovered for younger generations compared to the older counterparts. Additionally, the two justice ideologies do explain much of the variance, influencing strongly the external attribution of poverty. Whereas the positive impact of

egalitarian beliefs is higher in East than in West Germany, individualism has a higher negative influence in West than in East Germany.

Table 3: Regression models of internal poverty attribution in East and West Germany

	East				West			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1991	Ref.							
1996	-0.24 (6.02)**	-0.27 (6.77)**	-0.29 (7.13)**	-0.30 (7.44)**	0.21 (6.00)**	0.21 (6.02)**	0.20 (5.72)**	0.22 (6.19)**
2000	0.04 (1.00)	0.01 (0.20)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.37)	0.32 (10.68)**	0.32 (10.55)**	0.30 (10.10)**	0.27 (9.27)**
2006	0.03 (0.78)	-0.06 (1.29)	-0.05 (1.18)	-0.05 (1.03)	0.19 (6.80)**	0.19 (6.25)**	0.19 (6.23)**	0.20 (6.94)**
Gen 1934		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Gen.1935-44		0.09 (2.20)*	0.09 (2.04)*	0.07 (1.75)		-0.04 (1.24)	-0.05 (1.38)	-0.04 (1.10)
Gen.1945-54		0.02 (0.40)	0.01 (0.30)	-0.01 (0.29)		-0.09 (2.40)*	-0.09 (2.41)*	-0.05 (1.54)
Gen.1955-64		0.14 (2.94)**	0.13 (2.83)**	0.10 (2.22)*		-0.12 (3.35)**	-0.11 (3.18)**	-0.06 (1.78)
Gen.1965-74		0.16 (2.99)**	0.15 (2.86)**	0.12 (2.29)*		0.03 (0.70)	0.04 (1.05)	0.06 (1.76)
Gen.1975 -		0.40 (6.27)**	0.38 (6.09)**	0.32 (5.22)**		0.04 (0.96)	0.07 (1.49)	0.09 (2.12)*
Woman		0.01 (0.46)	0.01 (0.20)	0.02 (0.58)		0.02 (1.12)	0.02 (1.08)	0.05 (2.39)*
Casmin 1		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Casmin 2		-0.04 (0.98)	-0.11 (1.08)	-0.09 (0.66)		0.00 (0.09)	-0.12 (3.89)**	-0.03 (2.98)**
Casmin 3		-0.09 (2.12)*	-0.04 (2.61)**	-0.02 (2.12)*		-0.06 (2.09)*	-0.03 (1.02)	-0.09 (0.99)
Unemployed		-0.24 (5.37)**	-0.20 (4.38)**	-0.17 (3.89)**		-0.13 (2.31)*	-0.07 (1.29)	-0.05 (0.99)
Income quintil 1		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Income quintil 2		0.04 (1.01)	0.02 (0.40)	0.00 (0.08)		0.12 (3.15)**	0.10 (2.56)*	0.10 (2.63)**
Income quintil 3		0.06 (1.48)	0.03 (0.61)	0.00 (0.08)		0.12 (3.29)**	0.08 (2.16)*	0.09 (2.39)*
Income quintil 4		0.17 (3.19)**	0.11 (1.95)	0.07 (1.26)		0.20 (5.61)**	0.13 (3.59)**	0.11 (3.14)**
No income inf.		0.17 (3.48)**	0.13 (2.75)**	0.09 (1.90)		0.13 (3.45)**	0.08 (2.22)*	0.08 (2.26)*
Social standing			0.04 (4.30)**	0.03 (2.77)**			0.06 (7.52)**	0.04 (5.52)**
Egalitarianism				-0.09 (3.61)**				-0.02 (1.12)
Individualism				0.22 (10.35)**				0.26 (15.05)**
Constant	-0.18 (6.20)**	-0.25 (5.02)**	-0.41 (6.61)**	-0.25 (3.88)**	-0.06 (2.62)**	-0.14 (3.35)**	-0.39 (7.43)**	-0.38 (7.23)**
Observations	3359	3359	3359	3359	5643	5643	5643	5643
R-squared	0.02	0.05	0.05	0.09	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.08

Absolute value of t statistics in parentheses;

^{*} significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Table 4: Regression models of external poverty attribution in East and West Germany

	East				West			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1991	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
1996	0.32 (7.69)**	0.34 (8.08)**	0.37 (8.82)**	0.40 (9.66)**	0.13 (3.32)**	0.09 (2.23)*	0.10 (2.52)*	0.10 (2.81)**
2000	0.15 (3.66)**	0.16 (3.85)**	0.17 (4.20)**	0.20 (5.14)**	-0.01 (0.27)	-0.05 (1.70)	-0.04 (1.26)	0.02 (0.72)
2006	0.23 (5.06)**	0.27 (5.55)**	0.26 (5.39)**	0.27 (5.78)**	0.05 (1.60)	-0.01 (0.38)	-0.01 (0.33)	-0.01 (0.43)
Gen 1934	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Gen.1935-44		0.01 (0.15)	0.02 (0.46)	0.04 (0.93)		0.05 (1.36)	0.06 (1.48)	0.04 (1.13)
Gen.1945-54		-0.05 (1.08)	-0.04 (0.89)	-0.01 (0.15)		0.12 (3.11)**	0.12 (3.13)**	0.08 (2.11)*
Gen.1955-64		-0.06 (1.28)	-0.05 (1.08)	-0.00 (0.03)		0.23 (6.12)**	0.22 (5.97)**	0.16 (4.38)**
Gen.1965-74		-0.09 (1.70)	-0.08 (1.45)	-0.03 (0.52)		0.26 (6.36)**	0.24 (6.07)**	0.21 (5.30)**
Gen.1975 -		-0.13 (1.98)*	-0.11 (1.64)	-0.02 (0.32)		0.20 (4.17)**	0.18 (3.71)**	0.12 (2.59)**
Woman		0.07 (2.51)*	0.09 (3.01)**	0.07 (2.46)*		0.16 (7.13)**	0.17 (7.21)**	0.12 (5.29)**
Casmin 1		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Casmin 2		0.02 (0.54)	0.12 (2.80)**	0.11 (0.41)		-0.09 (3.29)**	-0.06 (2.25)*	-0.04 (0.34)
Casmin 3		0.08 (1.85)	0.03 (0.73)	0.02 (2.63)**		-0.05 (1.55)	0.01 (0.18)	0.01 (1.61)
Unemployed		0.29 (6.17)**	0.21 (4.41)**	0.18 (3.88)**		0.16 (2.69)**	0.11 (1.76)	0.07 (1.16)
Income quintil 1		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Income quintil 2		-0.11 (2.72)**	-0.06 (1.57)	-0.05 (1.27)		-0.05 (1.30)	-0.03 (0.76)	-0.02 (0.58)
Income quintil 3		-0.18 (4.05)**	-0.11 (2.42)*	-0.07 (1.70)		-0.16 (3.92)**	-0.11 (2.88)**	-0.12 (3.00)**
Income quintil 4		-0.27 (4.82)**	-0.15 (2.56)*	-0.09 (1.63)		-0.24 (6.33)**	-0.18 (4.46)**	-0.13 (3.37)**
No income inf.		-0.17 (3.39)**	-0.11 (2.07)*	-0.05 (1.01)		-0.16 (4.10)**	-0.12 (2.97)**	-0.09 (2.31)*
Social standing			-0.08 (8.13)**	-0.06 (6.27)**			-0.05 (6.82)**	-0.04 (4.62)**
Egalitarianism				0.23 (8.53)**				0.19 (12.03)**
Individualism				-0.18 (7.90)**				-0.22 (11.99)**
Constant	0.02 (0.53)	0.06 (1.18)	0.38 (5.87)**	0.13 (1.99)*	-0.14 (5.97)**	-0.15 (3.36)**	0.10 (1.83)	0.07 (1.19)
Observations	3359	3359	3359	3359	5643	5643	5643	5643
R-squared	0.02	0.05	0.07	0.11	0.00	0.04	0.05	0.10

Absolute value of t statistics in parentheses;

^{*} significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Conclusion

In our study we drew attention on changes in the legitimization of the distribution system between East and West Germany. In the tradition of social justice research, we focused on poverty attribution patterns and its changes over time. Aiming to testify whether structural or cultural factors are responsible for the still existing gab between East and West Germany, we employed two different methods popular in social justice research to analyse perceptions and legitimization patterns of social inequality: the short term change approach as well as the residual variation approach. We want to conclude, with a short summary of the major findings tying them to the above stated hypotheses: (1) First of all, in line with the split-consciousness theory as well as previous studies, we extracted two independent factors - one ascribing poverty to internal attributions like loose morals, ability and lack of effort, another external one explaining poverty by prejudice and discrimination, the failure of the economic system as well as the lack of equal opportunity. (2) Focusing on differences between East and West Germany, our expectations were met in discovering higher approval for external attribution patterns as well as lower support for internal ones by East Germans compared to their Western counterparts. Regarding the legitimization pattern of inequality in time series, the gab between East and West Germany maintained over time - without indicating tendencies of assimilation. (3) Considering structural as well as cultural aspects – the results of the short-term change approach indicated – in showing similar variation tendencies between East and West Germany - that overall macro-structural condition influence the attribution of poverty in East and West Germany. (4) Expecting larger variation in East Germany due to the transformation process and its struggles, the results proved true in particular for the external attribution of inequality. (5) Further, we assumed an increase in external causation patterns in both regions due to rising unemployment and poverty rates attributed in the media highly to structural deficits. In this regard, we only find evidence for East Germany showing a high increase in the external attribution of poverty, whereas raising approval for internal attribution patterns was discovered for people living in West Germany. (6) Testing for structural and cultural determinants, we found evidence for a structural causation of dissimilarities between East Germany in reference to West Germany in 1991, although changes over time within East Germany could not be referred to micro-structural settings. Whereas structural factors proved highly predictable for internal as well as external attribution patterns, cultural factors e.g. justice ideologies as well as generational differences indicating effects of socialisation need to be considered in explaining different attribution patterns in East and West. (7) Regarding generational differences in separate models for East and West Germany, the results indicate trends of assimilation: whereas younger Generations in East Germany prefer more often internal attribution patterns than their older counterparts – pointing out raising approval for market justice principles – young generations in the West favour more often external attribution patterns – articulating their disapproval with the actual distributions system.

Our findings highlight long lasting differences in the approval of the distribution system between East and West Germany – with rather small assimilation tendencies regarding younger generations. Pointing in particular to cultural differences between East and West Germany, further research is needed, which considers differences in the perception of macro-structural changes due to cultural settings.

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