Values of German media users : 1986-2007
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3 Aim and Scope of the Study

The present study investigates an important aspect of the relationships between individual values and media use: What values lead one to prefer certain media channels or outlets and certain types of content?

This question is not only relevant in order to further describe the typical audience of a newspaper, television channel or program. It also adds to knowledge about the steering power of values in decisions and behavior. And with regard to mass media use especially, it is an open question to what extent users notice the values disseminated by media and how much they orient their selection behavior according to these mediated value patterns. As discussed above, media do carry values, and differences across outlets or genres have been documented from numerous angles. What is unclear is how these differences affect users’ media behavior or, more generally speaking, how exactly personal values and use of value-laden media are related.

I will focus on television and print news as the media with the largest audiences in the country that will serve as an exemplar, Germany. This country seems a good choice because of its diverse, yet still manageable TV landscape as well as its well-documented conservative/liberal print spectrum. It also shares qualities with many other countries, especially in Europe.

In addition, Germany lends itself as an object of study because of the drastic expansion that has occurred within its media system over the last twenty to twenty-five years. Has this led to more choice for the audience—also in terms of values as criteria of selection? In this study, I will investigate historical developments in media use and its relationships to audience members’ values. To be precise, I will study values and media use in Germany for the 22 years between 1986 and 2007, the period of the greatest expansion of electronic media to date.

But what are possible consequences of such an increase in media offerings? If people choose media according to their values, what happens once the mediated offer expands? Does more choice lead to a stronger relationship because in a more diverse setting people are better able to select media that are in accordance with their values? Plausibly, and following Festinger (1957), selecting media
content according to one’s values starts with selective exposure, already at the level of media outlets. Selective exposure could lead to not even scanning specific TV stations, magazines and newspapers for articles and programs that seem to agree with one’s values. So, some communication channels may actually be avoided completely. Graphic examples could be the Playboy and Playboy Channel for people with Christian and family values and the New York Times, even CNN, for those who think that worrying about politics is a waste of time.

Selective exposure to communication content is the first step in a series of techniques that individuals can use to confirm rather than challenge their personal values. But, clearly, the autonomy of the audience in this respect depends heavily on the availability of a diverse media offering: As long as there were only two or three television channels, for instance, people with liberal values may have had difficulty always finding offers on television that confirmed their worldviews. In other words, as long as the mediated offer for the average person is limited, audience members must make do with content that may not fit their value system very well. The more diverse a media system becomes in what it offers, the more choices people can make, and the closer the match between their values and their media consumption should be.

Of course, there has always been a controversy about how diverse the mediated offer actually becomes once a media system expands (see, e.g., L. B. Becker & Schoenbach, 1989). Do more outlets really mean that the audience has more choice in selecting media according to its expectations, or at least to its general values? Optimists have tended to say that the addition of even just one more movie channel on television means a substantial broadening of the offer now accessible, at least for movie fans—although culture critics may think that this choice is just an illusion (see, e.g., Adorno, 1963/1986). For them it is “just more movies,” thus basically “more of the same.”

Yet, Youn (1994) found that in a multi-channel situation viewers’ selection behavior was correlated more strongly with their genre preference than in a situation with only a small number of channels available. Thus, media users today—as opposed to 30 years ago—should be able to construct their media diet at least somewhat more in accordance with the preferences they hold—including their values. So the relationship between one’s values and the media content selected should have become closer in recent years. One of the consequences should be an increasing fragmentation of media users into an ever growing number of small publics each with its own homogenous value system (see Holtz-Bacha & Peiser, 1999; Sunstein, 2001, 2007).
3.1 The Country under Study: Germany

Like many other European countries, the German media system has seen a drastic expansion over the last two decades, which makes it possible to study effects of a more diverse offering on relationships between values and media preferences. This chapter provides an overview of values and media in Germany. Results of a content analysis of German TV programs illustrate how values are reflected in the Germans' favorite medium.

Germany is well-covered by values research, not only in comparative analyses (e.g., Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Schwartz, 2006), but also in studies on specifically German particularities (Gensicke, 2000; Klages, 1984, 1988; Klages & Gensicke, 2005; Klein, 1995; Klein & Ohr, 2004; Meulemann, 2001). With its recent history of 40 years of separation into two independent states and the reunification of 1990, it also serves as an example of how value change within societies occurs and how socialization in different ideological surroundings may influence values.

3.1.1 Values in Germany

One instrument of value patterns that has been specially developed for Germany is the values inventory of the German Research Institute for Public Administration Research in Speyer (Gensicke, 2000, 2001; Klages & Gensicke, 2005). Building on Klages's (1984, 1988) earlier dichotomy of self-development, hedonism and egalitarianism on the one hand versus obedience, discipline and compliance on the other, the scholars have developed a German values inventory that explores four dimensions (the short version used in Klages & Gensicke, 2005, produces three dimensions): A first dimension (labeled “mainstream”) represents the most widely accepted values in Germany, such as a good family life and partnership, obedience, security, industriousness and responsibility. This factor is interpreted as the fundamental basis of “being German” and living a safe and law-abiding life in the cultural middle. Unsurprisingly, this value dimension is linked to the second: tradition—which includes values such as patriotism, faith in God, conformism and respect for tradition. More in accordance with the goal of self-development is a third dimension linking idealism (helping the socially deprived, tolerance, political engagement) with creativity and abundant social contacts. Finally, materialism and hedonism constitute the fourth dimension: power and influence, the fulfillment of needs, a high standard of living and enjoying life.
Apart from the typical cross-sectional analyses based on gender, age or education, values in Germany are usually differentiated by regional origin, contrasting East with West Germany (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Schwartz, 2006). This reflects the fact that values are acquired through socialization and that two German states coexisted for 40 years. Thus, two German cultures developed independently before being politically reunited in 1990 (for a summary, see, e.g., Gensicke, 2000; Mochmann, 2002).

One of the major differences between the societal development in the GDR (East) and FRG (West) concerns the changes that set in around the end of the 1960s in many Western countries and also heavily affected West, but not East Germany. Klages (1984, 1988) found that since that time, traditional German values such as discipline, obedience and compliance had decreased in importance in West Germany, while self-development, hedonism and egalitarianism rose to new heights (in principle corroborating Inglehart’s (1971, 1977) findings). In public discourse this is mostly discussed as a “post-1968 effect.” Unfortunately, no comparative studies on values in both German states were conducted before 1990. But Gensicke’s (1998) reconstruction of educational goals in the East and West suggests that traditional values continued to exert a relatively strong influence in the GDR while their importance was already declining in the FRG. Gensicke concludes that there were decisive differences in the value ideals of both countries. These differences should not come as a surprise given the deep ideological rift between socialist and capitalist countries during the Cold War which made both German states bastions of their respective political blocks. Socialist doctrine was much more oriented toward obedience and the greater good while in the West personal freedom and self-development were of more importance. Ironically, being deprived of the necessary freedom to realize these libertarian values, East Germans came to put more emphasis on them. Thus, the difference of importance placed on these values between East and West was not as great as one could expect. But these values apparently had different connotations in both countries. As time passed, after the reunification of 1990, East Germans placed less and less importance on these freedoms (Gensicke, 1998). Today, significant cultural differences are still apparent between East and West Germans. Mostly these are still ascribed to socialization effects from the Cold War era (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Schwartz, 2006), but also to the drastic changes and economic difficulties experienced by the East Germans during the 1990s (Gensicke, 2000).

Comparing East and West German value patterns, the most striking differences concern mainstream and traditional values, which represent the core
of German values (see above, Gensicke, 2000; see also Meulemann, 2001). Mainstream values clearly dominate the East German value patterns while tradition does not play an important role. In contrast, subgroups of the West Germans show strong enough preferences for either tradition or materialism/hedonism to shift the average pattern away from the mainstream dimension. West Germany is thus more diverse in its values than East Germany. Education, as one of Inglehart’s most central variables, does not affect mainstream values, but influences traditional values, with the highly educated placing less importance on tradition.

Schwartz (2006) describes egalitarianism (including values such as equality, social justice, responsibility, helpfulness and honesty) and intellectual autonomy (broadmindedness, curiosity, creativity) as the most important value dimensions for both East and West Germany. Embeddedness (social order, respect for tradition, security, obedience and wisdom) is a third, but less important dimension. In East Germany, the latter two sets of values are slightly preferred, while in the Western part of the country, egalitarianism is a little more prominent.

In the World Values Survey’s cultural map (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005), both East and West Germany are located in the upper right-hand sector, representing a strong orientation towards secular-rational over traditional values and a somewhat less clear preference for self-expression instead of survival values. At the turn of the millennium, East Germans tended to be a little more in favor of secular values. However, the distance between the two parts of the country is not entirely stable. Supporting Gensicke’s (1998) observations, around the time of the reunification Inglehart and Baker (2000) mapped very similar value patterns in both societies. But it has to be noted that analyses of subgroups with the East or West German samples (e.g., age groups in Inglehart & Welzel, 2005) reveal large amounts of variance within each part of the reunited country. And Klein and Ohr (2004) even come to the conclusion that in an Inglehartian frame of analysis value change in Germany might have changed direction: The younger generations (born after 1965) show much more “materialist” value patterns than older cohorts, thus reversing the direction of change postulated by the modernization hypothesis.

Most authors come to the conclusion that Germany today is still a country with two cultures and two respective value systems. These differences are mostly ascribed to socialization effects and illustrate the powerful effects of group-level
or cultural norms for individual values. Unfortunately, the role of the media has been neglected in research on German values. Likewise, comparative content analyses of East and West German media from the Cold War era are missing.

3.1.2 Media Offerings and Use in Germany

Germany’s federal structure is well-reflected in many aspects of its media system. Media pertain to the realm of cultural politics, which falls under the jurisdiction of the federal states (Länder). Broadcasting licenses are granted by the states, and most radio stations as well as some TV stations only broadcast within the limits of these geographical entities or sometimes in two or three states that combine their broadcasting and/or licensing activities. Equally, the newspaper market is characterized by strong regional and local titles. Still, national papers exist and form leading voices in the German public sphere.

The national dailies along with political weeklies and news magazines are published in different large cities across Germany (mainly Frankfurt, Munich, Berlin, and Hamburg), with the capital city, Berlin, being just one among others. The only truly “national,” integrative medium in Germany is thus television. Virtually all stations with a noticeable audience share are receivable nationwide. Again, the only exception stems from the federal structure of the broadcasting system, as every PSB provider has a regional channel, and only the two largest channels are broadcast throughout the country (notably WDR from North Rhine-Westphalia and BR from Bavaria, the two most populated states of Germany).

Continuous and large-scale audience research in Germany documents the relative importance of different mass media for the population. From a point of view of time spent on each medium and proportion of the population reached every day, television, radio and newspapers are the most important media in Germany (Figure 3). Both TV and dailies share an image as providing information of great quality. They are preferred sources for people seeking information, orientation for everyday life and food for thought (Ridder & Engel, 2005). Radio, although as heavily used as television and reaching about the same proportion of the population, serves more as a function of entertainment and often accompanies other activities (in 2005, on average 166 of the 221 minutes of daily radio listening were spent parallel to household chores, meals or other things; Media Perspektiven Basisdaten, 2008). Likewise, with close to 400 stations,
The radio market is much more fragmented than, for instance, that of television. Only a handful of stations have a market share of more than 3-4%, and the two national radio stations practically play no role at all compared to regional ones.\(^3\)

The increase in time spent on media use as well as the increase in people reached by mass media everyday parallels the expansion of the media system. As in many European countries the German media landscape has seen a considerable expansion since the 1980s, particularly due to electronic media (Figure 4). The number of television stations receivable in an average household has increased since the introduction of commercial channels in 1984 and especially during the 1990s: from three services in 1985 (two national and one regional public-service channel) and 11 in 1990 to 48 in 2005 (SevenOne Media, 2006). The first commercial services (such as RTLplus and Sat.1), introduced in the mid-1980s, were channels geared as much to general appeal as the already

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\(^3\) The more recent and much more fragmented (in terms of offers) Internet media will be neglected in the following. Probably due to the sheer vastness of the online world, there are no studies on Internet values or the values of Internet users (apart from Besley (2008) who does not differentiate what types of content people used online). Per country, only very few websites receive general attention and, e.g. in Germany, these are the sites of Internet access and e-mail providers (“ratings” for websites visited by German users can be found at www.ivwonline.de and www.agof.de). Their pages do offer content that could transport values, but they are mostly sought for individual or interactive services, making these pages hardly comparable to older mass media.
existing public-service ones, ARD and ZDF. But since the mid 1990s, the German TV landscape has increased mainly in terms of special-interest channels, both commercial and public-service—such as children’s channels (KiKa, Nickelodeon), news stations (N24), call-in television (9live), or educational (BR-alpha) and religious channels (Bibel TV). The increase in stations receivable by an average household is thus due to a larger offering, which was enabled by the spread of new receiving technologies capable of transmitting more and more channels, via basic or extended cable or satellite.

The German broadcasting system is marked by the duality of public-service broadcasters (financed through a license fee) and a number of private networks (dependent on advertising revenue). Today, about half of the population receives a wide cable offer of more than 45 channels. However, this large base from which people can potentially choose is only partly reflected in their actual viewing behavior. Even people who receive over 120 channels only regularly watch, on average, 37 of them, five to seven more than those with only 35 to 45 or 45 to 120 channels to choose from, respectively (Beisch & Engel, 2006). The four stations with the largest audience are public-service ARD (14% audience share) and ZDF (13%), as well as commercial RTL (12%) and Sat.1 (10%). These are the only stations that reach more than ten per cent of the daily German TV viewers (Media Perspektiven Basisdaten, 2008).
In addition to electronic media, the print market has greatly expanded as well, mostly due to general public and special interest magazines. In 2007, it offered about 900 publications, up from 369 in 1985 (Media Perspektiven Basisdaten, 2005, 2008). Although on the magazine market the number of titles has more than doubled during the last two decades (Figure 4), the sector of newsweeklies is still characterized by a small number of outlets, two of which have existed since the late 1940s (clearly left-wing Der Spiegel and moderately liberal Die Zeit). From 1993 to 2002 Die Woche offered a “younger” and more colorful—but still liberal—alternative to the two influential classics, while Focus (published since 1993) continues to take a more conservative stance. Spiegel, with a circulation of a little more than a million, and Focus (circulation: 735,000) are published in magazine format and have the largest readership in a hard news general interest segment. But the more intellectual broadsheet Zeit also has an impressive circulation of almost 500,000 copies each week.4 Woche was equally published in newspaper format and just before being discontinued had a circulation of about 135,000 (Spiegel Online, 2002). Meyn (2004) underlines the pivotal role of these publications for public discourse on matters of political, economic or cultural importance and their role as opinion leaders or leitmedia.

The number of dailies (both national and regional) in Germany has decreased slightly during the last 25 years, and the readership has shrunk considerably. In 1985, about three quarters of the population were reached by daily newspapers, a figure that plunged to about 50 per cent in 2005 (Figure 3). This has affected regional as well as national papers, but the national quality newspapers have remained stable, at least in number. The largest papers are liberal Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ; 460,000 daily copies on average), conservative Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ; 396,000 copies) and Die Welt (293,000 copies) as well as the smaller liberal Frankfurter Rundschau (FR; 161,000 copies). These four are complemented by two daily national business papers, Handelsblatt (153,000 copies) and Financial Times Deutschland (FTD; 109,000 copies).5

One type of paper, with a considerable readership, has been neglected so far: tabloids, which, unlike more than 50% of the quality press circulation, are sold at newsstands rather than by subscription. The infamous Bild, with the highest circulation of over three million, is one the most well-known media in Germany, widely cited by others and sought by politicians and celebrities alike for its

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4 All figures relate to average number of copies sold or distributed freely during the last quarter of 2007, following the German audit institution IVW (Retrieved April 30, 2009 from www.ivw.eu).
5 Again, all figures give official IVW numbers of average copies sold or distributed freely during the last quarter of 2007 (Retrieved April 30, 2009 from www.ivw.eu).
Meinungsmacht, the power it (allegedly) exerts on public opinion (for a brief characterization, see, e.g., Meyn, 2004).

3.1.3 Values on German Media

Some of the studies presented in chapter 2.2 analyzed values on German media. But almost all of them focus on one specific genre rather than draw a comprehensive picture of values in the German media landscape (Bruns, 1996; Grimm & Horstmeyer, 2003; Nitsche, 2000; Wünsch et al., 1996)—with the exception of two more general studies that will be covered below. These two analyses of mediated values focus on television, but for print media, their political orientation can serve as a proxy for values. Eilders (2002; see also Eilders, Neidhardt, & Pfetsch, 2004) has analyzed political positions in editorials of German quality papers between 1994 and 1998. Her work documents that across the entire period, left-versus right-wing orientations are clearly reflected in the papers’ contents. And although all papers take stands that contradict their general political standpoints on select topics, a clear cleavage between conservative FAZ and Welt on the one hand, and liberal FR on the other exists. SZ is more centrist on many economic issues than the other papers, but still displays a somewhat liberal tendency.

Eilders coded political positions expressed in editorials on a wide range of political, economic and social issues. She organizes these issues into pairs of policy alternatives most of which are closely linked to values. For instance, left-versus right-wing positions differ on the relative importance of economic wealth and of an equal distribution of goods, as well as on how to achieve these goals. Likewise, the autonomy of individuals versus the power of institutions is ranked differently between conservatives and liberals. Finally, opposing positions on cultural identity, societal integration and external security complete the scheme with which newspapers were coded for their political orientation.

Thus although there is no comprehensive analysis of values in the German quality press, their political orientations are well-defined and sufficiently related to values for my purposes here. Unfortunately, comparable analyses of business papers and of newsweeklies are missing, but their political standpoints and foci on issues are as concordantly described as those of German national newspapers (Meyn, 2004; Schrag, 2007).

TV as a medium shows a fundamental difference from print media. While newspapers and magazines can easily be ignored by people who do not share
their viewpoints (and in many cases may not even notice that these views are published), a television set more or less automatically offers all receivable stations. Thus, viewers are much more likely to come across more varied content, just by flipping through channels, for instance. They may never return to many of these randomly encountered programs or channels, but by learning what channels to avoid in the future, viewers still have a wider notion of what is available. Therefore, due to the broadcasting and reception technology alone, TV is potentially more diverse than any one printed periodical. As I have pointed out above, television is also the medium that reaches the largest part of the German population. It is no coincidence that a fair balance of informational TV programs has long been a heavily disputed topic, especially among political parties, while print outlets can follow a politically biased line with much more legitimacy (or may be even praised for their firmness). In Germany, news on public-service broadcasting has to strive to avoid political bias, and non-news programs have to follow a similar ideal of balance (Meyn, 2004). This does not hold, however, for commercial television, which could lead to differences in values between the two kinds of stations. However, locating television stations on a left-right continuum is less intuitive than for print media, further complicated by the fact that television mostly presents entertaining content. Left- versus right-wing orientation is much more connected to news.

Krüger (1988) and Lukesch et al. (2004) studied values on the overall program of public-service versus commercial channels and found differences between the two kinds of channels. But the studies differ a great deal on the range and operationalizations of values. In his pilot study, Krüger explored value patterns on the four largest stations (ARD, ZDF, RTLplus and Sat.1) in the winter of 1987. Just three years after the introduction of commercial television, it comes as no surprise that he reports large differences between commercial and public-service programs: In its early years, commercial TV drew attention and quickly gained notoriety through provocative, often amateur-like programs that stood in sharp contrast to the serious and sometimes stiff or uptight contents on public-service television (Husmann & Walter, 2006). Krüger found that while commercial channels showed about the same amount of sexually explicit content as PSB, they showed more violence and emphasized other values, notably values related to law and order as well as aggression. His primary aim was to map mediated value systems and to develop an instrument for their measurement, which is why he only reports exemplary results: Values seem to differ across stations, times of the day and program genres.
In a broader study on the “world according to television,” Lukesch and colleagues (2004) analyzed values on six public-service and nine commercial channels as they were broadcast in 2002, when all of the included commercial programs, and foremost RTL and Sat.1, had long since acquired a more refined but still popular rather than sophisticated image. Commercial channels offered considerably more sexual content, but differed only on some value dimensions from public-service broadcasters. The dimensions coded by Lukesch et al. represent abstract ideals that people can supposedly follow in their lives. In the overall program analysis, intellectual and political goals are more prominent on PSB, while commercial TV more often displays social values. At different times of the day, however, these contrasts become sharper and other value dimensions differ as well: “Vital” values (relating to health, physical or psychological strength and to life as such) are very prominent on prime-time programs of commercial channels, mostly due to the questioning or violation of these values in crime-related fiction. The same is true for the late evening programming on PSB. During the late afternoon, economic values and ethical considerations are presented more often on PSB, while on commercial channels the late-night program is more strongly characterized by esthetical and political values.

It is important to note that the duality of public-service versus commercial television is not just a categorization common among communication scholars. It also influences the audience’s image of these stations as well as their use. The admittedly sketchy studies of German television (Krüger, 2001) have revealed fairly stable similarities between the profiles of public-broadcasting channels, on the one hand, compared to those of commercial stations, on the other. Typically, public-service TV still follows higher standards in terms of cultural and educational content, information about public affairs, and support of the domestic film industry, for example. Essentially, public-broadcasting in Germany is dedicated to information, education and culture and is praised for its credibility, expertise and up-to-dateness (Ridder & Engel, 2005). In contrast, commercial channels, to a great extent dependent on advertising revenues, specialize more in exciting movies (action, thriller etc.), entertaining series/soap operas and game shows. Viewers consider them entertaining, unceremonious—and therefore a little less inspiring—but also a little more likable than the public-service channels (Media Perspektiven Basisdaten, 2007). The differences between the two kinds of channels seem so clear-cut that, in fact, a considerable portion of viewers in Germany entirely avoids viewing commercial channels, if possible (Reitze & Ridder, 2006).
The two kinds of channels have always differed in the amount of information (more prominent on PSB) and fictional content (higher proportion on commercial channels). What has developed between 1995 and 2000 is an ever-increasing amount of non-fictional entertainment on commercial channels. At the same time, sophisticated content has continued to be more prominent on public broadcasting whereas commercial channels have continued to present more arousing contents. Interestingly, in the context of this study, people ascribe different potentials for the transmission of values to PSB and commercial television: With a potential of 70, as compared to 22% for commercial television, public-service broadcasting is clearly seen as better apt to transport societal values and thus to fulfill this important integrative role (Ridder & Engel, 2005).

This study aims to explore the relationships between media users’ values and their media choices. This will be based on a long-term secondary analysis of detailed survey data. The data have been polled annually by the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach (IfD), Germany, from 1986 to 2007. The survey will be presented in more detail in chapter 3.3, but the current study’s design demands a preliminary analysis. It is simply unclear to what extent media outlets, in particular television channels, differ in terms of values. In order to make maximal use of the information contained in the survey data, the TV representation of the values gauged by the IfD will be studied.

In a content analysis of values on German television Krüger’s and Lukesch’s et al. general results were both confirmed and refined. It had been commissioned, for the purposes of this study, to the Institut für empirische Medienforschung (IFEM), Germany, which, since 1984, annually archives four weeks of German television programming. For three years, a natural week was deliberately chosen (June 23-30, 1997; March 10-16, 2003; September 24-October 1, 2007) that did not present major biases through public or school holidays, or major sporting events. For these weeks, programs that aired between 1 p.m. and 1 a.m. on the four largest stations (public-service: ARD, ZDF; commercial: RTL, Sat.1) were selected, excluding news and live sports coverage. Programs were segmented into

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6 I received funding for this study through the department for media research of public broadcaster ZDF.

7 News was excluded because this type of program is usually segmented into very short news items to which the IFEM’s operationalization of values was hardly applicable. In addition, for the purpose of this study, value patterns on TV stations globally were to be compared and the difference in the amount of news on different stations (with possibly very short, but numerous occurrences of values) could have distorted the comparison to an unjustified degree.
individual components for which characters or persons that spoke or acted in favor or disfavor of a number of values were coded. Table 1 gives the sample sizes for each year, aggregated on the level of programs, as well as details on the absolute and relative occurrences of values within programs. These are rather small samples that cannot be considered representative of the total programming of the four main stations—let alone German television in general. Nevertheless, they give insight into how commercial and public-service channels differ in terms of values, thus providing a background to interpret user-based data in a second step.

Eight values that reflect core dimensions of German values were coded. The exact wording was taken from the IfD’s survey that forms the basis of my analyses in the forthcoming chapters. The survey holds value items that can partly replicate two of the dimensions that Klages and Gensicke (Gensicke, 2000; Klages & Gensicke, 2005) see as central for the German population. As we will see more extensively in chapter 3.3, four items have a clear social orientation (helping people in need, being there for one’s family, caring for social justice and a Christian orientation in life), while four are more materialist (a high income, wealth, social advancement and willingness to perform). These items were coded individually for characters or persons on TV programs that represented or explicitly referred to these values. In each occurrence, the respective value was rated on a five-point Likert-type scale, from 1 = strong rejection to 5 = strong affirmation in either the words or actions of that character or person. Table 2 reports the mean ratings for these value items on the four largest TV stations in Germany in 1997, 2003 and 2007.

As can be seen, differences in rating are not substantial; most values are coded on average as being affirmed by TV characters. Likewise, differences

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### Table 1: Sample sizes of a content analysis of programs broadcast between 1 p.m. and 1 a.m. during one week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total number of programs</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total hours of air-time</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total occurrences of values</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programs containing values</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% programs containing values</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hours of air-time containing values</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8 See appendix A for an extract from the codebook.
between channels and years are only slight and not systematic. Public-service ARD and ZDF are slightly more in favor of the eight values examined here than are the commercial channels RTL and Sat.1. This is most pronounced for the Christian orientation. A good family life is presented a little less favorably on Sat.1.

Table 2: Mean rating of values on television

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channels</th>
<th>ARD</th>
<th>ZDF</th>
<th>RTL</th>
<th>Sat.1</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n (= number of programs containing values)</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helping other people</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social justice</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Christian conduct of life</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a good family life</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a high income</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wealth</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social advancement</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>willingness to perform</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 = strong rejection, 5 = strong affirmation
Table 3: Proportion of values in television programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channels</th>
<th>ARD</th>
<th>ZDF</th>
<th>RTL</th>
<th>Sat.1</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n (= number of programs in the total samples)</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helping other people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social justice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Christian conduct of life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a good family life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a high income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wealth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social advancement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the evaluation of values on German television does not seem to differ much between channels, the mere occurrence of values shows a wider range of difference. Relative to the more or less equal number of programs for each channel in the original sample of each year, the frequencies of the value items
show large deviances (Table 3). The salience of values thus seems to differ across channels.

The most prominent value on German television is helpfulness, closely followed by a good family life. This matches Gensicke’s (2000) observations about social ideals as core characteristics of German value patterns (see above, section 3.1.1). In 2003, however, both social dimensions were distinctly less present on ZDF and RTL. The more abstract value of social justice was most prominent on ARD and ZDF in 1997, but due to a strong decline in importance since 1997 it reached about the same level as on the commercial channels by 2007. Christian values are most present on ARD, but RTL also featured these values comparably frequently in 1997.

As for materialist values, public-service ARD surprisingly presents striving for a high income more frequently than other stations—and does not evaluate it more negatively (see above). Wealth is more frequent on ZDF and RTL, but less prominent on ARD. Its importance increases over time on Sat.1—which seems to have become more materialist, mentioning three out of four materialist items with increasing frequency. Willingness to perform follows no clear pattern: It is among the most frequent values in the programs on ZDF and RTL in 1997. In 2003, it dropped by more than 25% on both stations, while ARD and, to a slightly lesser degree, Sat.1 suddenly featured it more heavily. Four years later, the differences between stations are not as decisive anymore, and willingness to perform is most present on RTL.

All in all, ARD, ZDF and, surprisingly, RTL do not differ much in the frequency with which they bring up given values in their programs (e.g. helping other people and a good family life, most pronounced in 1997 and 2007). For virtually all items, however, commercial Sat.1 presents values markedly less frequently than the other stations, while ARD is most consistent in the values of its programs. For the purpose of this study, it is not essential to search for explanations of these differences. Differences in programming, for example, may account for some of the variance, because, as discussed in chapter 2.3.1, different types of programs are prone to different value patterns. What is important at this point, however, is to illustrate the range from which German TV viewers can actually choose.

My analysis presents a mostly coherent picture of values on German television—which should not come as a surprise: In the literature, there is no evidence for decisive differences in value patterns across channels for the value dimensions I examined. Nor do I expect the four largest TV stations in Germany to propose value patterns radically out of society’s bounds. Like most media, they
mainly aim at publics in the center of society and do not wish to repel large parts of their potential audience. This makes eccentric value patterns in such mainstream media highly improbable.

Also, the clear differences between public-service broadcasting and commercial channels discovered by other scholars are only partly confirmed by my findings. Instead, each channel seems to present a distinct value pattern that has evolved differently over time. This may be partly due to different genres (with typical value patterns) presented on different channels. It thus makes sense to examine differences between values according to channel preference—as between readers of different print media.

### 3.2 Central Foci of the Current Study

In this study, I will concentrate on the relationships between values and media preferences. Media preferences will be analyzed in terms of both taste for and (self-reported) use of mass media. I will focus on the media with the largest audiences in Germany: newspapers, news magazines and especially television. Radio and Internet will have to be neglected from further considerations because of their extreme fragmentation. And given the survey at hand, I have to focus on media that are available in all parts of the country, so as to enable analyses within samples of a relatively large size. My considerations will thus focus on media with a large audience or media that are at least well-known across the German population: select print news media and national television. I will exclude special interest outlets, which might be well-known, but not widely used. These outlets will also, by definition, exclude a large range of topics and thus limit the possibility of touching upon the complete range of values important in Germany. In addition, the large majority of Germans claim to be at least somewhat interested in news about politics (69%) and the economy (56%), while few other topics are seen as equally relevant (Blödorn, Gerhards, & Klingler, 2005). Thus news media have the largest potential group of users.

Although some regional papers have higher circulations than national ones, their limited availability in large parts of the country does not favor analysis of their readers’ values. And for most of these papers, no content data about their orientation in terms of values or other categories exist. The political orientation of the German quality press, on the other hand, is well-researched and has been stable for a long time (see, e.g., Meyn, 2004; Schrag, 2007). This allows me to analyze relationships between readers’ values and the political orientation (as a
proxy for value priorities) of their preferred paper. The apparent left-right spectrum in the German quality press is easily detected in opinions and commentaries as well as in the coverage of (political) events. Unfortunately however, there are no systematic data on value patterns in German newspapers. Assuming that political conservatism versus liberalism is expressed in different value priorities, I will analyze use of left- versus right-wing dailies and newsweeklies and their relationships to users’ values.

I will not study tabloids here, there being only one national title. All others would be too small and locally-bound to analyze their readership in a representative sample. And with only one potential token within a new category of outlets, I will limit my study to quality media.

At the center of my attention are thus general interest TV channels as well as national newspapers (sometimes referred to as “quality” or “elite” press) and newsweeklies—all of which transport the lion’s share of information to the public. I am interested in the extent to which audience values resonate with the values presented on and/or political orientation of the media they use or avoid the most.

The function of values studied here focuses on their potential to shape media choice behavior. This is a voluntary choice supposed to underline the point of view of this analysis: I acknowledge that mass media play an important role in socializing users and contributing to the process of acquiring a personal value system. However, I assume that the influence of personal values on one’s behavior is more clear-cut than the opposite effect. This study will thus focus on the relevance of personal values for media preferences.

The opposite causal direction is that people’s values are shaped by media. This is certainly plausible, but why, in a multi-channel system with press freedom, would (a) people tolerate media content permanently trying to teach them new values? And (b) why would media not want to cater to what their audience finds important and thus, in the end, confirm already existing values? Certainly, as stated above, a spiral process of mutual influences (Slater, 2007) is even more plausible, with value patterns leading to media preferences and media use reinforcing values. However, such a process of overlapping cycles of cause and effect would be hard to operationalize and is certainly impossible to study with existing data.

Lastly, as outlined above, commercial channels were introduced in Germany, as in many European countries, in the 1980s, parallel to a more rapidly expanding mediated offer in general. With more and more media outlets available, it is not only the content but the media offerings themselves that are
more diverse. In a broader television system, for instance, viewers should have less to make do with whatever a narrow televised offer provides, but should be at least somewhat better able to select programs that fit their needs (see above; Youn, 1994). Thus, a more diverse media system could also affect the relationship between values and media use.

3.3 Study Design

If one is interested in the study of historical changes, it is usually necessary to resort to secondary analysis of already existing data. The number of studies that cover values and media use over a longer time span, however, is rather limited. A notable exception is the annual survey of Noelle-Neumann’s Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, Germany, that polls information for publishing houses and advertisers. It not only includes hundreds of media use variables, but also a list of values in almost every wave—all in all a one-of-a-kind opportunity to investigate long-term historical developments in the role of individually held values for media use.

3.3.1 The Surveys

Every year, the IfD conducts interviews with, on average, 13,000 respondents, representative of the populations (aged 14 and over) of both East and West Germany. Respondents are selected via quota sampling and interviewed face-to-face in their homes. The surveys are the basis of the so-called Allensbacher Werbeträger-Analyse (AWA). This annual research report provides information for advertisers and communication companies about where to place ads and commercials for specific products and target groups. The surveys comprise detailed data on media use, of course, but also on a number of individual values, and a long list of demographics of all sorts. Specifically, my analyses are based

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9 Surveys conducted before 1990 only cover West Germany. In my analyses I have taken into account this fact and only present data that have been controlled for possible differences between East and West Germany.

10 The only study having used these data so far is Duncker’s (1998, 2000), but on an aggregate level: Duncker compared tables of the IfD’s time series of values from 1983 to 1999. He observed small differences for conservative and liberal values between women and men as well as between some age groups.
The number of respondents varies from 10,230 (1986) to 14,414 (1999).

3.3.2 Measurement

Values
Respondents are shown a list of seven values, accompanied by the following question: “Here’s a list of things one can consider important and desirable in life. Would you please name all items that you find particularly important?”

The wording of four value items was exactly the same in all 15 surveys: social advancement; social justice; a high income, wealth; helping others who are in need. The wording changed somewhat for the other three items: willingness to perform (1986-1999)/delivering a good performance (since 2003); being totally committed to one’s family (1986-1999)/being available for one’s family, committing to one’s family (since 2003); a life determined by Christian faith (1986-1999)/religion, strong faith (since 2003).

These values were, as always in secondary analysis, partly selected for their availability, but they also reflect, as stated in chapter 3.1.3, principal dimensions of German value patterns. Some of Gensicke and Klages’ (Gensicke, 2000; Klages & Gensicke, 2005) mainstream and traditional values can be replicated with the AWA-items; they will be subsumed under the label social values in this study. Materialist items are available as well. These two overarching orientations allow one to distinguish different groups within Germany (see above, chapter 3.1.1) and they should provide insights with regard to media use as well.

Media use
For television use, the frequency of viewing the four largest TV stations, ARD and ZDF (public broadcasting) and RTL and Sat.1 (commercial channels), is gauged. Respondents are given cards carrying the stations’ logos and are asked to place them on a table with five columns giving the frequency of use, from 1 = almost never watched to 5 = watched every day.  

The frequency of print-media use is measured for two weekly news magazines, the leftist Spiegel and the more conservative Focus, and two left-wing
weekly papers, Zeit and Woche. Conservative national newspapers (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Welt), left-wing papers (Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Rundschau), and business papers (Handelsblatt and Financial Times Deutschland) cover the political spectrum of Germany’s national quality press. Again, interviewees are asked to sort cards with the papers’ logos, according to how frequently they read them or if they know them at all (from 0 = publication unknown to 6 = read every issue).

Demographics
With the models presented in the previous chapter, I have underlined the importance of the social context in which media choices are made by an individual. The AWAs contain information on regional origin as well as education, which can serve as a proxy for social status. Both have been identified as related to values as well as media use. Likewise, on the individual level, age and position in the life-cycle are important factors that will be controlled for here.

Respondents are asked to state their gender as either male or female. Age is measured in years. To control for life-cycle effects I also include in my analysis two indicators of family status: living together with a partner = 1 versus living alone = 0 and living with own children under 18 in the household = 1 versus no own children under 18 living in the household = 0.

For education, respondents are asked which level of schooling they have completed and also if they have completed any higher education or vocational training. The answers to those two questions are then combined into a five-point index representing the different levels of education typical of Germany: up to nine years of schooling, no vocational training completed; up to nine years of schooling, vocational training completed; 10 to 12 years of schooling; 13 years of schooling, no higher education completed; higher education completed.

Only from 2003 onwards, East or West German origin (place where one had lived before the Berlin Wall came down) is measured. For the years before 2000, which part of the country a person lived in at the time of the survey will be used as an approximation of actual origin.13

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13 About 10% of the originally East German population moved to West Germany during the 1990s. Therefore origin should be a better indicator of one’s socialization than the current location of residence. My analysis of years in which information on both origin and current residence is available, however, has found only negligible differences between the respective coefficients.
3.4 Analytic Strategy

This study is about the relationships between people’s values and their media preferences. I am interested in the explanatory power of values, once well-known predictors of both media use and values are controlled for: age, gender, education, and, in this case, East or West German origin (see chapter 2.3.2). I will use multiple regression analysis with individual media use as dependent on values and demographics.

The focus of my analyses does not lie, as one could expect, on the amount of variance explained by an individual value item. As I have discussed above, values and actual media selections are influenced by many factors within a chain determining individual actions (see sections 2.1.3 and 2.4). In addition, as discussed in chapter 2.3, the clear-cut attribution of causal relationships between values and media use remains difficult. And since no panel data are available, this study cannot discern selection effects of values on media choices from effects that use of these media may have on personal values. Instead, my approach focuses on the way values affect behavior, in this case, media use. What value priorities make people prefer certain media?

I will emphasize the direction of this relationship (increased use versus avoidance) rather than absolute size. In this respect, the longitudinal design of this study is a great advantage: Relationships will be tested numerous times across years in very large samples. I will concentrate on consistent patterns in relationships and thus minimize the risk of following mere artifacts of small effects.

3.5 What this Study Explores

My aim in this study is to analyze what role personal values play in the selection of media offerings. It seems likely that the values presented in these media at least to some degree relate to their users’ values. This presupposes differences in value patterns across media outlets. For print media, I will use, as outlined above, their clearly delineated political orientations as a proxy for conservative versus liberal value patterns. I will explore how a paper’s political conservatism versus liberalism is related to social and materialist values among its readers. For television, my content analysis allows some slightly more precise assumptions. I expect to find, for instance, people with strong social and Christian values more
drawn towards ARD than towards Sat.1. Strong materialist values, on the other hand, should go along with a preference for commercial television.

Although some assumptions can be made based on the present state of research, it is important to stress that this study is of exploratory nature—due to two limitations: On the one hand, this being a secondary analysis, I cannot freely choose an approach that would, for example, integrate all existing research strands. As presented in chapter 2, the literature on values and media preferences or media use is unsystematic. Scholars have used different definitions of values, have identified different value sets, and have approached media preferences in strongly divergent ways. Since the variables available to me differ from these approaches yet again, it is difficult to predict how they are related to one another.

On the other hand, political orientation of a news outlet can only be an approximation of some of its values. In addition the content analysis of televised values did not reveal strong differences in all of the tested values across the four stations covered. Unfortunately, these two factors make it nearly impossible to derive a set of hypotheses that would clearly state expectations about which value will be related to which media outlet. I will try to compensate for this lack by covering the broadest set of values possible as well as a general and diverse set of media. I will begin with a broad question on the role values play for media choices and then unfold, based on the first results, a more detailed analysis. Thus, my first research question is:

RQ1: How do audience values influence the use of media outlets?

As discussed above, both values and media use are influenced by certain external variables. I will control for age and life-cycle indicators, gender and education. Moreover, in Germany, it makes sense to take into account possible differences between East and West Germans. I am thus interested in the additional explanatory power of values in the analysis of media use.

As stated above, the last two decades have seen an unparalleled increase in mass media offerings in Germany. This has affected television more than print news media: The first private stations were directed towards the general public, but both commercial and public-service broadcasters soon started to provide special interest channels, with a focus on, for instance, sports and younger audiences (mostly commercial offers) and news or culture (often PSB). Thus, the offerings became more and more specialized, which could have fed back into the general interest programs as well as print media, since, for instance, the
introduction of news channels has created competing sources for hard facts around the clock.

The expansion of media offerings could have affected relationships between audience values and media use in different ways. In my view the most likely development is that more choice, i.e. broader media offerings, leads to closer relationships between individual values and media use:

H1: The greater the number of media outlets becomes, the more their use is determined by the individual values of the audience members.