

Family conflicts in environmental concerns 1984-2019

Within or in between?

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1. Background and research question

Conflict within families through cohort effects

At least since 2019, the narrative of generational conflict has experienced a renaissance in public discourse in the context of environmental attitudes and protests.

In this context, the generational conflict implies the following drastic consequences on societal levels:

- **Micro:** moral-ideological conflicts in the parental home strain family relationships, lower the quality of life, promote political apathy
- **Meso:** moral-ideological conflicts within the family endanger the family function as a (emotional) support network
- **Macro:** Generational conflicts cause overall societal burdens by jeopardizing intergenerational solidarity

Conflict between families through lineage effects

According to scientific findings from the fields of family research, however, it can be assumed that families are relatively homogeneous groups ideologically and morally due to two processes.

- **Selection:** The choice of partners is based, among other things, to a high degree on the homogeneity of diverse socio-cultural characteristics.
- **Socialization:** Ideal-typically, values and attitudes are initially learned through the upbringing of parents as the primary instance of socialization.

In the case of ideological-moral homogeneity within families, it is of particular interest to analyze these families for significant differences in order to uncover possible structural differences.



left: Anti nuclear-demonstration Oktober 14th 1979, in Bonn (Hans Weingartz, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE, via Wikimedia Commons)
 right: Fridays For Future Demonstration March 15th 2019, in Berlin (Leonhard Lenz, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons)

2. Analysis

Data

The Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) has been collecting data on socio-economic factors and attitudes from about 30,000 people from 15,000 households annually since 1984.

Used for the analysis is the question "Are you concerned about environmental protection?" which could be answered in the following categories:

1 - „not worried“ 2 - „somehow worried“ 3 - „very worried“

Descriptive information on the data

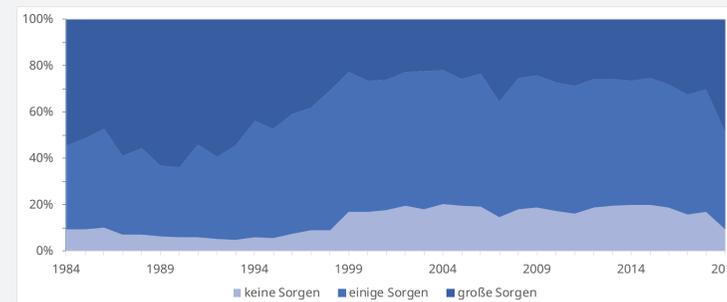


Fig. 1: Individual environmental worries of subjects with at least one parent who answered the same question, allowing to research the intergenerational linkages from 1984 to 2019

Correlation

- Mother-Child: $r_s = 0,2980, p = 0,0000$
- Father-Child: $r_s = 0,2853, p = 0,0000$
- Parent-Child: $r_s = 0,3079, p = 0,0000$
- Father-Mother: $r_s = 0,4332, p = 0,0000$

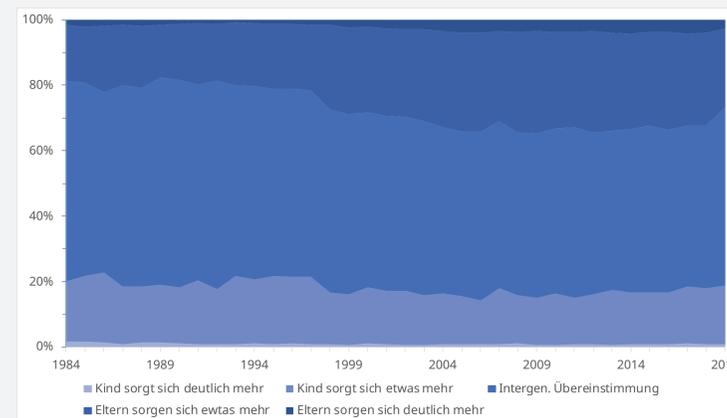


Fig. 2: Differences of environmental worries between individuals and at least on of their parent

Tab. 1: Ordered logit regression on predictors of environmental concern

Variablen	Odds Ratio	Standardfehler
Umweltsorge der Mutter		
keine Sorgen	1	
einige Sorgen	2,450**	0,0994
große Sorgen	4,587**	0,212
Umweltsorge der Vater		
keine Sorgen	1	
einige Sorgen	1,958**	0,0718
große Sorgen	3,202**	0,140
Alter in Jahren	1,004	0,0026
Geschlecht		
männlich	1	
weiblich	1,461**	0,0452
Bildungsniveau nach ISCED97		
ohne Abschluss	1	
Haupt-/Realschule	1,666**	0,212
Beruflicher/Realschulabschluss oder (Fach-)Abitur	1,948**	0,250
Beruflicher Abschluss mit (Fach-)Abitur	2,601**	0,364
höherer beruflicher Abschluss	2,105**	0,320
FH/Universität	2,380**	0,328
/cut1	0,704	0,100
/cut2	12,03	1,711
Beobachtungen	77,196	
Cluster	11,465	
Wald chi2(45)	5274,70	
Prob > chi2	0,0000	
Pseudo R2	0,1018	

Figure 3 illustrates the inheritance effect on environmental attitudes using predicted values for different constellations. The probability of developing the same environmental concerns as the respective parents is thus between 40 and 60 percent. To clearly contradict the parents' concerns at the same time is a maximum of 10 percent.

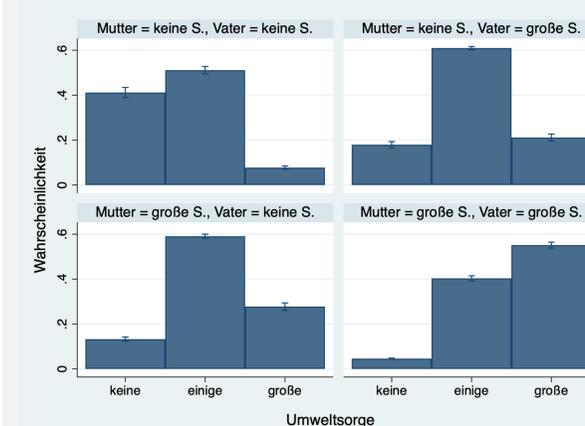


Fig. 3: Predictive Margins of environmental worries on the basis of the regression model in Tab. 1.

3. Results

The correlation analysis already shows clear, highly significant effects of social inheritance of environmental attitudes. This effect remains significant in the regression analysis, even though socioeconomic factors were controlled for (Table 1).

While age is not significant among the socioeconomic factors, thus additionally contradicting the generational narrative, the level of education is highly significant. This may indicate (vertical) social differentiation.

Further information on the research project and contact:



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IKG | 25 Jahre