

Belief and practice in the unified Germanies

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Terwey, M., & McCutcheon, A. L. (1994). Belief and practice in the unified Germanies. *ZA-Information / Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung*, 34, 47-69. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-201257>

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Belief and Practice in the Unified Germanies¹

by Michael Terwey and Allan L. McCutcheon²

Zusammenfassung

Gegen Ende des Mittelalters wurde die Christenheit in Westeuropa mit der protestantischen Reformation konfrontiert. Heute müssen sich die Christen - wiederum in Deutschland - mit einem weiteren krisenträchtigen Phänomen zunehmend vertraut machen: Der prinzipiellen Ablehnung des traditionellen christlichen Glaubens. In diesem Beitrag werden zunächst die in Westdeutschland längerfristig feststellbare Verringerung von konfessioneller Mitgliedschaft und der Rückgang des Kirchenbesuchs für verschiedene Kohorten beschrieben. Der Zeitraum für diese Untersuchung ist 1953 bis 1992. Der zweite Abschnitt konzentriert sich auf einen Ost- West- Vergleich für die ersten Jahre nach der deutschen Vereinigung. Die Autoren zeigen, daß der Sozialismus in der DDR zu einem außerordentlich starken Rückgang von kirchlicher Partizipation und religiösen Einstellungen geführt hat. Vergleichbar hohe Schwächungen traditioneller Religiosität konnten bisher in keinem anderen Land mit Erhebungsdaten belegt werden. Im dritten Abschnitt werden die Untersuchungen auf alternative Glaubensformen ausgedehnt. Glücksbringer, Wunderheiler, Wahrsager und Horoskope werden immer noch von einem großen Bevölkerungsteil akzeptiert, ohne daß ein grundlegender Ost- West-Unterschied zu beobachten ist. Dies gilt sogar für Befragte in der jüngsten Kohorte. Weitere Analysen befassen sich mit den potentiellen Beziehungen zwischen Glauben an Gott, kirchlicher Partizipation und alternativen Glaubensformen.

Abstract

At the end of the Middle Ages, Western Christianity was confronted with the Protestant Reformation. Today, and again in Germany, modern Western Christianity may be preparing to confront another major crisis — the rejection of traditional Christian belief. The first part of the article focuses on church membership and church attendance in the Western parts of Germany. It describes how far "unchurching" has progressed among the various cohorts. Observations start in 1953 and end in 1992. The second section contains an East-West comparison of recent religious participation and attitudes in the new and old federal states. The authors show that the socialist influences experienced in the former GDR led to

1 This article is based on a Paper presented by Allan L. McCutcheon and Michael Terwey at a seminar of the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research, University of Cologne, November 23, 1993

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an extraordinarily high degree of explicitly unchurched people in Eastern Germany. This result is unparalleled in the other formerly socialist countries for which we have survey data. Finally, alternative forms of belief are investigated. These are beliefs in good luck charms, faith healers, fortune tellers, and horoscopes. Such alternative forms of belief apparently still persist in Germany today, irrespective of the East-West differentiation. They can even be found in the youngest cohorts. Further investigations focus on some of the potential relations between Christian and alternative beliefs.

1. Differing Church Attachments in the Federal Republic of Germany 1953 -1992

About four centuries ago in Germany, Western Christianity confronted a major crisis - the Reformation. Today, and again in Germany, modern Western Christianity may be preparing to confront its next major crisis — the rejection of church and accepted religious beliefs brought on by general secularization, modern pluralism, and by the enduring influences of the socialist legacy. Thus, the unified Germany may be poised to repeat its role as a striking member among societies in the Christian tradition: There are reasons to believe that Germany is developing toward being one of the first large Western nations which have a population majority that is neither churched, nor believing in traditional faiths. Other nations may still be even more secularized (e.g. France, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium; cf. *Zulehner/Denz* 1993), but the German unification and the costs of economic cutbacks (cf. EKD 1993: 3) may accelerate similar developments in Germany.

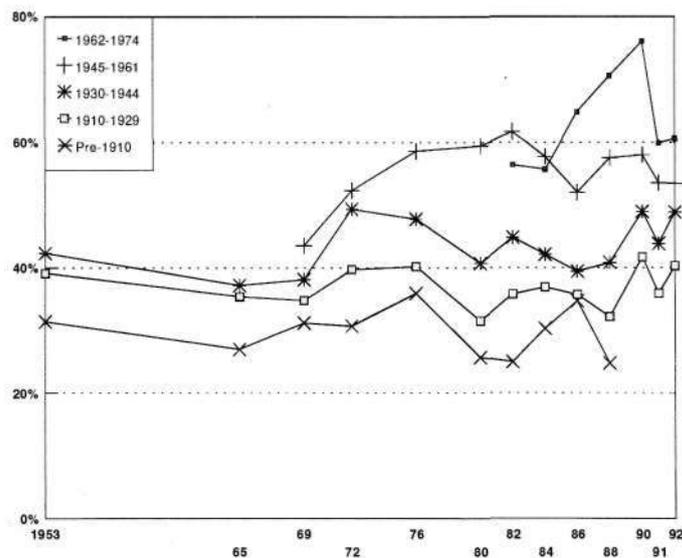
Our empirical investigations start with the questions of how far "unchurching" has progressed among the various cohorts in the old federal states; observations start in 1953 and end in 1992.³

The first general chart shows in nearly every respect a very clear pattern of secularization or alienation to traditional church. Inspection of the chart suggests, that a large part of this "unchurching" process may be attributed to cohort differences. At all of the time-points, respondents who were born before 1910 have the smallest percentages of low church attendance. Cohorts of 1910-1929, 1930-44, and 1945-1961 show consistent, increasing patterns of low church attendance. Only the trend-line for the youngest cohort — those born between 1962 and 1974 — shows any exception to the general pattern. This exception of comparatively low percentages found in 1982 and 1984 may possibly be the result of the small subsample of observations in this cohort at these earlier time-points. Besides, we

³ We wish to thank the seminar participants for many helpful comments on our presentation. The analyses in the first section constitute only a first straightforward step toward a more formal cohort analysis (cf. *Glenn* 1977; *Jagodzinski* 1984; *Hout and Greeley* 1987; *Mnich* 1989). In such a formal analysis the separation of age, period, and cohort effects results in more detailed numerical description. For 1953 we use the "Reigrotzki"-study. data on 1965, 1969, 1972, 1976 are German National Election Studies, 1980 to 1992 are ALLBUS-data (Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften).

shall discuss other explanations for such peculiarities of the youngest people, which deserve our close consideration. Certain **age effects** are also reflected in Chart 1. Even though there are some unsystematic sampling variabilities prevailing trends within most cohorts can be seen: low church attendance appears to be augmented by age. Some similar observations are reported by *Jagodzinski/Dobbelaere* (1993).

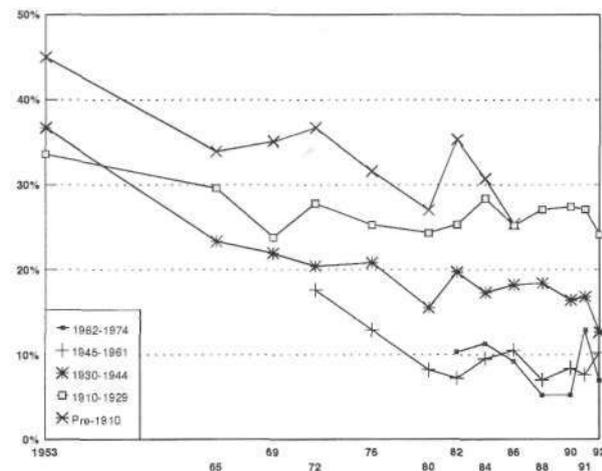
Chart 1: Low Church Attendance in Different Cohorts
German Christians in the Old Federal States



A corresponding pattern of relations between cohorts emerges, when we examine high church attendance (cf. Chart 2). With only some minor exceptions, higher degrees of church attendance are found in earlier birth cohorts. Percentages tend to decline within cohorts as their members age.

We may now ask, whether different patterns have to be drawn for the two "Volkskirchen" of Germany (cf. Chart 3 and 4). When denomination is taken into account, the relations between cohorts and frequencies of church attendance within each denomination remain similar to those discussed above. But comparing Catholics and Evangelisch (Lutherans⁴), it is clear that the Evangelisch have consistently lower rates of church attendance.

Chart 2: High Church Attendance in Different Cohorts
German Christians in the Old Federal States



In general the oldest Protestant cohorts show less high church attendance than even the most recent cohorts of Catholics.⁵ Lower rates of church attendance among Protestants do not necessarily indicate lower religiosity. In his "Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" Weber introduced his concept of "disenchantment" (**Entzauberung**) of the world. Salvation in the tradition of protestant disenchantment is rather reached by personal faith, action, and rescue than by ritual participation in church-sacraments, which are often supposed to bear elements of superstition (*Weber* 1993: 178).⁶ Amongst Protestants, church practices are much less considered a mediator between the religious individual and God (cf. also *Jagodzinski/Dobbelaere* 1994). There is, however, evidence that on average

4 We also use the expression "Lutheran" to denote the German "Evangelische Kirche (ohne Freikirchen)", even though not all of the smaller churches included in this denominational group explicitly call themselves "Lutheran". As we shall show in more detail, the moderately engaged majority of the "Evangelische Kirche (ohne Freikirchen)" differs considerably from other churches which are usually denoted as "Protestants" or "Evangelical" in English.

5 An exception is found for 1980 and 1982 between the lines of the pre-1910 Protestants and of the rather young 1945-61 Catholics (cf. Chart 3, Chart 4 and *McCutcheon/Terwey* 1993). It could be interpreted as the result of sampling variability, but it could also make some sense that the very oldest Protestant cohort has a slightly higher rate of high church attendance than the rather young Catholics.

6 The consequences of disenchantment can to some extent be applied to the Lutheran denominations, even though *Weber* thought in first line of Protestantism closer to the tradition of Calvin.

Chart 3: High Church Attendance in Different Cohorts
German Catholics in the Old Federal States

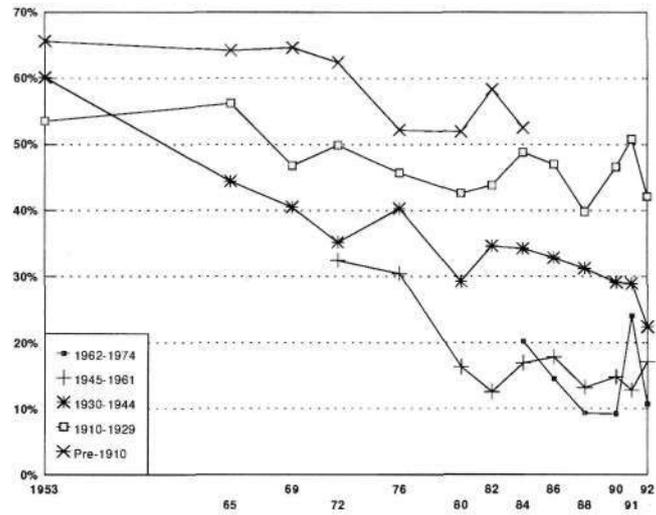
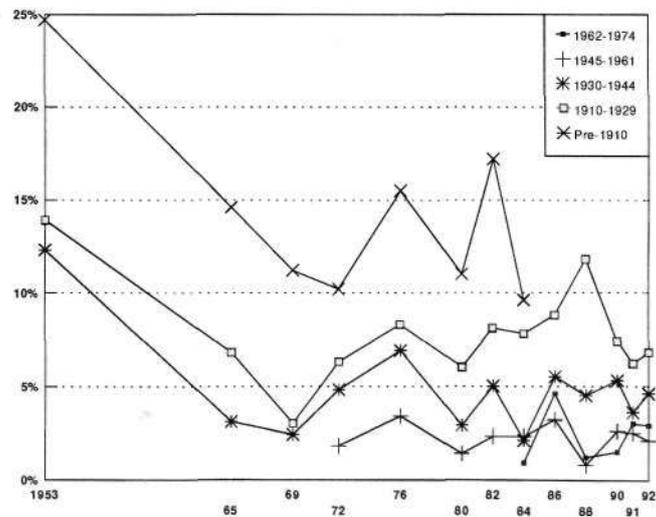


Chart 4: High Church attendance in Different Cohorts
German Protestants in the Old Federal States



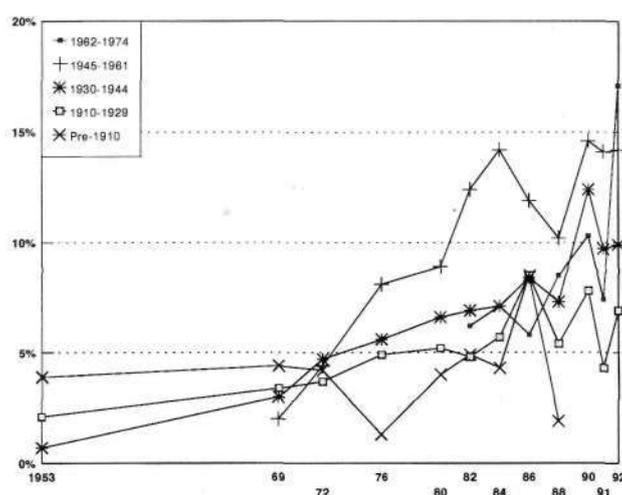
German Lutherans are not only attached to more abstract or less "superstitious" forms of belief and practice, but that they are also more alienated to central Christian ideas. This concerns even the belief in God (*Terwey* 1992: 65). Differing degrees of belief in God are also closely related to Protestant church attendance as *Jagodzinski* and *Dobbelaere* (1993: 87 f.) have shown. On the other hand, as Protestantism is claimed to be more person-centered and "disenchanted" than Catholicism, it may be regarded as a more modernized form of religion and a step in the direction of secularization (*Weber* 1993: 28; *Shiner* 1967; *Meulemann/Birkelbach* 1993: 644 f.).

Charts for low church attendance among Catholics and Protestants depict corresponding patterns (cf. *McCutcheon/Terwey* 1993). A part of the decrease in Catholics' church attachment after 1968 has been attributed to the encyclical "Humanae Vitae" (cf. *Hout* and *Greeley* 1987). The assumption of a "**Humanae Vitae**"-effect is also consistent with our data for German Catholics, particularly for the percentages of low church attendance. In general, there is a noticeable increase in low attendance between 1965 and 1969. But as Protestant cohort-lines move in a similar direction, there is also some evidence that the alienation from church had also been caused by the more general socio-political process which is often called the "**1968er Bewegung**", which may be regarded as a part of a more general movement against affirmative ideologies and institutions ("antiinstitutionelle" Kulturrevolution (cf. *David* 1968; *Gabriel* 1993; *Tyrell* 1993)).

The cohort trends for people who do not belong to any denomination (cf. Chart5) give further support to the "de-traditionalization" which we have seen in the data on church attendance. The proportion of the population outside of a "Konfession" has tended to increase. In general, the older cohorts have smaller relative frequencies of "Konfessionslosigkeit" than the younger ones. Church-membership is also decreasing by age. As can be seen, however, there appears to be an irregularity for the youngest cohort 1962-1974; until 1991, these respondents report lower percentages of "Konfessionslosigkeit" than the cohort 1945-1961. This particular finding is similar to some results of *Andrew Greeley* (1993, 1993a). Currently, young people may be more attached to some beliefs and churches than those in the middle years of life. This higher percentage of belief or ecclesiastical engagement among the very youngest people may represent a trend toward decreasing secularization. In short, it could be the result of a "**returning effect**", which is consistent with other signs of returning to religion which can presently be observed. There is, however, an alternative explanation which also is plausible and more parsimonious; the comparatively higher degrees of churching among the youngest cohort may be attributed to some kind of "**family effect**". The very youngest respondents may either still live with their parents, who are likely to display more attachment to the churches than the people in the younger cohorts, or they are still reflecting the influence of the religious socialization received from their parents. Furthermore, the youngest people are less likely to have regularly joined the labor market,

and labor force participation may - besides the age effects — foster individual secularization (e.g. *de Vaus* 1984; *de Vaus* and *McAllister* 1987).

Chart 5: "Konfessionslos" in Different Cohorts
Germans in the Old Federal States



2. The Present Situation of Church and Belief in the Unified Germanies

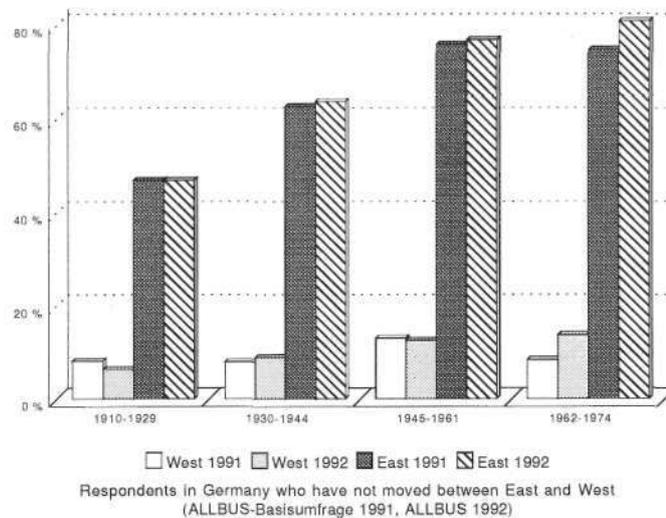
The unification of the old federal states and the new federal states of Germany has created a situation, which is very challenging. Since there is relatively little survey data about the former German Democratic Republic, we must restrict ourselves to the recent developments for comparisons.

The first striking feature in Chart 6 is the extraordinarily high degree of explicitly unchurched people in Eastern Germany. This result is unparalleled in the other formerly socialist countries for which we have survey data (*Greeley* 1993, 1993b; *Terwey* 1993). Importantly, this devastating loss of membership has disproportionately impacted the Lutheran church, which represented the majority faith in the former area of the new federal states (80,4% in 1950; cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 1992: 193).⁷ As we have already noted,

⁷ The estimated percentage of Protestants for the ending period of the former GDR (1988) is about 30% (Statistisches Bundesamt 1992: 193). Most sample data for the following years show slightly lower percentages (ALLBUS 1991 27%; ALLBUS 1992 27.3%).

a large portion of the people belonging to the German Lutherans shows only moderate attachment to their church and matters of faith compared to Catholics or some small German Protestant denominations. Therefore, Lutherans were more likely to have been more susceptible to the secularizing influences of socialist ideology and socialist practices. In accordance, the relative decline of church membership has had smaller impact among the more limited number of Catholics in the German East than among the Lutherans (*Terwey* 1992: 61; *Pollack* 1993:91).

Chart 6: "Konfessionslos" -Old and New Länder 1991-1992 (% Konfessionslos)



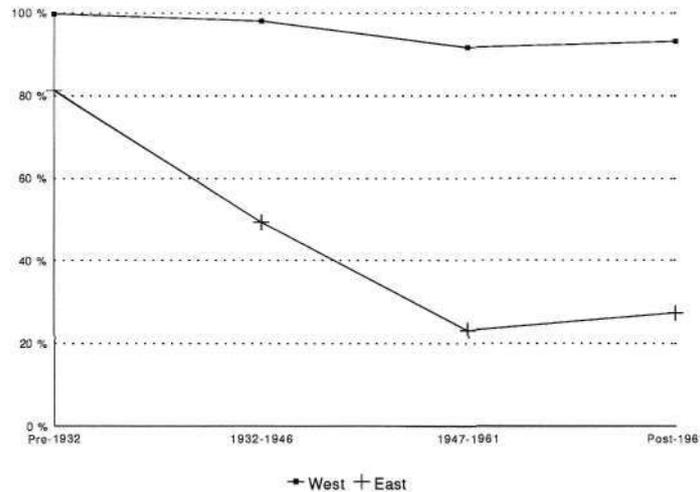
The rising numbers of younger "Konfessionslose" are far greater for the people from the new federal states. Besides political pressures exerted against church-members, a rather materialistic and individualistic orientation among younger people in the former GDR may explain these large east-west-differences among the young people (cf. *Pollack* 1993; see however *Gensicke* 1992).

We may ask whether German churches are presently losing their function as rather bureaucratic "Volkskirchen", who can claim the population's majority as members and are co-operating with the state's administration in important aspects (e.g. religious education, church tax). "Konfessionslosigkeit" is accepted by a rapidly increasing portion of the population. In 1991 10.7% of all the Western ALLBUS-respondents had no church membership, in 1992 12.3%, and the Eurobarometer 39 of 1993 showed already a rise to 14.1% (new fed-

eral states 1991: 64.6%, 1992: 66.3%, 1993: 70.8%). The overall assumption that after the end of socialism people would rejoin the "Volkskirchen" is not supported by these data.

Among the services which are often requested from the traditional churches are basic rites of passage for important life stages as death or birth. Looking at the percentages of people who have **baptized their children** or who would like to do so, if they had children, there is a gap of about 18 percentage points in the oldest age group (pre-1932; cf. chart 7). Easterners and Westerners born before "Nationalsozialismus" are much more similar than those from the next cohort 1932-1946 (about 48 percentage points). The gap increases still for the 1947-1961 age group, primarily due to the decline from 49% to 23% of baptizers in the East. A similar East-West-difference exists in the post-1961 cohort. "Baptizing" has become a minority-custom for the Eastern people, whereas the vast Western majority still continues in the practice.

Chart 7: Baptizing Children (Practice and Intention)
(% Yes by Birth Cohort)



Respondents in Germany who have not moved between East and West (ALLBUS 1992)

We might also ask whether those who remained active in the religious life of the GDR were more, or less, active than those in the West. In 1991 respondents were also asked, how often they used to **attend church in their childhood** at the age of "eleven or twelve". Frequencies for this retrospective report of former church attendance indicate little difference between respondents in the East and the West, though there is some indication for a growing East-West gap in the younger Protestant cohorts (cf. Chart 8). Among Catholics we see a moderate declining for the younger age groups, and among the Lutherans a

stronger decline: between Catholics and Lutherans cohort differences appear to be increasing.

Chart 8: Church Attendance in Childhood at Age " 11 or 12 Years"
(At Least Once a Month)

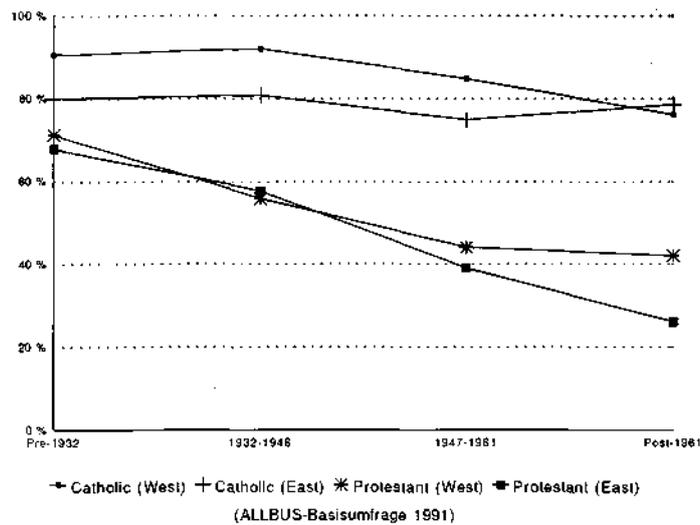


Chart 9 shows former and present **belief in God**. The old federal states represent a Western nation which has not a very wide, but at least a noteworthy spreading of faith (*Greeley* 1993b; *Terwey* 1993). In the two cohorts under 35 years of age about 14% of the respondents have been life-long atheists (cf. the darkest portion in Chart 9). In the next four age groups this percentage drops down to half that value, and, as might have been expected, among those 75 years and older only a very small number identify themselves in this life-long atheist category. Interestingly, the number of people who switched to disbelief is much larger than that of the constant atheists. This supports the thesis that secularization is still going on — not only in the respect of formal church-integration, but also in the respect of rejecting traditional forms of central metaphysical beliefs. The cohorts of those who switched from disbelief to belief are much smaller, except for respondents aged 65 years and older. Besides that, there is little indication for a consistent increase in the tendency to switch toward religious belief as people get older. The white part of the chart finally shows the proportion of constant believers. Amongst the youngest cohorts, about 50% report being life-long believers; this percentage rises to 78% among the older respondents.

Chart 9: Which Best Describes Your Beliefs about God - Old Federal States

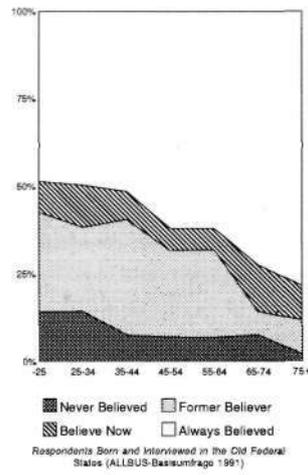
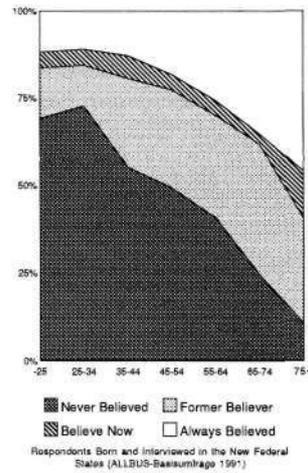


Chart 10: Which Best Describes Your Beliefs about God - New Federal States



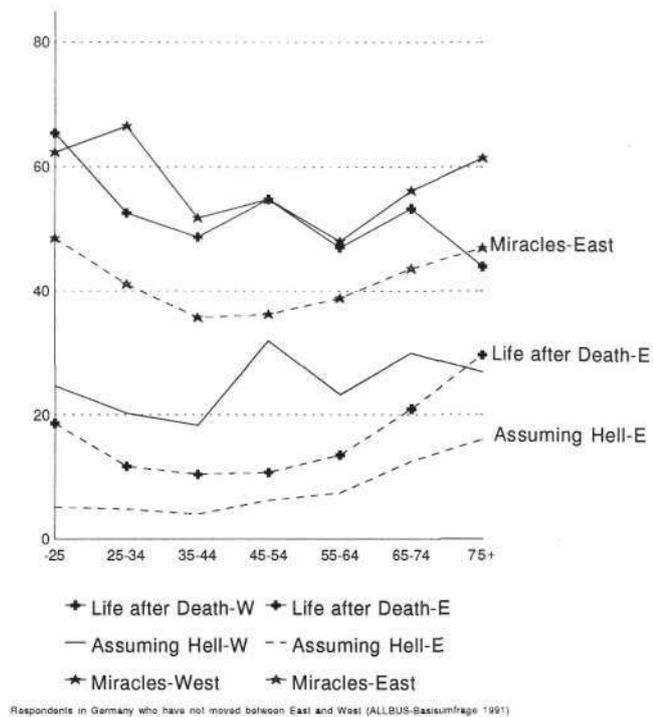
Atheism in the former GDR has grown more rapidly (cf. Chart 10). The portion of respondents who said that they never believed in God is far greater, especially among the young cohorts. Among the older respondents, on the other hand, a substantial number of former believers augment the total of non-believers. It is clear from the information in Charts 9 and 10 that the overall decline of faith among the Eastern young cohorts is much steeper than in Western Germany. Although the proportion of life-long believers rises by age, there is little variation in the proportion of new believers. All in all, only 24.6% of the new German citizens have a persisting faith in God, while 67.3% of those in the old federal states believe in God. Analysing the same question for **Russia** (ISSP 1991), *Greeley* (1993a) has shown much larger percentages of people who switched from atheism to belief, especially amongst the younger cohorts. Secularizing influences of socialist ideology and government do not necessarily produce similar religious results in each nation. To some extent, Orthodox and Catholic backgrounds have given stronger support to religious persistence than Protestantism in the German East (cf. *Greeley* 1993a, 1993b; *Terwey* 1993).

Besides the basic idea of God, several other assumptions are more or less well accepted in dominant Christian traditions. Out of various possible issues, we focus on belief in hell, life after death, and miracles (cf. chart 11). In each instance, Eastern respondents are less often convinced of these phenomena. On the other hand, there are some interesting similarities between East and West. In both parts, people more often tend to believe in life after death than in hell.

This suggests that, for all age groups, Germans are inclined to accept positive, rather than negative, expectations about post-mortal life (cf. also *Terwey* 1992). The acceptance of hell in the East cannot sink much lower, but also conviction of life after death is for all cohorts less often observed than even the Western conviction of hell. The lines for belief in life after death and for belief in miracles are quite close in the old federal states.⁸ Nevertheless, a striking characteristic in Chart 11 is the rather wide spread belief in miracles which is found in the East. Moreover, higher percentages of belief are again often to be observed among the very youngest people contrasting to middle aged groups. Although this might reflect a "**family effect**", the "**returning effect**" hypothesis might be more appealing in this instance.

⁸ We do not want to comment on the decline of belief in life after death in the rather small Western cohort of 75+. As we have seen up to now in almost every respect, rather old people tend to be religious believers. To interpret this singular deviation as some kind of disappointment or anything like that would be to daring until further evidence is found.

Chart 11: Belief in Life after Death, Hell, and Miracles



3. Alternative Forms of Belief in the German Society of the Nineties

In the following part of the paper we go beyond the scope of traditional churches and Christian beliefs. Are people believing in God noticeably more often "superstitious" than atheists? In the following part of the paper we go beyond the scope of traditional churches and Christian beliefs. Are people believing in God noticeably more often "superstitious" than atheists? If the empirical answer to this question is "yes", the sociology of religion would be rather simple in this respect. A simple secularization model assumes that there are two types of individuals. The first tends to belief in the supernatural, transcendency, metaphysics, miraculous events, fate, luck, and so forth. Individuals of the second type are rational, scientific, and secular in their worldview. A functional definition of religion, however, allows for other "types" which are equally plausible: e.g., individuals, who are alien-

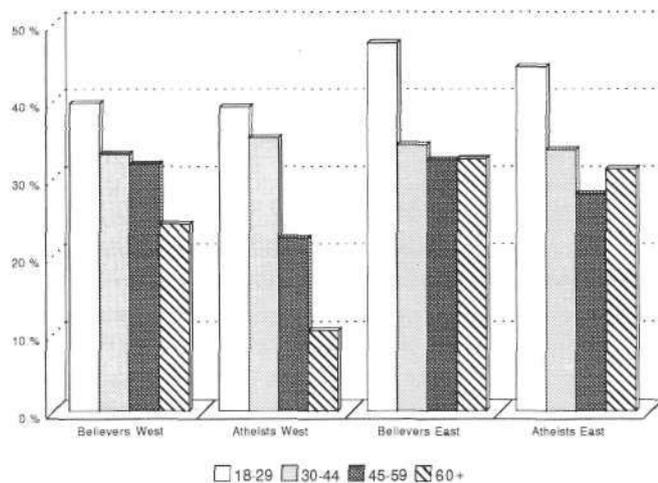
9 In order to avoid a priori negative connotations we shall substitute the term "superstition" by "alternative forms of belief".

ated from the central forms of accepted religion and have turned to alternative forms of belief as a substitute. As in our previous analysis of ALLBUS items, we again control for age and East-West-differences.

Among Easterners, 34% of the respondents giving valid answers assume that **good luck charms** at least probably bring good luck (Glücksbringer bringen manchmal tatsächlich Glück), while 30% of all Western respondents hold this view. Considering the substantial meaning of this item, these percentages appear to be rather high. At least "Glücksbringer" could be expected to be out of date in a nation educated in the tradition of rational science. Contrary to our findings about accepted church practice and traditional beliefs, the overall frequency of inclining towards good luck charms is even a little higher in the East than in the West of Germany. It seems that Socialism has even left a little more leeway for this inclination than for today's belief in God.

We observe analogous patterns for different age groups in each of the regions - among believers and atheists the highest rates of this alternative belief is to be found in the youngest cohort, irrespective of the East-West differentiation. Beyond that, percentages decrease more clearly among the older Western cohorts than among those in the East.

Chart 12: Good Luck Charms Do Bring Good Luck
(% Yes or Probably Yes)



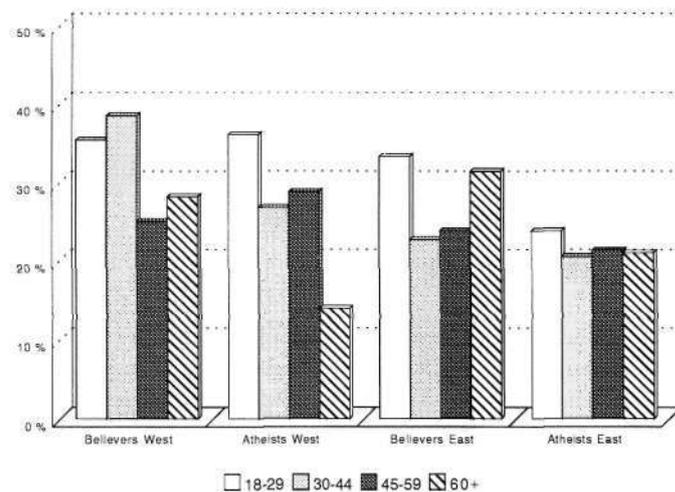
Respondents in Germany who have not moved between East and West (ALLBUS-Basisumfrage 1991)

Given this age-related pattern with regard to good luck charms, we might also expect that other forms of alternative beliefs are distributed in a similar pattern. Those who believe in

the "enchantment" and "supernatural powers" of things, may also believe in clairvoyance and other "supernatural powers" of humans. It might be more plausible to confer such powers to human spirits than to lifeless things. Such expectations, however, are not confirmed by the data about **fortune tellers'** ability to foresee the future (Es gibt Wahrsager, die die Zukunft wirklich vorhersehen können). In the new federal states fortune tellers have presently a smaller fraction of adherents (22%) than do the fortune tellers in the West (31%). Interestingly, belief in fortune tellers among the Western respondents is nearly at the same level as their belief in good luck charms.

The pattern of lower percentages in the older cohorts is barely apparent from Chart 13. There is a slight indication that acceptance of this alternative belief is more often found among young people.

Chart 13: Some Fortune Tellers Can Really Foresee Future
(% Yes or Probably Yes)

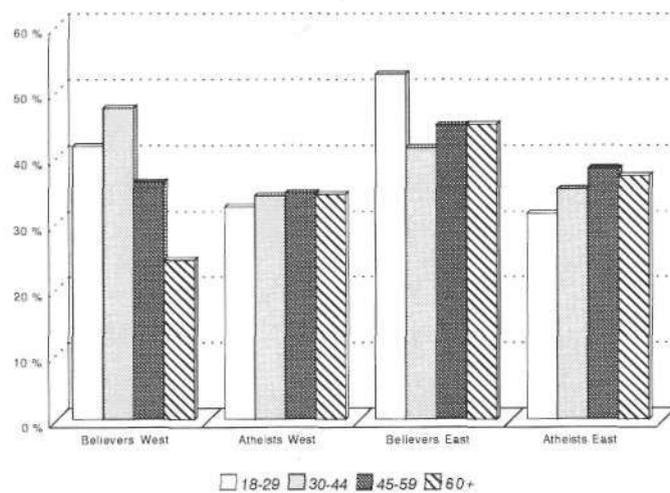


Respondents in Germany who have not moved between East and West (ALLBUS-Basisumfrage 1991)

Another capacity ascribed to some humans is the "supernatural power" of **faithhealers** (Manche Wunderheiler verfügen wirklich über übernatürliche Kräfte). In the West, 37% of the valid respondents reply that some persons may have such powers, while 39% of the Eastern respondents believe that such supernatural powers exist. As we can see, this form of alternative belief is even more wide spread than belief in fortune tellers. Looking generally at the data, there are relatively few differences between respondents in the East and West, although religious believers in the new federal states appear to be marginally more disposed than the other groups to accept this alternative belief.

The age differences shown in Chart 14 appear to be even less systematic than those for fortune tellers. Among atheists there are nearly no differences between the age groups. Among believers, on the other hand, there does appear to be some indication that younger people are more likely to accept the personal powers of "Wunderheiler".

Chart 14: Some Faithhealers Really Do Have Supernatural Powers
(% Yes or Probably Yes)

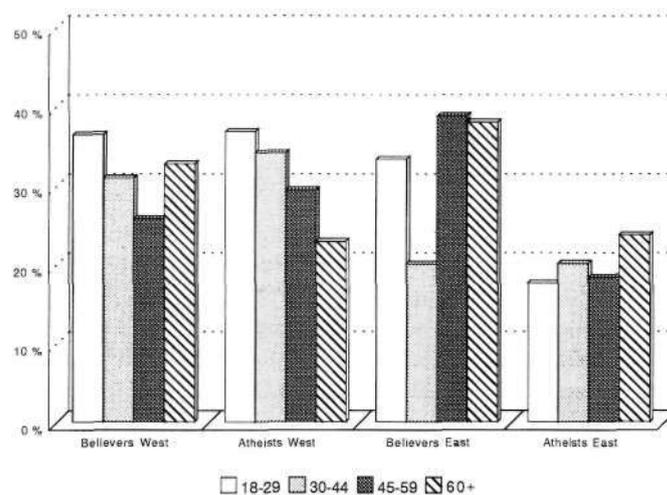


Respondents in Germany who have not moved between East and West (ALLBUS-Basisumfrage 1991)

The last form of alternative belief that we examine is that of astrology. A brief look into many newspapers suggests that astrology is a very popular form of alternative beliefs, which may appear in more or less sophisticated variants. As with fortune telling, acceptance of astrology seems to be stronger in the West than in the East; 31% of all Westerners' valid responses, and 23% of those in the East, are positive about the statement that persons' star signs or horoscopes have effects on their life (Das Sternzeichen bzw. das Geburts- horoskop eines Menschen hat einen Einfluß auf den Verlauf seines Lebens). Given the high public visibility of this special alternative belief, it is somewhat surprising that these percentages are not higher than the other general percentages already introduced in this section.¹⁰⁾

¹⁰⁾ Perhaps the implication of a causal influence exerted by the stars has reduced the acceptance of the astrological item a little. Some adherents of mystics refuse a causal influence of stars on life, but they accept synchronous occurrences of the astrological kind.

Chart 15: Stars Signs or Horoscope Have an Influence on Life
(% Yes or Probably Yes)



Respondents in Germany who have not moved between East and West (ALLBUS-Basisumfrage 1991)

Among Western respondents who believe in God, the percentage reporting belief in horoscopes declines over the first three cohorts, but those who are over 59 years of age nearly equal the percentage level of believers under 30 (33% vs. 36%). Atheists in the old federal states show a clear pattern of belief in astrology declining by age. Among Eastern respondents, the only clear pattern is that those who believe in God are also more often inclined to astrology than are atheists.

Among the four forms of "superstition"-items available in the ALLBUS-data astrology can be regarded as coming closest to having some kind of religious function. It may be included in everyday's life and it is not necessarily tied to exceptional personal abilities of healers or fortune tellers. Interest in predictions about a person's future derived from some more or less observable combination of natural circumstances are part of a solution to the problems of an elementary uncertainty ("KontingenZ"; cf. amongst others *Pollack* 1990: 113), which according to some definitions constitutes the religious character of a belief system. Astrologists may mediate between individual fate and a general cosmic situation or transcendent powers without claiming own personal magic. Their undertakings aim at some kind of explanation and solution of basic personal problems. There may be no "Church of magic"¹¹, but astrology sometimes comes closer to it than many other alterna-

tive convictions or practices. It has even a rather large German organization and at least some regular clients.¹²

According to some results of *Schneider* (1991), our four items concerning alternative forms of belief do not show a simple common relationship to fixed types of people who are generally superstitious, even though exploratory data analysis suggests some common factor (cf. *Terwey* 1992: 71). To examine the possibility of more complex relationships, we turn next to a set of logistic regressions in which these alternative beliefs serve as the dependent variables.

Gender and education appear to be related to all of our indicators for alternative beliefs; women and less well educated persons tend to accept such phenomena (cf. Table 1). In this respect there are some similarities to the prediction of belief in God (cf. *Terwey* 1992). Also, as we saw earlier, age is connected to belief in good luck charms for both parts of Germany. Another age effect is indicated by an interaction term for faith healers in the old federal states — it appears that in the old federal states, older people are less likely than younger people to assume the real existence of faith healers.

Abercrombie et al. (1970) found in their English interview data that there is a genuinely counter-superstitious influence of church participation. Corresponding results are shown for New Age assumptions in three German cities by *Schneider* (1991). After controlling for church attendance German Catholics and Lutherans do not have a significantly higher probability than those with no church membership for adhering to any of the four alternative beliefs. Similar to the results of *Abercrombie et al.* and *Schneider* (1991), we find that there is no significant estimation for regular church-goers to be less inclined to alternative forms than those who never attend. Interestingly, it appears that we are most likely to find believers in these alternative forms among those who attend church services at least some of the time. There are significant effects for good luck charms and — more clearly - for astrology. Finally, Westerners with low church attendance are more often persuaded of star signs than respondents in the East (cf. significant interaction effect for church attendance in Table 1). But if some tentative results of *Schneider* (1991: 66) are correct, half of all regular church-goers sampled in three cities pronounce a desire for "new religiosity" ("Neue Religiosität"). Therefore, *Schneider* (1991: 67) concludes: high church integration does not

11 "To be sure, the belief in magic is always more or less general; it is very frequently diffused in large masses of the population ... But it does not result in binding together those, who adhere to it, nor in uniting them into a group leading a common life. **There is no Church of magic.**" (*Durkheim* 1961: 60) Following Durkheim's "Elementary Forms of the Religious Life" and *Mandelbaum* (1966), *Stark* and *Bainbridge* (1987: 108) apply this argument even to Buddhist and Hindu cultures.

12 The results of *Schneider* 1991 suggest that "New Age" is a some relevant part of the belief system in the old federal states. Such New Age assumptions also rely in many respects on astrology (e.g. the age of aquarius).

necessarily mean opposition to all dimensions of "New Age-spirituality" ("New Age Spiritualität").

Table 1: Logistic Regression Coefficients for Alternative Belief Equations ('Probably Not True' and 'Definitely Not True' Coded as 1; Catholics, Lutherans, and persons without any church-membership; Germany 1991)

	Good Luck Charms	Fortune Tellers	Faith Healers	Astrology
Sex (male = 1)	.244 *	.747 ****	.350 ***	.399 ***
Education	.231 ***	.343 ***	.234 ****	.239 ***
Age	.017 ****	.008	.002	.006
Church Attendance:				
More than once a week	-.080	.543	.246	-.918
Once a week	.377	.587	.105	-.033
1 - 3 times a month	.090	.130	-.125	-.702 **
Several times a year	.018	.009	-.040	-.445 **
Less often	-.309 **	-.146	-.041	-.466 ****
Catholic	-.023	.247	-.319	-.055
Lutheran	-.154	-.123	-.302	-.127
East-West (West = 1)	-.412	-.115	-.377	1.082
Interactions with East-West:				
Church Attendance	.060	.069	.027	-.301 ***
Sex	.401	-.337	.087	.073
Education	.190 *	-.201	-.132	-.094
Age	.007	.006	.012 *	.010
Catholic	-.373	-.650	.279	-.411
Lutheran	-.372	-.429	.119	-.331
Constant	-.522 *	-.028	-.069	1.094 ****
Model χ^2	94.957 ****	96.118 ****	51.139 ****	104.364 ****
	* p < .10	** p < .05	*** < .01	**** < .005

Alternative forms of belief apparently persist in the Germanies today. A "God of the Gaps" may serve to fill gaps between people's desires and what is in fact possible (*Abercrombie et al.* 1970). A similar perspective is developed by *Stark and Bainbridge* (1987: 106), who claim that religious specialists in the traditional, highly institutionalized churches will, over time, tend to reduce the amount of "magic" they supply. If the demand for "magic" continues, other cultural specialists, they argue, will specialize in providing it. Alternative beliefs

may spread in times of anxiety, lost faith or uncertainty. People often look for horoscopes when they feel insecure about their future or environment and need encouragement. Following *Abercrombie et al.* (1970: 101), it is noticeably that stars columns tend to be optimistic. Such predictions would often lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. If a person is told to have a positive constellation for the day to follow, this person probably is more motivated to look out for chances and may try harder to be really successful.

A rather high degree of alternative belief in the new federal states could perhaps be connected with widespread present wants and scarcities in this part of Germany after unification (*Mreschar* 1992). Certainly, further evidence would be needed for such far-reaching assumptions. *Durkheim* (1960: 272 - 285) already suggested a link between economical crises, social pessimism, and religion. As some anxieties about the future are growing at least in the Western part of Germany¹³, changing trends in German religion may ensue (e.g.: strive for accepted or alternative "compensators" (*Stark and Bainbridge* 1987: 36); traditional religious groups having lower tension with external society (cf. the Volkskirchen in the former BRD) or groups who are in sectlike tension with the sociocultural environment (*Stark and Bainbridge* 1987: 122- 125,311)).

The unity of Christian belief and church has not always been as persistent and streamlined as some of the secularization analysts have assumed (cf. *Stark and Bainbridge* 1984: 110 ff.; *Finke and Stark* 1992; *Gabriel* 1992, 1993; *Schmied* 1993; *Tyrell* 1993), but the rapidly growing number of people leaving German Churches indicates a severe instability of the traditional forms of German religious organizations. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the outcome may even be a majority of unchurched atheists. Another possible outcome may be a change to a more open religious market structure such as that found in the U.S. (*Finke and Stark* 1992). The decline of religious monopolies connected with government regulations might finally result in even higher rates of church attendance and religious belief as *Iannaccone* (1990) asserts. The high religiosity in the U.S. society (cf. *Greeley* 1989; *Finke and Stark* 1992; *Terwey* 1993; *Warner* 1993) is quite contrary to what simple secularization theories would predict even though this picture may be exaggerated by some poll data (cf. *Hadaway et al.* 1993).

13 "In spite of what some people say, the situation of the average man is not getting better, but worse." In ALLBUS 1982 62.4% agreed with this pessimistic item — this was already a critical year, when the German government was taken over by the conservative-liberal coalition of CDU/CSU and FDP. The former SPD-FDP coalition was less and less expected to cope with some social problems (cf. *Gibowski and Kaase* 1986; *Kühnel and Terwey* 1990; *Terwey* 1990). After 1982 social pessimism in the West changed to 54.2% (ALLBUS 1990), 59% (ALLBUS 1991), and 70.8% (ALLBUS 1992; East: 66.4% (1991), 66.1% (1992)).

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