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Max Haller: Towards a Modern Society of Responsible Citizens  
Value Change in Austria between 1986 and 2003

Translated by Camilla Nielsen Vienna 2005



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# **Max Haller: Towards a Modern Society of Responsible Citizens Value Change in Austria between 1986 and 2003\***

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# 1. Presentation of the Problem and Theoretical Background

## *a) Introduction*

Seventeen years – the span of time covered by our Social Surveys – do not seem much from a historical perspective. And yet in just two decades since the mid-1980's a number of far-reaching technological, economical, social and political changes have taken place.

The revolution in information technology, in particular the rise of the Internet, has led to a tremendous acceleration of worldwide communication and economic networking. The new term “globalization“, coined for this phenomenon, very soon experienced a real heyday. These dramatic changes are also reflected in our data. Whereas at the time of the first survey, in 1986, only 9% of all Austrians used a computer at their workplace, this percentage had risen to 64% by 2003. The collapse of the communist power system in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union around 1989/90 was the most decisive development in world politics. For Austria this was of paramount significance, since the north-eastern, eastern and south-eastern parts of the country bordered directly on the Iron Curtain. Here formerly intense exchange relations found an abrupt end, resulting in economic stagnation in all of the affected border regions. With the accession of these countries to the European Union in 2004 a number of positive perspectives emerged on the horizon. Far-reaching political changes have also taken place in Western Europe where the European Union had created a huge domestic market with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, initiating the full economic integration of 15 countries. This process culminated ten years later in the introduction of a common currency.

In Austria there were also significant changes in the period under study here. When in 1986 Dr. Jörg Haider took over the leadership of Austrian Freedom Party, which became transformed into a right-wing, populist party, massive shifts within the political landscape set in. In 2000 the black-blue bourgeois coalition came to power under Federal Chancellor Schüssel, marking the end of a long period of big coalitions and the beginning of a new epoch of structural reforms inspired by neo-liberalism in a harsher political climate. The erstwhile “isle of the blessed“ appears to have given

way to a society that is torn within and perceived as xenophobic and authoritarian from the outside. Evidence of this seemed to be provided by the sanctions that the European Union imposed on Austria when the black-blue coalition came to power.

A tangible change could also be noted with respect to basic social and political values insofar that they are manifested in the public realm. Whereas in the mid-1980's it was still possible to speak of a clear ideological primacy of neo-liberalism (in Great Britain Margaret Thatcher ruled from 1979 to 1990 and in the USA Ronald Reagan from 1981 to 1989), there is growing evidence that a communal and welfare-state orientation is in greater demand again. Social democratic heads of state were elected again: in the United States the democratic candidate Bill Clinton in 1993, Blair in Great Britain in 1997 and Schröder in Germany in 1998. Here, as so often, Austria lagged behind international developments, with the governing bourgeois coalition (most notably the Austrian Freedom Party) having to accept one election defeat after the other in recent years.

Is it possible to find traces of these secular, social transformational processes in the behavior and value orientations of the Austrian population? With the third "Social Survey" presented here, it is for the first time possible to document not just differing opinions between two points in time but also to examine whether this has to do with more long-term trends. The latter can be assumed to exist when continuous developments point in one and the same direction over three periods in time. As the findings show, we have indeed been able to note striking transformations in this relatively short period of seventeen years. These refer to both the level of social structures and behavior as well as to that of social attitudes and value orientations.<sup>1</sup> Here an overview of the most significant changes in the central realms of life of Austrians is to be given from a uniform theoretical perspective. In the following sections of this volume similar analyses will provide a more in-depth view of all social sub-realms. There may also be interpretations of changes that differ from those given in this contribution.

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<sup>1</sup> For earlier analyses of the transformation of values on the basis of Social Surveys 1986 and 1993, cf. Haller/Holm 1987 and Haller et al, 1996. Denz et al. (2001) have put forward an analysis of the change in values based on the *World Value Surveys*,

**b) Decaying values, value change or growing acceptance of universal values?  
Three different diagnoses.**

In what direction are values changing? Here we can define at least three different scenarios or diagnoses (c.f., also Klages 1984, 1993; Hillmann 1986; Hepp 1994; Prisching 1998; Rossteuscher 2004).

(1) *Relativization of values and decline in values:*

A number of authors have noted a loss of meaning in traditional values without these being replaced by new and modern ones. This general thesis can be endorsed in three ways. First, one can note a more or less complete disappearance of formerly important values that buttressed society. Who would still see premarital chastity and virginity as values? Who still sees saving as a value today? In Austria it has become common for people to live together with someone (often with different partners successively) before getting married or to forego marriage altogether, even if children have been born in the meantime. Something similar applies to saving – which until not so very long ago was much lauded as a virtue. Today saving is seen as a form of behavior that dampens the turnover of goods and economic growth and not as a virtue that benefits the individual and national economy altogether. (Zahn 1960) Explicit mention of such a decline in values is mainly made by neoconservative authors. They speak about - or better: lament - a general loss and decay of values, as for instance the German social scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1978) in her book titled *Werden wir all Proletarier?* (Are We All Becoming Proletarians?). A special problem for all of these authors is the alleged decline in the value of “performance“ or “achievement“. Helmut Schoeck (1971), the author of the book *Der Neid und die Gesellschaft* (Envy and Society) (1966), which has been translated into many different languages, has asked: “Is performance something indecent?“. The attacks are less targeted at “ordinary citizens“, who are ever less inclined to perform, but at progressive-liberal theoreticians who intellectually discredit the idea of performance and establish a “Ecclesiastical hierarchy of intellectuals“ (Schelsky 1975). While these new “high priests of culture“ (Bell 1976:54), artists, writers, philosophers, sociologists and pedagogues may often achieve great feats (and often make a lot of money in the process), they recommend and promise their

contemporaries liberation from the pressure to perform, comprehensive possibilities of participation, new forms of symbolic-ritual self-promotion. In this kind of culturally pessimistic diagnoses it is mainly young people who, understandably, are the target, since they are the main bearers of new attitudes and modes of behavior. In 2003, Elisabeth Gehrler, Austria's Federal Minister for Education and Science, observed that today's young people should spend less time going from one party to the next and devote themselves more to having and raising children to secure pensions. That she literally stepped in a "hornet's nest" is evidenced by the fact that this statement unleashed a very heated public controversy. Assumptions of this sort are often tacitly implied in the superficially radical theories of individualization (Beck 1986; Beck-Gernsheim 1994) which see community-related, traditional values yielding to the rise of individualist-egoistic attitudes. (König 1988)

A second variant of the thesis of the decline of values is that the traditional, collectively recognized system of values is giving way to a diversity of different values that now only coexist. Today there can be no talk of a general binding character of certain basic values for all of society – with perhaps the exception of the conceding everyone his/her own individual life style. The individuals can adopt parts of the entire canon of values, as they see fit and shape their lives in whatever way they wish – provided that their behavior is not detrimental to anyone else's (Bell 1976:54). According to this diagnosis, also formerly recognized and binding social institutions such as the family, political parties, churches, etc. are losing ground (thesis of de-institutionalization). A classical earlier representative to note the prevalence of such value relativism was the American sociologist David Riesman. In his bestseller *The Lonely Masses* (Riesman 1958) he diagnosed already in the 1950s the rise of an adjusted mass human being controlled from the outside.

A third variant of the thesis of the decline of values says that from the beginning of time values have not played a big role. Behavior is primarily guided by needs and interests – both individual and group-related ones. The most prominent representative of this view was, no doubt, Karl Marx who saw values as only shrouding the interests of the ruling (capitalist) classes. For a contemporary theory according to which all human behavior can be explained by the gains for those affected the American economist and sociologist Gary S. Becker received the Nobel

Prize for Economics in 1992 – a clear indication of the international esteem of such a perspective. There is also no room for an autonomous role of values in sociological theories that view human action as merely a rational choice between various profitable alternatives (Coleman 1990; Esser 1993).

(2) *Changing values and the rise of new values*

The most well-known thesis of the rise of new values is the *Theory of Post-Materialism* by Ronald Inglehart (1990). According to this book, the rising standard of living among the population and the growing security offered by the social state have resulted in primarily materialistic values being replaced by post-materialist values. Instead of seeking a safe working place and income, high material standard of living, security and order, values such as self-development and self-realization, co-determination and participation increasingly came to the fore in the post-war period. Inglehart's theses are based on the theory of the hierarchy of needs developed by the psychologist A. Maslow according to whom human needs can be arranged in a hierarchy from low (survival and material security) to high needs (self-realization). Higher values are only aspired to once the lower ones have been satisfied.

Both of these traditions of theory capture important tendencies of the change in values, but show significant weak spots. The thesis claiming an ever more prevalent individualism and egoism overlooks the fact that the relevance of social relationships has by no means decreased as will become clear in the following. We will also see that there can be no talk of a general decline of values. The theory of the change in values is also lacking. On the one hand, the thesis of the rise of post-materialism could not be confirmed in careful empirical studies. For example, it became evident that individual aspects of so-called "materialism" vary depending on the economic situation of a country (e.g., the situation of the labor market) but do not show any long-term tendency in a specific direction (Haller 2002). On the other hand, it would be greatly simplifying things to believe that the diversity and complexity of human values could be captured by a one-dimensional scale ("materialism" vs. "post-materialism"). Ever since human history has been documented in writing, there have also been people who have been guided by "higher" values in Maslow's sense and were willing to not just sacrifice material well-being but also security and life.

### (3) *Growing acceptance of universal values*

This text proceeds from an alternative third approach stating that we cannot just speak of the emergence and acceptance of new values because there are only a limited number of basic and universal values that are valid for people of all epochs and cultures. This position has recently been argued convincingly by Martha Nussbaum (1999) in regard to the emancipation of women. What we can observe is a loss in the importance of values which under the changed life conditions no longer fulfil important functions. At the same time, we note that values are becoming more widespread and generalized. This is taking place in a dual sense. One, certain values are related to ever more people and more comprehensive social groups and, two, they encompass ever more realms of life and/or subsystems of society. The meaning of these two trends can be very nicely illustrated with the example of the value of equality. In ancient times (even in the small ideal democracies of Greece) only a fraction of the population was seen as citizens, as real people, while since the late Middle Ages an ever growing number of people in Europe attained this right. At first, only men owned property in the 19th and 20th century. Since then there have also been women who owned property (Dann 1975; Majer 1995). Whereas the notion of “equality“ used to refer only to the public sphere, it applies ever more today to the labor world and the “private“ realms of partnership, marriage and family.

#### ***c) The rise of a socially responsible individualism backed by institutions as a central element of today's value change***

What are the values that have prevailed since early modernity and in particular in the transition to post-industrial society? Are there especially central values in this regard? This question can be answered in the affirmative. It is the value, the dignity of the individual. In this sense one can speak of the triumph of “individualism“, but not (just) in the connotation of increasing ego-centrism and egotism but in the positive sense, i.e., the aspiration for autonomy and self-determination, respect of the dignity and freedom of each individual. Raymond Boudon (2002a, b) has, in a series of recent articles, shown that that the idea of individualism already played a central role in the classics of sociology. Thus Durkheim wrote in his book on the division of labor (Durkheim 1977) that individualism and free thinking had not just been discovered in ancient Greek/Roman democracy or the French Revolution but had played an

important role since the beginning of mankind (Boudon 2002a:75). Georg Simmel (1923: 528ff.) saw in the increasing differentiation of modern societies and in the more pronounced manifestation of the individual two sides of one and the same process. Even for Max Weber the aspiration to increasing respect of the individual and the resulting idea of the equality of all people represented a fundamental principle of socio-cultural development. He saw this clearly formulated for the first time in early Christendom (Weber 1973). Accordingly, Weber interpreted the history of mankind as controlled by the “secret“ program of developing institutions, laws and rules of human coexistence that respect the dignity of the individual ever more (Boudon, 2002a: 81; Margalit 1999). From this emerges also the revolutionary idea of the universal state citizenship. The rise of Christendom and of Socialism is closely linked with this idea. Already Alexis de Tocqueville recognized the power of the principle of equality which he described as a “general and prevailing“ passion of people (Tocqueville 1976; cf. also Haller 2003: 541 ff). The goal of democratic societies lies in the higher realization of this principle than all other forms of state and society.

An important question is: What role do social institutions play in this process of change? Does man living in modern societies in which the individual may not be without all moral tie yet still be able to make decisions about their behavior more autonomously still require the support and control of institutions with public recognition? This question is often, if only implicitly, negated. Thus the transition to modern societies is often described as a process of deinstitutionalization. Precisely in recent decades the obvious loss of meaning of the large social and political institutions seems to confirm this thesis. Here one only need think of phenomena such as the dissolution of marriage and family (decline in numbers of marriages and births, increase in number of divorces), the decline in the activities of unions, political parties and churches, the loss of trust in public institutions.

In order to be able to answer this question we have to ask ourselves where values and institutions come from and what social functions they fulfil. With Popper (1973) we must assume that values - once they are recognized as such, formulated and translated into binding norms and institutions – are part of the universal “realm of ideas“. In this sense they have an existence that is independent of each epoch and

society. Yet at the same time the values relevant for the here and now are inseparably linked now with the concrete human life conditions and needs (Haller 1987.) Along with George Herbert Mead we can assume that values are ultimately founded in human interests. As Mead (1968:35) wrote “a moral act is an intelligent, socially oriented act in which one takes into account the interests of others just as much as one’s own identity.” Concrete norms and social institutions are indispensable since they represent the social backing of such modes of behavior that have to do with the basic interests of certain groups of people. These are, in particular, those groups that are not capable of adequately articulating and implementing their needs and interests on their own. Children could not survive without the family, an institution backed by society, just as the unemployed could not survive without the support of the welfare state. Private property would be just as little ensured as public order if there were not such a thing as economic and criminal law, along with a judicial and police apparatus.

From such a perspective it becomes clear that social development can never lead to a complete “disappearance“ of institutions. What we can observe is rather a continuous *structural transformation of institutions* – a transformation that must equally take account of the changed socio-structural conditions and the continuing acceptance of basic values. If we wish to grasp the emergence of new institutions – which in modern societies is to be seen as a deliberate and planned (even if usually not entirely predictable in its results) social process (Coleman 1991) – the way they relate to values must be considered to the same extent as the underlying social forces and interests. A decisive factor leading to the acceptance of institutions also in the interest of weaker social groups is the (national and international) public opinion that can very well distinguish between legitimate life needs and claims and more interest and power politically motivated demands and actions. The “good arguments“ (Boudon 2002) put forward by representatives of weaker groups or advocates of universal basic values represent a separate power factor of social development that should not be underestimated.

#### **d) Three theses on the transformation of value orientations**

Three relatively concrete theses can be derived from the preceding reflections which are to serve as a guide for the interpretation of the empirical findings of this article.

*1st thesis: A general principle can be seen as underlying the many specific changes of social attitudes, value orientations and modes of behavior, namely, the growing significance of autonomy, dignity and the freedom of the individual to decide.*

Here we can second the thesis of the growing “individualization“, but not with the implicitly cultural critical, conservative and valuative diagnosis of a growing egotism. What is more central is the aspiration for an expansion of the individual’s freedom and the leeway for decision making. Personal autonomy and the freedom to make decisions is one of the most important prerequisites for a happy, fulfilled life as was shown in a re-analysis of the *World Value Survey* (Haller/Hadler, 2004.) With Albert Schweitzer (1981) the last legitimization for the growing importance of the individual’s value could perhaps be seen as respect for life. Such a basic value also comprises non-human nature and our environment the significance of which we have only very recently become aware of. However, it is certainly to be expected that the aspiration for individual autonomy and freedom often comes into conflict with other important needs and goals or can lead to modes of behavior and situations which, in turn, can hardly be regarded as desirable.

*2nd thesis: Close social ties and relationships represent central individual life goals and indispensable social structural elements even in modern society. However, we can note a shift from socially standardized ties and relationships that we more or less take for granted to ones that are freely selected and developed by the individual. With the growing demands and expectations, these relationships are becoming more complex and more tenuous.*

Clearly indicative of this trend are phenomena such as declining rates of births, the growing number of divorces. However, this trend is empirically significant not just in partnership, marriage and family but also in realms of social commitment in “civil society“, in the world of labor and in public life. We can, however, assume that people also feel a sense of responsibility for their fellow human beings still today. Sociology, in particular, is called upon to demonstrate the immense importance of assuming

responsibility for oneself, of socio-ethical and moral action also in economically rich and politically free societies (Wolfe 1989).

*3rd thesis: Universal values as well as the institutions in which they are embodied are by no means losing meaning. However, we are able to detect a significant change to the extent that such values and institutions come to the fore, clearly relating to the changed needs and interests of individuals and groups that have emerged as a product of economic-technical, socio-cultural and political upheavals. Thus there is a plethora of new social norms and institutions emerging, which affect socially relevant modes of behavior and socially discriminated groups. On the other hand, those social norms and institutions whose social function is no longer transparent and over whose role responsible individuals can decide are losing ground.*

Let us now examine the most important processes of value change that have taken place in Austria over the past seventeen years against the backdrop of these observations.

## **2. Tendencies in Value Change 1986 – 1993 – 2003**

In this section several central tendencies of value change that took place between 1986 and 2003 are to be described in broad lines. Our focus will be on four aspects: the relative importance of the various life realms for the individual, the change in the meaning of partnership and family, the change in attitudes and participation in the socio-political realm, changes in work and profession orientations. The change in values can come into effect in different ways, i.e., by affecting all people to the same extent, by first appearing in certain groups and then spreading to the entire population. Groups that are especially receptive to new values, often even initiating a change in values, are young people and persons with a higher education. In this section, value attitudes are thus also to be differentiated according to age group and groups with various levels of education. In the next section we will study the relative significance of these four ways in which changes take place in value.

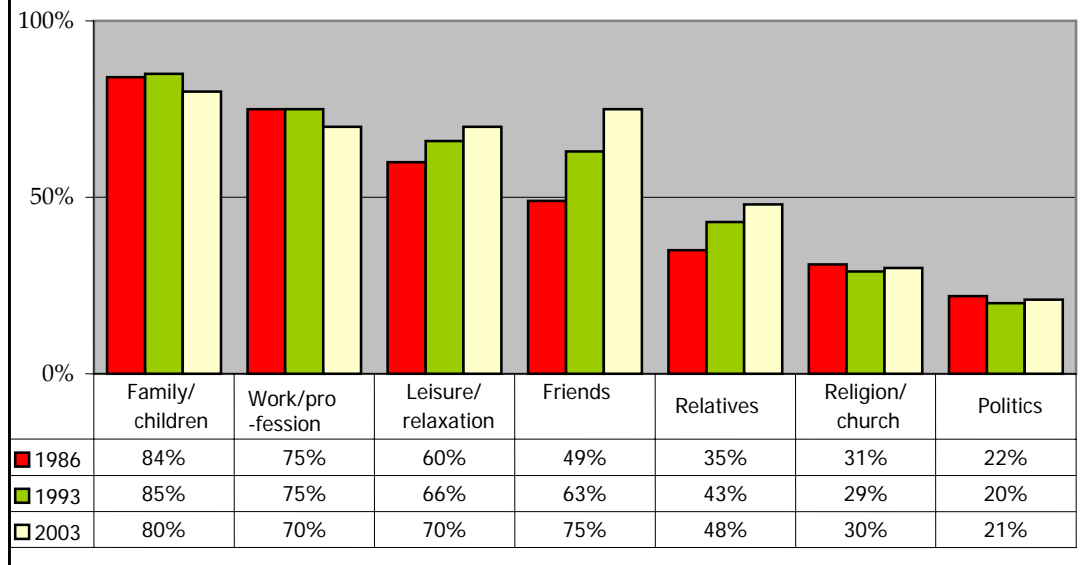
**a) Rise of a leisure and fun society? The continuing central importance of partnership and family, work and profession**

In particular in the German-speaking countries there is often talk of formerly central realms of life (i.e., work, profession, family and the related “compulsory values”) increasingly giving way to “hedonistic” orientations that are primarily interested in fun here and now (Schulze 1992; cf. also Prisching 1998). Do these findings confirm the diagnosis?

Relevant in this context are the answers given to the question as to the *importance of the various realms of life* for Austrians. The respondents were presented with seven such realms in each of the three surveys.<sup>2</sup>The findings showed a clear ranking: at the top was “partnership” as well as “family and children”. Two thirds gave these realms the highest grade on a seven-level scale (extremely important). Altogether, 80-90% of all respondents viewed this realm as very important (cf. [Figure 1](#)). The fact that there were only minor differences in age and education further proves the importance of this realm. Only young people (up to 29) see “family and child” as less significant which reflects the fact that most of them still do not have their own family (cf. [Table 1](#)). Since 1986, there has been an only insignificant decrease in the number of those who ascribe highest importance to these realms.

Three realms follow second: Work and profession, leisure time and relaxation, friends and acquaintances. They were seen as “extremely important” by 40—50% of those surveyed and by 80-90% as very important. There were hardly any variations in age and education in the realm “work and profession”. The two remaining realms (leisure time/relaxation, friends/acquaintances) were clearly more important to young people but this is to be interpreted less as an indication of value change than as an effect related to life-cycle. The realm of “leisure time” is, for instance, important to 49% of young people and only to 32% of older people. Over time, changes became manifest which could be interpreted in the sense of the theses cited above. The realm “work/profession” has lost in significance, while that of “leisure time/relaxation” and in particular “friends/acquaintances” has gained significance dramatically.

Figure 1: The Importance of Various Realms of Life, 1986 - 1993 - 2003 (% extremely important)\*)



\*) Values 6 and 7 on a scale of 1 (unimportant) to 7 (extremely important)

The realm “relatives“ lags behind a bit. Contacts with relatives are seen as “extremely important” by about a fourth of the respondents and as “very important” by two thirds of them. It is surprising that in the course of time greater importance is attached to these relationships, while the differences due to age and level of education are amazingly small.

Two realms (“religion/church“ and “politics/public life“) are clearly at the bottom of the scale ranking the importance of the different realms. Only 10-20% of the surveyed find them “extremely important“, while 20-30% see them as very important. Only in the realm of religion/church do the effects show up in the expected direction, i.e., they are seen as less important by older and less educated persons. It is surprising that there are no clear tendencies over the course of time towards a diminishing importance of these two realms.

We can draw general conclusions from these findings (cf. also Haller 1992, 10) (1) Individuals primarily see the immediate realms of life and action as being central to their lives.

<sup>2</sup> “Partnership“ was added in the most recent survey.

**Table 1:** The Importance of All Realms of Life according to Age Groups (2003)

Age groups (N)	16 – 29	30 – 39	40 – 49	50 – 59	60 – 69	70 +	Alle
	Numbers in %, for whom realm is very important *)						
Family and children	55	72	71	68	71	64	66
Partnership **	59	71	68	63	61	48	62
Work and profession	48	45	49	50	48	37	46
Leisure and relaxation	49	45	43	42	35	32	42
Friends/acquaintances	63	47	44	40	35	41	46
Relatives	28	24	22	25	23	31	26
Religion and church	9	16	14	17	25	28	17
Politics and public life	6	6	6	12	14	12	9

\*) Category 7 on a scale of (unimportant) to 7 (extremely important).

\*\*) Only surveyed in 2003

(2) The central and increasingly significant role of realms such as partnership, family, friends and relatives proves that stronger individual life orientations do not necessarily mean that a solipsistic, 'egocentric' individualism is taking hold. If not even more than in the past, close social relationships continue to be seen as a central

element of a desirable and fulfilled life.(3) The continuously high significance of the realms of marriage and family as well as work and profession as opposed to such realms in which more individualistic-hedonistic orientations are expressed (e.g., friends, leisure time, etc.) proves that one can hardly speak of the rise of a society geared mainly to fun and free time. Long-standing social ties and obligations continue to play a decisive role.

In sum, we can state that certain shifts have taken place in the relative significance of the various realms of life. However, we cannot claim that there has been a clear trend away from work and family towards free-time. We also cannot say that community- and obligation-oriented values have been eroded by individualistic or hedonistic orientations. Further indications of these developments are to be elaborated on in the following sections.

***b) From the family as an internally functional, differentiated, unequal system to the egalitarian partnership between men and women and the view of children as autonomous individuals***

According to a widespread sociological interpretation of the change of marriage and family, they have become transformed from a socially predefined and normed institution into a system of freely selected relationships that can be formed by the individual. This thesis was already explicitly endorsed by the American sociologists Burgess, Locke and Thomes (*The Family – From Institution to Companionship*, Burgess et al. 1953) half a century ago. Wolfgang Schulz (1983) adopted this interpretation for the change of the family since the end of WW2 in Germany and Austria and substantiated it empirically (cf. also Rosenmayr 1989). There are indeed a number of indicators that bear out the assumption of a deinstitutionalization of the family, namely, the decline in people's inclination to get married, the increase in the number of non-marital life partnerships, single-parents raising children and other new forms of the family, the rise in divorce figures, etc.

Here it is argued that the crucial change in forms of life in marriage and family is not the fact that their institutional character has changed. Rather it has to do with a fundamental transformation of the family as a functionally differentiated, unequal system into a system of more or less egalitarian relationships between equal members. The classical sociological account of the former form of family has been given by the American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1964). For him the modern small family with husband and father as the breadwinner and the mother who as the housewife devotes all her energy to raising the children and taking care of the household (in addition to at best assuming secondary, time-limited voluntary activities outside of the home) represents the pattern that is best adapted to the modern industrial society. This prevents a status conflict between man and woman in a professional setting which could have a negative impact on family stability, keeping each of their loads within acceptable limits. To the extent that such a system is recognized by all members of the family and the obligations defined for each family member are honored, it cannot be described as socially unfair or unjust, since both men and women have been assigned rights and duties.

It is undisputed that this model has lost validity. But can we say that it has not been replaced by a new, socially binding model? On closer scrutiny, we can easily see that the deinstitutionalizing tendencies of family and marriage that no doubt exist correspond with many tendencies of new forms of institutionalization. For instance, the partner relationship has not been entirely stripped of its institutional elements as a result of the weakening of the binding nature of marriage as a prerequisite for lasting sexual relations and raising children. What we can see is merely the fact that the claim to exclusivity of traditional marriage is losing ground. The rights and obligations are, by contrast, increasingly being granted to life partnerships not based on marriage (marriage certificate) as well as to illegitimate children born in these relationships. The appeal of an institutional foundation of a partnership is most evident in homosexuals who today are struggling to also be able to benefit from institutional support which was traditionally accorded to marriage. A number of further areas could be named in which new processes of institutionalization are manifest in connection with marriage and family life. The lawmaker intervenes even in the most intimate areas of conjugal sexuality when, for instance, it also defines rape as a possible offence of a spouse. The basic principle of many other marriage and family policies, legal and socio-political regulations and measures consists in reinforcing the autonomy of the individual partners and members of a marriage or a family, redesigning them in sum as more of an egalitarian system. This trend is aptly rendered in the title of a book by the social historians Mitterauer and Sieder *Vom Patriarchat zur Partnerschaft* (From the Patriarchy to Partnership) (1977). This institutional transformation has also had a crucial effect on the child's position within the family. Whereas in pre-modern societies the children hardly received any notice (at least in broad sectors of the populace), today the child is increasingly granted rights associated with the dignity of an integral individual (Ariès 1978).

The far-reaching effects as well as the necessity and inevitability of this change are clearly evident in international comparison. Marriage and family seem to fulfil their central functions better when this process of modernization (to use this somewhat ambivalent term here) has developed further. In Europe today the birth rate is relatively high in countries with "modern" family structure and institutions (the Scandinavian countries, France), while in those countries that are still strongly influenced by traditional role models (in particular southern Europe, but also Austria

and Germany) the internationally lowest birth rates can be noted. One could almost say that women in these countries have reacted to the delayed societal adoption of modern marriage- and family-related institutions by not having children; in a way, the traditional family orientation of these countries has stumbled into the trap that it has laid itself. When adult children (as in Italy) often live with their parents until they are 35 and enjoy the amenities of their home, they are hardly motivated to create their own household, to have children and to raise them (cf. also Haller/Höllinger/Gomilschak 2000.)

What kinds of change tendencies can be noted here in Austria? On the one hand, we see that the populace also holds a similar conviction as sociologists who speak of a deinstitutionalization of the family (cf. Table 2.) In 1986, about one third of all those surveyed agreed with the statement that the development of society tended towards a dissolution of marriage. In 2003 already 54% shared this opinion. In 1986 only one third of the surveyed fully endorsed abortion (independent of a woman's personal motives), in 2003 88% were in favor of it. Statements regarding alternative forms of cohabitation (e.g. living together without marrying) found broad acceptance. A majority (55%) of those surveyed believed that surrogate motherhood, certainly a problematic form of producing children, should not be forbidden. A third also does not view homosexual relationships as problematic.

**Table 2:** Indicators Regarding the Change of Values and Attitudes Related to Marriage and Family, 1986 – 1993 – 2003

Indicators (questions/statements)	1986	1993	2003
<u>Ideal no. of children:</u>	%	%	%
No children	2	1	2
1 child	6	6	9
2 children	63	67	62
3 or more children	29	26	26
One really needs a family to be happy <sup>)</sup>	74	75	73
One can also lead a happy life without children	30	26	25
Sexual fidelity is an important foundation of marriage	94	94	96
Society is moving towards the dissolution of marriage	34	43	54
Abortion should be legal irrespective of a woman's reason for seeking one	32	38	88
A working mother can have just as warm and trusting relationship with her children and a non-working mother	68	74	91
It is the man's task to earn money and and the woman's job to take care of the household and family	77	66	56

<sup>)</sup> In this and the following statements the answers in the affirmative were added up and indicated in %..

On the other hand, it is more than clear that these attitudes by no means imply a dissolution of the central elements of a close partnership and steady relationship. In 1986 and 2003 three fourths of those surveyed agreed to the statement that one needs a family to be really happy. Almost unanimously (about 95%) the surveyed believed that sexual faithfulness was an important basis of marriage. Here, too, there were also no differences among the various age groups. Extra-marital relationships would represent a reason for dissolving the partnership for two thirds of those surveyed (and for 70% of those under the age of 30.) In 2003 as well as 17 years ago the ideal family size was seen as being the two-children family, while one fourth considering three children or more to be ideal.

A spectacular change, however, can be seen in the attitudes regarding the distribution of tasks and power between men and women in professional life and in the family. Large majorities agree to statements in which women are granted the right to full employment in addition to marriage and family and all statements are rejected that state there are irresolvable conflicts between both of these realms. In 1986 three

fourths of those surveyed still endorsed the traditional image of the family in Parsons' sense (man as the breadwinner, woman as the housewife and mother.) In 2003 there were 56% - much less but still a high percentage. (Table 2)

We can draw the following conclusions from these trends. The model of the internally functional, differentiated marriage and family characterized by unequal (even if perhaps compensated reciprocally) duties and burdens is no longer accepted today. It has been replaced by a model that sees egalitarian relations between partners and full respect of the needs and rights of the children as its prerequisite.<sup>3</sup> This new model of marriage and family also needs to be backed (and in fact is backed) by social institutions. These are, on the one hand, ever more elaborate (sometimes even excessive) legal provisions and regulations and, on the other hand, public institutions, social policies and services supporting the family (institutions providing care for small children, protection of women, family assistance, etc.)

### ***c.) Responsibility and willingness to achieve in work and profession***

In the realm of work/profession the Social Survey unfortunately contains few statements that relate directly to value orientations. Some questions had to do with aspects that one finds most pleasing in one's profession or which one has the feeling that they are least satisfied. From the latter we could at least obtain indirect information to professional values.

In the preceding section we already noted that work and profession continue to figure among the most important life realms. Here it is interesting that those aspects of one's profession that one sees as being best fulfilled also include (in addition to diversity and job atmosphere), "activities for which one assumes responsibility oneself" (cf. Table 3.) Aspects viewed as not so important are "extrinsic" ones, such as income, security of job and working hours, and as unimportant: co-determination, significance of the profession for the general public, self-realization.

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<sup>3</sup> The Social Survey unfortunately contained no direct questions regarding this aspect. One could, however, clearly infer the change from the many legal reforms as a result of which children's rights have been considerably expanded.

**Table 3:** Important professional aspects that are best fulfilled, according to age and education, in 2003 ( % of respondents citing the aspect in question)

	Good pay	Stimulating, diverse activities	Good working atmosphere	Self- responsible activity
<u>Age groups</u>	%	%	%	%
16 – 29 (207)	36	36	58	37
30 – 39 (306)	31	48	44	52
40 – 49 (293)	25	40	40	50
50 – 59 (162)	25	49	39	48
60 – 69 (14)	(13)	(49)	(6)	(79)
<u>Training/schooling</u>				
Compulsory schooling (91)	17	26	49	39
Apprenticeship (450)	35	39	51	42
BMS <sup>1)</sup> (139)	26	45	39	51
BHS, AHS <sup>2)</sup> (182)	27	52	43	53
University (120)	20	57	(25)	66
<u>All</u> (983)	29	43	45	48

<sup>1)</sup> Occupational secondary school

<sup>2)</sup> Occupational or academically oriented secondary school

One aspect of “responsible individualism“ as sketched above is also evidenced in the responses to a question that refers to what the level of income should be based on. Of the four criteria cited – performance, level of education, age, family need – “performance“ was cited by far the most frequently (first by two thirds of the surveyed and second by a further fourth). Here there were clear differences depending on age and level of education. Higher pay and good working atmosphere is particularly important to younger people. Older people, by contrast, find activities that are stimulating to persons with more education and requiring personal responsibility more interesting.

There can thus be no talk of a devaluation of the areas of work and profession. This is also indirectly evidenced by the fact that satisfaction with one’s profession has shown more of an increase than decrease in the past 17 years. In 1986 48% of those

surveyed were very satisfied with their job, in 2003 54% were.<sup>4</sup> The “higher ranking/grading“ of the entire professional structure may have contributed to this development: in 33% the percentage of the qualified staff in leading positions was 33%, in 2003 it was over 40%.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 4:** Does life have meaning without work? (according to sex, age and education, 2003)

	Work is an important part of life	Life can even be fulfilling without work	Non answer	Total
	%	%	%	%
<u>Sex</u>				
Men (951)	86	11	3	100
Women (1.049)	83	13	4	100
<u>Age groups</u>				
16 – 29 (404)	85	11	4	100
30 – 39 (395)	80	15	5	100
40 – 49 (360)	80	15	5	100
50 – 59 (293)	83	13	4	100
60 – 69 (261)	89	9	2	100
790 and more (287)	89	8	3	100
<u>Education</u>				
Compulsory schooling (564)	87	8	5	100
Apprenticeship (758)	87	10	3	100
<b>BMS</b> (231)	80	16	4	100
<b>BHS, AHS</b> (346)	81	15	4	100
Hochschule (162)	72	22	6	100
<u>All</u> (2000)	84	12	4	100

One question referred directly to the role of work in life. Here two alternatives were offered: “Work is an important part of life“ as opposed to “A fulfilled life is also possible without work.“ The responses given were unambiguous: the large majority – 84% - of the surveyed opted for the first alternative (cf. [Table 4](#)).

<sup>4</sup> Whether this is really a trend is up for debate. In the meantime (1993) the percentage of those who are extremely satisfied with the job (55%) is markedly lower than before and after.

<sup>5</sup> Here, too, various samples or definitions may play a role, since this portion has not increased continuously (1986 33%, 1993 45 %, 2003 41%).

In particular respondents between 30 and 69, that is, mainly those at a working age, saw work as a central part of their life. Women see this practically the same way as men do. However, what is striking is that the level of education has a negative effect. The higher the education, the less one is able to imagine a fulfilled life without work. But also among those with a higher education only a fourth of the respondents agreed with this statement.

***d) Socio-political orientations and modes of behavior: A decline in formal forms of participation and an increase in critical political consciousness***

Since 1986 Austria's political landscape has changed dramatically. The foundations of the systems of social partnership and the coalition and 'consociational' governments\* inextricably linked with post-war history began to shake the year of the first survey (1986) when Dr. Haider assumed the leadership of the right-wing Freedom Party of Austria.<sup>6</sup> Among the electorate a strong break with thinking in terms of camps and party affiliations took place and there was a growing number of floating voters (Plasser et al. 2000) This, however, was accompanied by problematic tendencies: first and foremost, the decrease in voter turnout. Whereas in 1986 still 90.5% of eligible voters voted, in 2002 it was 84.3%.<sup>7</sup> The data from the survey very clearly reflect the decreasing willingness to be a member and participate in classical interest groups and political organizations. The percentage of labor union members among the respondents dropped from 30% in 1986 to 28% in 1993 and 21% in 2003. The corresponding percentages of party members amounted to 24%, 19% and 12%, amounting to a 50% drop. (Table 5)

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\* Proporz or consociational political system refers to proportional representation of the two political parties in most positions with political service.

<sup>6</sup> As an immediate consequence of Haider's rise to head of the Austrian right-wing Freedom Party the Federal Chancellor, the Social-Democrat Franz Vranitzky, dissolved the coalition government with the Freedom Party and, following the new elections immediately thereafter, established a large coalition with the Austrian People's Party

<sup>7</sup> Austria's Statistisches Jahrbuch (Almanach) 2004, p. 469.

What were the causes of these trends which could at in part be seen as positive but also as problematic? (The decline in terms of political camps could also imply an increase in the individual's political thinking). My thesis is that general basic patterns of value change are also evident in this area. This change means that people are less and less willing to have large organizations and institutions tell them what to do and think, and that important decisions are increasingly being made in relation to the individual case and depending on circumstances. For the change in attitudes, value orientations and modes of behavior in politics and public life three factors in particular play a crucial role:

Table 5: Indicators regarding the change of socio-political ideas and values 1986 – 1993 – 2003

Indicators (statements)	1986	1993	2003
<u>Class conflict and exploitation</u>	- % agreement -		
In Austria, like everywhere else, there are those "at the top" who are in charge and those "at the bottom" who follow orders	87	87	82
There are still large parts of the population in Austria today that are suppressed and exploited	44	54	54
<u>Discrimination and its compensation</u>			
There has not been any discrimination of women in Austria to speak of for a long time	58	48	42
Anyone who makes a real effort has the chance to get ahead in this country	64	69	65
The various lobbies in Austria ensure that everyone gets what he/she deserves	49	52	46
<u>Authoritarianism</u>			
The disputes in parliament are more detrimental to us than beneficial. It would be better if there were a few courageous, untiring and selfless men whom people can trust	82	72	66
A lot of things function better if one person calls the shots and the others follow orders	50	38	29

- 1) *Higher level of education among the population* and growing employment and independence of women which has led to more critical perceptions and attitudes with respect to public affairs. (Döring 1995)
- 2) *The loss of credibility of social elites and public institutions.* Not only in the 'consociational' governments (that still exist on a provincial level) but also in the change of governing parties it is still today often the case that the practice of distributing benefits, jobs, etc. within the context of party

politics, has not been done away with but now only takes place in a different, less patent and seemingly more “legitimate“ way.<sup>8</sup> In terms of their careers politicians today enjoy more general security even after their politically active period than was previously the case (as a result of higher wages, lucrative pensions, positions of provision in companies affiliated with the government, etc.) due to the continuous expansion of state activity there is an increasing number of areas where political intervention is possible (Scheuch 1992; Sickinger/Nick 1990). The Catholic church, historically a significant institution in Austria, has also experienced a loss of credibility not just because it was revealed that highest dignitary were involved in morally unacceptable behavior but because the church has adhered to dogmatic principles that are irreconcilable with life in a modern world (e.g., in connection with sexuality, treatment of divorced; cf. also Morel 2003).

- 3) *The growing erosion of democratic forms of co-determination for the population.* This is mainly true as a result of Austria’s integration in the European Union. It has been said a number of times that already three fourths of all economic political decisions which are important for the people of the member states are made on the EU level. If this is true it means that the national parliaments are now only executive authorities of EU laws and decrees. However, on the EU level itself, voters have less possibilities of co-determination since the power of the directly elected EU parliament is limited. The extremely low election turnout at the elections for the EU parliament on June 13, 2004 (only about 45% in Austria and throughout all of Europe) showed that the people in the EU are aware of this. In this connection it should be noted that elements of direct democracy, such as personality-driven elections or binding popular referendums, are not well developed in Austria.

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<sup>8</sup> A case in point was the restructuring of the umbrella organization of the social insurance companies by the Austrian People’s Party and the Freedom Party coalition government which was also motivated by the fact that the unpopular social democratic leadership of the main organization was to be replaced by managers who worked closely with the government. How precipitate and interest-oriented this reform was became clear when it was revoked by the Constitutional Court which declared it to be illegal.

**Table 6:** Indicators regarding change in political and church involvement, 1986 – 1993 – 2003

	1986	1993	2003
<u>How much do politics interest you?</u>			
	%	%	%
- very much/much	21	22	26
- pretty much	42	41	39
- not much	23	25	21
- not at all	15	12	14
No leaning towards any specific party	21	24	40
<u>Member of ...</u>			
... a political party	24	19	12
... the Austrian federation of trade unions	30	28	21
<u>Church affiliation (religious denomination)</u>			
Roman Catholic	84	82	75
Protestant	6	5	5
Moslem	*)	*)	4
Other	1	2	3
None	9	11	13
<u>Frequency of church attendance</u>			
Weekly or more often	25	18	13
One to three times per month	14	16	18
Several times a year	22	22	19
Less frequently	22	23	29
Ever	16	20	20

\*) No separate entry

If we look at the questions regarding political orientation and participation contained in the social survey we can note clear tendencies toward a “*critical individualization*”. However, unmistakable latent authoritarian attitudes persist. In 1986 still 58% of the respondents agreed with the claim that wrangling in parliament did more damage than good and that “a couple of brave and untiring men who the people could trust” would be better (Table 6). By 2003 this percentage had dropped to 35% - a still alarming authoritarian potential (interestingly enough it is not far from the highest percentage of votes that Haider’s Freedom Party was able to obtain in the Austrian parliament). 29% expressed approval regarding the statement “a number of things function better if there is someone giving orders and the others obey.” In 1986 it was

still 50% (though in other categories of response). The statement “In Austria there are also ‘those at the top’ that give orders and ‘those at the bottom’ who follow orders“ is still affirmed by 39% of the respondents today, while in 1986 the percentage was even 59%. It can be seen as positive that this type of statements can be found less frequently among younger people. Yet there is no clear connection with the level of education in the sense that persons with better education would generally refute such statements.

Additional facts show that these trends do not just reflect a growing “political disillusionment “ which the voters are to be blamed for – as conservative speakers and authors have often claimed. The interest for politics has by no means decreased (even if it is still low). In 1986 21% of the respondents expressed a strong interest in politics and in 2003 26%. About a third of the respondents openly admitted having little or no interest at all in politics. At least here a stronger interest can be seen among those with more education. A clear indicator for the decreasing tie to political camps can also be found in our data. No fixed party preference was expressed by 21% in 1986, 24% in 1993 and 40% of the respondents in 2003.

We have already indicated that it could be up to the institutions themselves whether one is interested in politics and perhaps even actively participates or not. The findings on membership in various types of organizations provided indicators of this. 42% of the male respondents were members of a club, 30% members of a union and 17% members of a party (among women the respective percentages are clearly lower at 22%, 15% and 7%). This ranking obviously reflects one’s chances of being able to personally influence something/get something moving in the various organizations. The chance for doing this is certainly greatest in a club (cf. a nice case study based on sports clubs Stanzer 2003), in a labor union it is not so great and there is least chance in a political party.

The findings regarding tasks ascribed to the government and the state are interesting in this connection. Since the mid-1980s the dominant public opinion in this regard has been that the state has intervened in too many realms, that people are being taken care of too much and that this security has been undermining individual initiative and protection. This neo-liberal-bourgeois critique of the state, however,

glosses over the fact that public-state services are generally in the interest of socially weaker groups. The young, well-educated, and high-achievers, however, benefit most from privatization and stronger competition, and one speaks much more seldom of the losers of growing competition (cf. also Haller/Hadler 2002.)

How does the population see these questions, which task does it ascribe to the government today? Here the findings show that it is only the basic welfare provisions that are defined by the large majorities as clearly the tasks of the state: securing pensions, health care, public safety. Just short of half of the respondents see free access to university education and price control as the most important tasks of the state, while only one fourth to one third see the state as being also responsible for creating more equality (work for all, decrease in unequal income, securing an adequate standard of life for the unemployed). However, precisely the latter cited tasks show very clearly that people who are less dependent on such functions of the state also endorse them less frequently (the higher the education level, the more seldom their advocacy; cf. also Ressler 2002.)

Also the Catholic Church has experienced a marked decrease in appeal. This is evidenced both by the dropping number of church members as well as in church participation. The percentage of members of the Catholic Church has dropped from 84 to 75%, while the number of persons without any religious belief has risen from 9 to 13%. Today only 13% of the respondents attend a weekly religious service – in keeping with their creed. In 1986 it was still a fourth. The decline in church activity is a phenomenon found mainly in the big cities. In smaller communities (up to 3,000 inhabitants) still 91% of the population was Catholic in 2003 and 33% attended church weekly. In the larger towns (50,000 + inhabitants) and in Vienna the percentage of Catholics was only 63% and 58%, respectively, and the number of persons attending a weekly church service 8% and 9%, respectively. Also with regard to religiosity there is a pronounced rift between religiosity in the sense of church participation and in a more general sense. In 2003 still 40% of the respondents affirmed strongly believing in God. At least 82% of all Austrians believe in a higher being or in God.

### **3. Transformation of Values and Socio-cultural Change. A More Precise Analysis of the Process and the Determining Factors of Value Change**

A basic assumption of sociology is that the change in values in the population (micro-level) does not take place in a vacuum but is embedded in the change of social structures and social institutions (macro-level). Its socio-structural changes can be seen as both the cause and the result of this change in individual value orientations. If one examines values, as elaborated at the beginning of this article, as a generalization of legitimate and vital interests of large (in particular weaker) social groups it is clear that a change in social structure must entail certain values gaining importance with others losing significance. A main intention of this article is to describe the interaction between the changes on both the micro-level and the macro-level. In this section we will indicate to what extent the changes described above in the basic social orientations of Austrians have been co-determined by socio-structural shifts.

Which aspects of social structure were particularly relevant for changes in attitudes and value orientations? Here we can define at least three dimensions:

1. *Advances in science and technology and shifts of professional, social and class structure from industrial occupations to service and knowledge-based professions.* As empirical indicators we can use data regarding the educational level of the surveyed, the participation in gainful earning and the professional and sector-related affiliations of the employed. The educational level can be regarded as a central factor of modernization. New value attitudes and forms of life usually take hold in persons with higher levels of education and professions. Gainful earning is especially relevant for women whose life perspectives have been dramatically revolutionized by their growing integration in the labor world outside of the domestic context.

2. *Economic growth and increase in material standard of life.* The growing prosperity of large segments of the population has no doubt resulted in people striving less for income, material security and prosperity than they did in the 1960's and 1970's, not to mention the war and post-war years that were full of privations. However, as opposed to Inglehart we believe that this factor alone is not decisive for the change in values. It must be noted that in the phases of economic regression/slow economic growth economic problems can once again come to the fore.
  
3. *Personal-social security and protection through social networks such as family, relatives or local (village and city) communities are increasingly yielding to comprehensive public social institutions and backup systems.* The effect of this change generally tends to reinforce the individual's autonomy and agency - irrespective of gender and age, family status and domestic situation. At the same time there is a change in people's involvement. The readiness to participate in large, formal institutions that are more or less given to the individual (such as all manner of associations, unions, parties and churches) is growing. This, however, does not necessarily mean a retreat to "one's own interests", as conservative critics of the present day and culture lament. New, more informal and spontaneous forms of involvement are also emerging which are compatible with new capabilities, interests and forms of life (Fukuyama 2002; Etzioni 1997; Hondrich/Arzberger 1992.)

The data in our survey clearly illustrate how strong the socio-structural changes have been in all these dimensions over the past seventeen years. Whereas in 1986, 25% of the respondents lived in small communities with less than 2,000 inhabitants, by 2003 this percentage had dropped to 18%. By contrast, the percentage of the population living in medium-sized cities (from 5,000 to 1 million inhabitants) had increased. Moreover, education had shown a dramatic rise. Whereas in 1986 39% of those surveyed only had compulsory education without any vocational training, by 2003 this percentage had dropped to 24%. In 1986 there were still 20% housewives among the surveyed, but by 2003 this figure was only 11%. The percentage of the respondents who lived with a (conjugal) partner

had dropped from 63% to 50%. In 1986 14% of those surveyed still had four or more children, and by 2003 this figure only amounted to 11%. Whereas in 1986 14% of the respondents lived in a one-person household, by 2003 this percentage had almost doubled (29%). This trend was probably less related to the increase in “singles” in the young and middle age groups than with the increase in older women living alone whose partners had died earlier. One could also note a marked increase in the percentage of women from one sample to the next (from 55 to 57 to 62%.)

Here we want to explore whether the processes of value change as described above can be traced back to these processes of socio-structural transformation or whether they can be seen as “genuine” processes of value change. In the former case one could say that the changes in attitude have mainly been “produced” by urbanization, the growing education of the population, the growing integration of women in professional life, the higher qualification of the working population, etc. In this case, the changes should have take place mainly in the groups affected by these processes. In the latter case it should be possible to show that the processes of value change had affected all groups of the population equally and irrespective of the cited socio-structural shifts.

In order to answer this question a new set of data was created which contains those variables and/or value orientations registered in each of the three times a survey was conducted. At the same time five socio-structural characteristics of the surveyed persons were included in the data set (which comprised about 4,000 to 5,000 persons surveyed) when each survey was carried out. The year of the survey was also used as a variable, with two so-called dummy variables being created; the effect of the change between 1986 and 1993 was tested on the one hand, and the effect of the change between 1986 and 2003, on the other. A regression analysis provides an approach for answering the preceding question as to the relative significance of socio-structural shifts and genuine processes of value change. In this analysis we regard the value orientations of the population as a dependent variable and the three following groups of variables as independent variable:

- a) The above-mentioned *socio-structural variables* (size of town, education and employment of the respondents). Here, also the effect of gender is controlled.
- b) *Age*. This variable can be seen as an indicator of the changes related to life cycle. In the relative unencumbered period of youth the focus is, of course, on different interests and values than in adults who are fully integrated in professional and family obligations or in retired persons who are relieved of these burdens. We also know that the processes of value change take place mainly among the younger generation. Striking effects of age could thus be indicative of secular tendencies of change. A new value pattern which young persons adopt is usually maintained throughout life.
- c) *Year of survey*. Here the so-called net effect of the time at which the survey was conducted, i.e., the temporal change of value orientations, is documented, that is, the “pure change in value“ that took place independent of the socio-structural shifts between 1986 and 2000.

The results of this analysis are contained in Table 7. We can sum them up relating them to the following three questions: Which of the included variables of social structure have the strongest influence on the change in value orientations? How strong was the genuine value change as compared to the effect of socio-structural shifts? In which realms of life, value orientations and modes of behavior did the most pronounced change take place?

One indication of the relevance of the different dimensions of social structure can be obtained by examining how many of the considered twelve dimensions of attitude had significant effects. Here it becomes clear that four of the five social structure variables – gender, age, level of education and size of community – are very significant. They have significant effects on nine or ten of the twelve attitude variables. Size of community has an effect in only four cases. The most important of the socio-structural dimensions seems to be age: In three cases it also has rather strong effects (Beta-coefficient over .20)

**Table 7:** Multivariate regression analysis of the change of value orientations 1986 – 1993 and their socio-structural determinants

Dependent variables (values attitudes) <sup>1)</sup>	Independent (socio-demographic) variables					Change	
	Sex (M/F)	Age (young/old)	Educa-tion (low/high)	Em- ployed (yes/no)	Size of town (small/large)	1986-1993	1986-2003
	Beta-Coefficients (Standard Error)						
Family orientation (index) (2=strong, 7=weak)	-.07**	-.07**	-.08**	-.01	.13**	.02	.02
Dissolution of marriage (1=agree, 2=don't agree)	-.08**	-.01	.05**	-.02	-.06**	.10**	.19**
Traditional view of the role of women (index) (2=traditional, 8=untraditional)	.11**	-.22**	.16**	-.03	.15**	-.11**	-.18**
Abortion is allowed (2=agree, 4=disagree)	.00	.02	-.01	.04**	-.17**	.04	.50**
Importance of family /children (1=unimportant, 2=important)	.09**	.06**	-.03*	-.03*	-.12**	-.04**	.03
Importance of work / profession (1=unimportant, 2=important)	-.06**	-.02	-.01	-.13**	-.09**	-.01	.04*
Importance of relatives (1=unimportant, 2=important)	.07**	.03*	-.10**	.02	-.04	-.07	-.12
Leisure-time orientation (index) (2=unimportant, 14=important)	-.02	-.21**	-.04**	.00	.04**	-.10**	-.18**
Authoritarianism (index) (2=high, 8=low)	.04**	-.20**	.13**	-.01	.06**	-.16**	-.24**
Party ties (index) (2=high, 4=low)	.11**	-.17**	-.06**	.09**	.05**	-.06**	-.23**
Political interest (1=very strong, 5=none at all)	.18**	-.07**	-.30**	-.01	-.09*	-.01	-.01
Church religiosity (index) (2=high, 4=weak)	-.09**	.04	.00	-.01	.31**	-.04**	-.06**

Significance: \* : p<.01, \*\* : p<.05

<sup>1)</sup> For the precise formulations of questions or compositions of the indices cf. text.

This already clearly indicates that the observed changes are genuine transformations, since the age effect also implies the effect of differences between the generations (in addition to the life-cycle effect.) When new effects emerge particularly noticeably in the younger generation, it can be expected that they will eventually spread to the entire population.

How can these effects be described in detail? If one looks at gender *almost* all the “standard expectations“ are fulfilled. We see that women are more oriented to family and relatives than men and that they do not advocate the dissolution of marriage as

often. Their profession is less important to them than to men. In politics they show more authoritarian attitudes; they are less bound to a party and show less interest for politics (this effect is particularly pronounced). By contrast, women show greater religiosity or ties to a church than men. Women are more “progressive” than men in only one aspect: they take a more adamant stance against the traditional role of women. The following can be concluded: For women the realms of life such as family, children and church continue to be more important. A significant change has, however, taken place to the extent that they no longer want to be just limited to family and household as in the past.

As we have already noted, *age* has several very strong effects. Young people oppose the traditional view of gender roles much more than older people. They are much more leisure-time oriented and a bit less family-oriented than older people. (However, this is a life cycle effect since the importance of leisure time decreases the older one gets while the significance of family increases.) Finally, they are also much less authoritarian and bound to a party, but they are somewhat less interested in politics than older people. On the whole there can be no doubt that most of the “new values” that have come to prevail among young people can be described as “modern”.

The same is also true of the effects of the variable referring to *level of education*. The more educated among those we surveyed also represented much less frequently traditional views of gender roles. They are less authoritarian and bound to a party but showed a much greater interest in politics (with a beta value of  $-.30$ , this was one of the strongest effects altogether.)

The effects of the two remaining social structure variables were surprising in various respects, i.e., *gainful earning* and the size of community. It is noteworthy that the variable “gainful earning” only had a few – weak – effects. Those who have gainful employment are more often in favor of abortion, their job is more important to them, and they are less strongly bound to a party. However, one hardly noticed – as perhaps could have been expected – that they (many of them are women with gainful employment) are less family-oriented. It can thus be generally concluded that the

growing gainful employment of women had not lead to a depreciation of life realms or social ties such as partnership, family and children.

The effects of *community size* also deserve mention. This variable has proven throughout to be an important determinant of value orientations. As was to be expected, persons living in smaller communities are more traditional in their attitudes (they strongly oppose abortion under any condition) and more family and job oriented. In politics, they are generally more authoritarian, more bound to a particular party but show less interest for politics. The strongest effect could be noted in church-related religiosity which was much more pronounced in persons living in small communities than in city dwellers. The fact that church celebrations and rituals are socially and culturally embedded in the yearly rhythm of life plays a strong role in small communities. One only needs to observe marriages, funerals or church holidays in a big city and in a small community to see the difference. While in the city only a small minority sets high store on church ceremonies, almost the entire village participates in a small community. Church choir and music bands often lend such events a festive note.

How does the genuine change in values relate to the changes that have been brought on by the transformation in social structure? An answer to this question becomes possible through a comparison of the effects of the cited social structure variables and the effect of time which could be documented at the time of the three surveys. Here we first notice that the change between 1986 and 2003 (column to the far right in Table 7) was considerable. Even under the control of the social shifts, the temporal change of value attitudes in eight of the twelve indicators documented was statistically significant, in almost six it was very strong. These included: the attitudes towards dissolution of marriage, the traditional role of women, the legitimacy of abortion (the strongest change altogether), the increase in leisure-time orientation, the weakening of authoritarianism and of party ties. In only three aspects there was no temporal change – irrespective of change in the structure of education, gainful employment and region: the significance of family and children, of work and profession, and political interest.

The answer to the third question posed at the outset was also pretty straightforward. In all realms of life – private life as well as in socio-political value orientations – a more significant change in values has taken place. Only in work/profession the changes are less noticeable. However, we had a very limited number of questions at our disposal in this realm.

#### **4. Summary**

This article took as its point of departure three different diagnoses of value change to be found in social science literature today. Authors of a more conservative vintage diagnosed a relativization, even a decline of generally binding values. Other authors, in particular Ronald Inglehart in his well-known theory of “postmaterialism” (Inglehart 1990) speak of a rise of new values. Our own argument is that neither a decline of values nor a rise of “new” values has taken place. Rather, we are mainly dealing with a dissemination of universal values that have been known since the beginning of documented historical time. The most important of them include the respect of the individual’s rights and dignity. Our thesis is that for these values to gain widespread acceptance, neither increasingly egoistic attitudes and modes of behavior need to prevail nor social ties and relations or social institutions such as those backing the family have to lose significance. Rather, individual life models and modes of behavior as well as institutions have to be adapted to new socio-structural conditions so that they do justice to the needs of those individuals and groups which previously were not fully recognized as autonomous persons capable of acting in their own way.

A description of the changes of value orientations between 1986 and 2003 generally showed that very profound changes took place in these seventeen years. In connection with increased income and shorter working time, the life realm of “leisure time and friends” clearly became more significant. However, there can hardly be any talk of a rise of “leisure and fun society “. Both family and children and work and profession have not lost significance. There have also been pronounced changes within the individual life realms. Our thesis is that within marriage and family the change is moving from an internal functionally differentiated and unequal system to one in which both adult partners are given the same rights and duties. As real life shows, the recognition of the traditional division of roles between men and women

(the man as the bread winner of the family, the woman as a house wife and mother) as well as the corresponding division of labor in the household is increasingly losing ground, while alternative forms of cohabitation are gaining greater acceptance just as abortion and non-conventional forms of sexual orientation are. Nonetheless, we see that central elements of the partner relationship which were traditionally only associated with marriage continue to be valid, i.e., to have a family, to have about two children and to also be sexually faithful to one's partner.

Something similar can be noted in connection with the attitudes toward work and profession. As opposed to conservative theoreticians of the decline of value as well as the theory of the rise of "post-materialism" this realm of life remains central for all persons surveyed. The overwhelming majority continue to see work as an important part of their life. In a professional context one still sees "performance" as the most important criterion for determining the amount of income. Satisfaction with one's profession has generally increased and not decreased.

The processes of change in the realm of politics and public life were also very pronounced. They can be quickly summed up as follows: lesser readiness to collaborate in large formal organizations, such as trade unions, political parties, churches, and a decline in authoritarian political orientations. General political interest, however, has not declined, and the large majority of the surveyed continue to attach great importance to the (welfare) state.

In the last section of this article we examined to what extent the value change had affected all strata of the population and whether it was mainly a result of social structural shifts, such as advances in education or the greater participation of women in gainful earning or urbanization. The answer is clear enough. Both of these aspects played a significant role in the change in value orientations. All Austrians today have a more egalitarian notion of relations in partnership and family. Leisure time has become important to all of them and they are more critical and less prone to adhere to authorities in a socio-political sense (cf. also Haller 2001.) Shifts in the educational, professional and social structure have, in turn, buttressed and accelerated these changes.

We believe that the findings presented in this article support our central argument, namely, that the change in value orientations first and foremost means that the value that mankind has known and held in high esteem since the beginning of time has gain widespread acceptance. It is the value of the individual, the recognition of his/her rights and dignity and the promotion of the individual's potential. At the beginning of the 21st century it no longer seems a question whether men and women are of completely equal status, it is a shared belief that even children and young people have inalienable rights. Austrians are also on the best way to emerging from the "long shadow of the totalitarian state" – to paraphrase the title of a big social history of Austria in the 20th century (Hanisch 1994), no longer willing to relinquish its socio-political fortunes to large organizations and institutions. However, there is still much left to be done in pursuing this path and in translating the generally accepted individual rights cited above into real opportunities and participation for all groups of society. In the attempts to achieve this strategies and solutions are sometimes applied, which are also problematic in different respects. Here one could cite tendencies such as the destabilization of marriage and family, dropping rates of birth, the appearance of new social problems such as depressions, drug addiction or isolation, especially among older people. The strong variation of these phenomena, however, in international comparison shows that these are not the automatic consequences of social development and the acceptance of new values. Moreover, there are increasing signs that the problematic trends leading to an individualism with a negative impact on society are on the wane, while positive traditional values with respect to social ties and obligations are once again gaining ground (Fukuyama 2002). However, we must also further develop our social, political and cultural institutions (marriage and family, work organizations, political system, church) in such a way that the increased education, autonomy and the maturity of the citizens are all done justice to.

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