

# Social Structural Effects on the Level and Development of the Individual Experience of Anomie in the German Population

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## Vol. 2 (2) 2008

**Editorial** (p. 159)

**Focus:**  
**Anomie / Anomia**

**Guest Editorial** Steven F. Messner / Helmut Thome (pp. 160 – 162)

**Institutions, Anomie, and Violent Crime: Clarifying and Elaborating Institutional-Anomie Theory** Steven F. Messner / Helmut Thome / Richard Rosenfeld (pp. 163 – 181)

**Want Amid Plenty: Developing and Testing a Cross-National Measure of Anomie** Beth Bjerregaard / John K. Cochran (pp. 182 – 193)

**Anomic Crime in Post-Welfarist Societies: Cult of the Individual, Integration Patterns and Delinquency** Sabine Frerichs / Richard Münch / Monika Sander (pp. 194 – 214)

**Assessing the Relevance of Anomie Theory for Explaining Spatial Variation in Lethal Criminal Violence: An Aggregate-Level Analysis of Homicide within the United States** Brian J. Stults / Eric P. Baumer (pp. 215 – 247)

► **Social Structural Effects on the Level and Development of the Individual Experience of Anomie in the German Population** Sandra Legge / Eldad Davidov / Peter Schmidt (pp. 248 – 267)

**Is the Market Eroding Moral Norms? A Micro-Analytical Validation of Some Ideas of Anomie Theory** Eckhard Burkatzki (pp. 268 – 287)

**Open Section**

**Modernity Strikes Back? A Historical Perspective on the Latest Increase in Interpersonal Violence (1960–1990)** Manuel Eisner (pp. 288 – 316)

**Deprivation, Violence, and Conflict: An Analysis of “Naxalite” Activity in the Districts of India** Vani K. Borooah (pp. 317 – 333)

# Social Structural Effects on the Level and Development of the Individual Experience of Anomie in the German Population

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Can one observe an increasing level of individual lack of orientation because of rapid social change in modern societies? This question is examined using data from a representative longitudinal survey in Germany conducted in 2002–04. The study examines the role of education, age, sex, region (east/west), and political orientation for the explanation of anomia (micro level) and its development. First we present the different sources of anomie in modern societies, based on the theoretical foundations of Durkheim and Merton, and introduce the different definitions of anomia, including our own cognitive version. Then we deduce several hypotheses from the theory, which we test by means of longitudinal data for the period 2002–04 in Germany using the latent growth curve model as our statistical method. The empirical findings show that all the sociodemographic variables, including political orientation, are strong predictors of the initial level of anomia. Regarding the development of anomia (macro level) over time (2002–04), only the region (west) has a significant impact. In particular, the results of a multi-group analysis show that people from West-Germany with a right-wing political orientation become more anomic over this period. The article concludes with some theoretical implications.

## 1. The Problem

Anomie is a central sociological concept. Interest in anomie as a topic waned during the late 1970s and 1980s, but since the early 1990s more attention has been paid to it in both international and research in Germany (inter alia Atteslander 1999, Passas and Agnew 1997; Heitmeyer 1997; Bohle et al. 1997; Adler and Laufer 2000). Building on theories developed by Durkheim (1983) and Merton (1968, 1995), many modifications of theoretical models have been posited in the course of time, for instance by Passas (1997), Agnew (1997), and Messner and Rosenfeld (1997), from which different definitions of the concept have emerged (Wakenhut 1983)<sup>1</sup>. An important aspect in our context is the distinction drawn between anomie and anomia. *Anomie* refers to the structural level and describes a weakening of regulative and integrative social forces that either results from rapid social

change or is structurally immanent. *Anomia* is located at the individual level and means a loss of normative orientation and of control over situations and goals of action, which however are dependent on the socially anomic constitution. According to Abercrombie et al. (1988, 11; quoted from Passas 2000, 97) anomie can be seen as a concept that bridges the gap between explanations for social action at the individual level and at the level of social structure. Thus, implicitly at least there is a bridge between the social and the individual level (structural and action level), or between *anomie* and *anomia* (Albrecht 1997, 512; Merton 1995, 156; Byrne 1977)<sup>2</sup>. In terms of a program of structural and individual explanation, this means that social phenomena can be explained by way of assumptions at the micro level if simultaneously a link is made between the action theory

<sup>1</sup> While Besnard (1988) is highly critical of the variety of concepts where the concept of anomie is concerned, others, such as Passas (2000) and Horton (1964), stress the positive aspects.

<sup>2</sup> Although, in research into anomie theory, a debate still exists on the connection between or transferability of macrotheoretical assumptions to the individual level (debate: Bernard 1987 and Agnew 1987).

core and the structural level (e.g. Maurer 2006, 145; Coleman 1991; Esser 1993; Hedström 2005).

Against this background one must assume that current social developments, especially in structurally weak regions such as eastern Germany, produce corresponding effects at the individual level. Recent studies on the individual experience of anomie (i.e. anomia), similarly to older studies mainly originating in the U.S. research context (e.g. Barnett 1970; Middleton 1963; Roberts and Rokeach 1956, 358), find only partial evidence to back up this assumption.<sup>3</sup> Herrmann, for instance, comes to the conclusion on the basis of ALLBUS (General German Social Survey) data “that neither have the dramatic processes of change in the new federal states of eastern Germany led to a demonstrably higher subjective lack of orientation among the people who live there, nor . . . do sociostructural factors adequately explain the extent of a person’s anomia” (Herrmann 2001, 114). Similarly, Glatzer and Bös (1997) interpret their findings based on the Wohlfahrt survey data as follows: “This means that either the key determinants of anomie [anomia] have yet to be discovered, or that accelerated social change and economic crises affect all population groups to an equal extent” (Glatzer and Bös 1997, 580; but see also Blank 2003; Oepke 2005).<sup>4</sup> In contrast, Kühnel and Schmidt (2002) and Hüpping (2006) show, on the basis of representative surveys conducted in 2002 and 2005, a clear connection between anomia and various sociodemographic variables (especially level of education).

However, the problem with previous studies on the explanation for and incidence of *anomia* is that they permit no precise conclusions as to the extent to which sociostructural factors influence and change the incidence of anomia. Most findings are based on cross-sectional or trend surveys<sup>5</sup>, while longitudinal surveys tend to be the exception (e.g.

Oepke 2005; Grundmann et al. 1997; Blank 2003). Moreover, the few that do exist only permit conclusions about social sub-groups, because of the specific nature of the survey sample (parents and youth sample: Oepke 2005; youth sample: Grundmann et al. 1997; exception, representative sample: Blank 2003).

Our paper aims to tackle precisely these problems. Our main objective is to clarify whether during the course of social changes the level of anomia among the population changed between 2002 and 2004 and, if so, whether it is possible to identify variations in dependency on socio-structural features. We focused especially on comparisons between eastern and western Germany because of their different social structures and the pace of change in recent years.

In doing so we were responding to the call of Bohle et al. (1997, 60) to examine which sociostructural factors seem to be especially relevant to the genesis of anomia. Answering this question was all the more urgent in that recent investigations have focused increasingly on the potential consequences of anomic attitudes. Possible patterns of reaction to a high degree of anomia range from political apathy (Boehnke 2006, 158), the manner of communication with parents and peers (Morgenroth and Boehnke 2003), the individual position taken on the question of immigration (Rippl 2003), and the development of derogatory attitudes towards weak groups in society, right through to a general propensity to violence (e.g. Herrmann 2001; Kühnel and Schmidt 2002; Fuchs 2003; Hüpping 2006; Stolz 2000; Terwey 2000). The question of which indicators are relevant for anomia, in contrast, has tended to receive marginal treatment. This paper aims to make it the central focus of attention, since finding an answer to it may be of practical relevance.

<sup>3</sup> Stronger links between social structure characteristics and anomia are, in contrast, to be found in Hoffmann-Nowotny et al. 2001 (for second-generation immigrants to Switzerland); Stolz 2000 (for the Swiss population); Li 1999 (for the Chinese population); Scheepers et al. 1992 (for the Dutch population).

<sup>4</sup> Blank (2003), for example, finds on the basis of data from a representative survey at the same time (1993) a very slight overall extent of anomic feeling and, in addition, no differences between western and eastern German respondents (Blank 2003, 273).

<sup>5</sup> The term “trend survey” means several representative studies with different samples over time.

The distinguishing features of our contribution are, first, the use of a longitudinal survey design and, second, a method of analysis, the LGC, or latent growth curve model (Urban 2002; Reinecke 2005; Bollen and Curran 2004, 2006), rarely used in sociology with the exception of criminological studies (e.g. Raudenbush and Bryk 2002, Nagin and Land 1993; Nagin 1999, for an overview see Kreuter and Muthén 2008). Admittedly, even this data basis only permits one to test the relationship between anomie and anomia implicitly. However, it is then possible to examine whether anomia is relatively stable (McClosky and Schaar 1965; Hopf et al. 1999) or changes occur over time, and specific sociodemographic characteristics can explain such changes.

In section 2, after a brief overview of the potential social sources of anomie we give a short presentation of previous concepts of *anomia* and the definition adopted in this paper. We go on to formulate hypotheses about differences in the degree of anomia and how it changes over time, using different sociodemographic variables. Then we describe the data basis, the operationalization of anomia and the method of analysis used. In section 4, our analyses are presented step by step. In the final section we summarize our findings and discuss them, pointing out gaps in research and suggesting promising research approaches.

## 2. Anomie and Anomia and Characteristics Relevant to its Incidence

### 2.1. Anomie

Present-day (Western) societies are characterized by enormous change. This is evident in the transition from an industrial to a service-based society; in policies of increasing deregulation, privatization and liberalization; in increasing global networking using new information and communication technologies; the growing significance of markets; and the simultaneous increase in economic instability and

vulnerability through mass and long-term employment, etc. (Blossfeld 2005; Schumann 2003; Ebbinghaus et al. 2006, 75ff.; Thome and Birkel 2007, 139; Dallinger 2006, 92, 98; 2004, 114; critically: Stehr 2007). Durkheim stated long ago (1897, 329) that rapid social changes encourage the emergence of *acute* social anomie (normlessness) that can lead to socially harmful modes of behavior (in extreme cases suicide or murder), unless effective social regulatory forces are simultaneously available in the form of the state or via its intermediaries, such as professional bodies.<sup>6</sup> In many Western societies, from the mid-twentieth century this role was played by welfare state arrangements. However, there is increasing evidence to suggest that these requirements are no longer comprehensively fulfilled. Thome and Birkel (2007) even speak in the context of social change of a “general structural problem” of modern societies. In the course of social acceleration, new and sometimes conflicting requirements for action have emerged (e.g. mobility, flexibility, dealing with complexity, etc.). More decisions have to be taken and more information has to be processed in a shorter time and more change, more “structural stress” (Müller and Schrötle 2006, 87) has to be coped with than in the past. Social security decreases as options increase (Zapf 1987, 138; Beck 1986).

In contrast to Durkheim, Merton (1938, 1968, 1995) sees not change but a specific societal state as a potential source of anomie. This occurs when the legitimate means for achieving culturally fixed and generally valid goals are not distributed equally among all population groups (Merton 1968, 292). Thus society is *structurally anomic* as defined by Merton (1968, 1995) inasmuch as it formulates the same binding goals for all members of society (e.g. occupational success), but fails to provide for all its members equally effective and legitimate coping strategies for dealing with the high rates of change.<sup>7</sup> For how the new challenges are perceived, coped

<sup>6</sup> In addition, Durkheim also sees modern societies as being in a constant anomic state that he terms “chronic anomie.” These assumptions are found more specifically in the institutional theory of anomie outlined by Messner and Rosenfeld (1997, 2001), so that we here dispense with any further description of Durkheim’s second version of anomie (1983, 292).

<sup>7</sup> Merton himself refers only to anomie. To draw a clearer distinction between the different forms of anomie we have qualified Merton’s concept of anomie as “structural.” This type of anomie is comparable with the “chronic anomie” type in Durkheim’s work *Suicide*, which in turn is labeled as “disintegrative individualism” by Thome (2007, 193–94; see also Thome 2003).

with and, if the situation arises, exploited, depends primarily on the specific life situation and on sociostructural characteristics such as educational level, age, and gender (Elder 1974; after Diewald et al. 1996, 220). Concerning possible reactions to the experience of social anomie, Merton elaborates different modes of adaptation. Of particular significance in exploring violent behavior are *innovation*, whereby goals are adhered to but legitimate means are replaced by more effective (illegitimate) means, and *rebellion*, whereby culturally determined goals and means are rejected and instead a new social order is aspired to (Merton 1968, 293–311). The two other non-conformist modes of adaptation are *ritualism*, whereby goals are abandoned but social rules are still followed, and *retreatism*, whereby both goals and means are abandoned (e.g. addicts, homeless people, etc.). The scientific literature still more or less ignores these, although much evidence suggests that these types of adaptation are very common, as evident from the steadily growing number of depression-related illnesses.<sup>8</sup>

Thus the ways of adapting to anomic social conditions described by Durkheim and Merton also involve implicit assumptions about individual states that arise from the experience of social anomie (Israel 1972, 285). Later work in the context of alienation and anomie concepts has concentrated especially on this individual experience of social anomie (anomia) (e.g. Srole 1956; Seeman 1959).

## 2.2. Anomia

The particular problem with research on individual facets of anomie (i.e. anomia), has always been that it often ignores social conditions, or deliberately neglects to relate it back to them. MacIver (1950), who was first to use the concept of anomie to describe an individual state, refers to it as a mental state (as do McClosky and Schaar 1965) without addressing the issue of social causes. Linked to this there is a simultaneous shifting of the analysis of causes to the individual (with personality deficits) (Dreitzel 1972, 53; Fischer

1970). Srole (1956), following Merton's theory of anomie, was the first to turn his attention to the empirical recording of anomia (for a critique of content see Rose 1966; Dreitzel 1972, 54ff.; Friedrichs 1997; for a critique of methodology see inter alia Basler 1977). Yet although Srole postulated a relationship between anomie and anomia, he did not make it explicit. Accordingly, the operationalization of anomia proposed by Srole (normlessness, meaninglessness, pessimism about the future, futility and social isolation) and many subsequent authors (e.g. Middleton 1963) does not seem to be guided by theory to any great extent. The same applies to the theoretical concepts developed by Seeman (1959), who defined anomia (or normlessness) as one of several dimensions (meaninglessness, social isolation, powerlessness, self-estrangement) of a general concept of alienation (Seeman 1959; Wakenhut 1983, 37) based on value expectancy theory. However, according to Israel he did so without providing a precise theoretical argumentation for this selection, for the relationship between alienation and anomia, and the relationship to the social level (Israel 1972, 261ff.). But several empirical studies show that all of the considered facets reflect different dimensions of a general syndrome of alienation. There followed numerous further attempts to reappraise anomie theoretically and record it empirically, with a clear emphasis on the latter (Dreitzel 1972; Fischer 1970; Bohle 1975). Due to the variety of ways in which the concept of anomia is used (e.g. Lukes 1977, 74) it is important to provide a clear definition for our own use of the term.

Starting from the social sources of anomie described above (change, increase in complexity, social inequality), we take anomia to mean a loss of cognitive orientation and confidence to act. "One no longer knows what is possible and what not, what still seems appropriate and what no longer does, which demands and expectations are permitted and which are excessive" (Durkheim 1983, 288). Thus orientation and confidence to act emerge from a "loss of all-embracing long-term cultural orientations" (Duncker 2000, 121; also

<sup>8</sup> Thus 32 percent of adult Germans suffer from mental illness, and the number of days lost due to it has risen disproportionately compared with other diagnoses (IGES 2005, 44).

<sup>9</sup> Roberts for example finds intercorrelations between all of the dimensions of the alienation concept of Seeman (1959). "This supports the conclusion that all five types of alienation identi-

fied by Seeman are part of a common domain" (Roberts 1987, 349; similarly Middleton 1963).

Hitzler and Horner 1994, 307). Previously unquestioned, self-evident moral standards, behavioral customs, values and cognitive patterns collide with changing general social conditions (Schultheis 2005, 580). In this manner our definition refers to the “meaninglessness” dimension of the alienation concept by Seeman. According to Seeman (1959, 786) meaninglessness is characterized by “a low expectancy that satisfactory predictions about future outcomes of behavior can be made.”<sup>10</sup> Nowadays, nearly everyone is called upon to adapt repeatedly to changed situations during the course of his or her life, regardless of personal motivation. “Such developments hold both opportunities and risks. Some see plurality and development as pleasant and almost desirable, while for others these states lead to serious stress, not seldom even to overstress” (Duncker 2000, 121f.). Past experience often loses significance, but due to the large number of options and risks, it is less possible to plan the future (Dahrendorf 2003, 44f.). Accordingly, current scope for action is limited to the present. Increasingly, lifelong identity patterns are being replaced by *situational identities* (Rosa 2005). Opportunities are growing as calculability declines.

This conception distances us from Merton inasmuch as we do not directly work on the basis of normative disorientation arising from the experience of discrepancies between goals and means, but on that of cognitive uncertainties of action and orientation, though these may precede the former, or (can) emerge simultaneously, respectively.<sup>11</sup> We assume that anomia consists of two dimensions, one cognitive and one normative, although we concentrate in the following analysis on the cognitive variant of anomia. Merton (1956) himself puts forward additional hypotheses about further potential sources of anomia that are certainly compatible with our assumptions. According to Merton, *first* there are situations in which ambivalent norms exist, *second* situations in which many values exist but members

are not allowed to define which are important, and *third* situations that contain insufficient, deficient norms in relation to others, or ambiguities (Merton 1956). Our concept is also reconcilable with Durkheim’s theoretical assumptions inasmuch as anomia signifies a perception that can be described as a direct reaction to social change and associated cognitive disorganization. However, at the same time we assume (following Merton and unlike Durkheim) that the extent of individual experience of anomie varies depending on sociostructural characteristics.

### 2.3. Hypotheses Concerning the Relationship between Anomia and Sociostructural Characteristics

For our study we have chosen sociostructural characteristics that lead one to assume that patterns of incidence differ (Thorlindsson and Bjarnason 1998, 97). Integration risks, in particular, still depend on earning opportunities that are determined especially by the level of education. Along with these, however, there are “new” inequality indicators that correlate with a large number of problem areas. In this respect, relevant factors in addition to educational level are age, gender, and place of residence (broken down into eastern and western Germany). Accordingly, these were taken into account in our analyses. In addition to these indicators we also took account of political orientation. In the following we propose and examine twelve hypotheses in respect to the indicators we have taken into account. We developed hypotheses both for the initial level of anomia and its rate of change. The content of hypotheses marked *a* relates to the initial level and that of hypotheses marked *b* to the rate of change. We will now outline the individual hypotheses (see Table 1).

<sup>11</sup> Roberts (1987) finds low to moderate intercorrelations between normlessness and meaninglessness ( $r = .27$ ), whereas Middleton (1963) finds higher ones ( $r = .59$ ). Whether these two dimensions appear at the same time or whether the cognitive dimension predicts the normative dimension is primarily an

empirical question. But in any case, it is important to separate these dimensions from the intention to act in a deviant way and deviant behavior, respectively.

**Table 1: Anomia level and change hypotheses.**

Level hypotheses (2002)	Change hypotheses (2002–04)
East/West	
H1a: The initial anomia level is higher among people in eastern Germany than among people in western Germany.	H1b: Anomia increased in equal measure between 2002 and 2004 among people in western and eastern Germany.
Age	
H2a: Older people are more anomic than younger people.	H2b: Anomia increased at a faster rate among older people between 2002 and 2004.
H3a: Younger people are more anomic than older people.	H3b: Anomia increased at a faster rate among younger people between 2002 and 2004.
Education	
H4a: People with a lower level of education have a higher initial anomia level than people with a higher level of education.	H4b: People with a lower level of education become more anomic than people with a higher level of education due to the growing risks.
Gender	
H5a: Women have a higher anomia level than men due to the complex demands made upon them and their poorer career prospects.	H5b: The level of anomia among women rose faster than among men between 2002 and 2004 due to the deterioration in economic conditions that affected them more than it affected men. <sup>12</sup>
Political orientation	
H6a: People with a right-wing political orientation have a higher level of anomia than people with a moderate or a left-wing political orientation.	H6b: Anomia increases more over time among people with a right-wing political orientation than among people with a moderate or left-wing political orientation because societal developments more quickly diametrically oppose their convictions. <sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> An alternative hypothesis could, however, be formulated just as easily. Due to the breakup of classical role concepts and the stronger societal need for action in the family and social context—as institutionalized by parenting benefit (Elterngeld), for example—the anomia level among men has risen more sharply over time.

<sup>13</sup> An increase in anomia levels among people with a left-wing political orientation would at first glance appear to be equally plausible. Due to German history and government policies we assume, however, that people with a right-wing political orientation feel more anomic and that their anomia level rises more sharply over time.

We assumed that anomia does not represent a stable individual disposition but a socially induced subjective uncertainty that depends (primarily) on the quality and quantity of rates of social change. Our basic assumption also formed the basis for the further analyses. Accordingly, we assumed that the level of anomia had changed during the period from 2002 to 2004.

With respect to place of residence (eastern or western Germany), we assumed that economic crisis in the new federal states of eastern Germany had led to a greater uncertainty of orientation and action and that anomia therefore features more strongly among *people in eastern Germany* than among those from western Germany. As regards the rate of change of anomia we assumed no difference between the two subgroups. Negative economic trends such as growing unemployment, insecure employment conditions, etc. became established in the mid-1990s to a greater extent in eastern Germany (Diewald 2006, 285), but also in western Germany (Grotheer et al. 2005, 134ff.; Bonß 2001, 349). Accordingly, we assumed that they impacted in equal measure on the anomia level of individuals in both western and eastern Germany.

As regards *age* we tested two hypotheses about the level and development of anomia and age. First, we assumed that older people, on account of their experience of severe crises in the first half of the twentieth century, had learned to cope with them better. Moreover, to a large extent, older people are already professionally established. On the other hand, younger people, especially adolescents and young adults, have yet to start their working lives and, due to higher mobility, etc., are usually involved in more fragile social networks than middle-aged and elderly people. Due to the relatively poor economic situation young people are exposed to a multiplicity of demands from educational establishments, employers, etc. Yet performance and success no longer guarantee a secure occupational future (Hurrelmann and Albert 2006,

17). Given this line of argument, younger respondents ought to show higher degrees of uncertainty of action and orientation and correspondingly higher anomia levels than older people. In addition, we assumed that the extent of anomia among younger respondents rose more rapidly in the period from 2002 to 2004 due to the deterioration of the economic situation, growing pressure to perform, etc.

Another line of argument is equally plausible, however. Due to their somewhat traditional norms and values and the associated concepts of action, older people have fewer strategies for coping with the pace of rapid social changes. Therefore, they are often confronted with situations that conflict with their norms or are ambiguous, and that increasingly gives rise to uncertainties of action or orientation. Moreover, older employees, along with female and low-skilled workers, are a group that runs a relatively high risk of unemployment, a risk that has intensified in recent years as a result of rising unemployment and associated competition from younger workers (Struck and Köhler 2005, 15). Thus it could be assumed that anomia would be more pronounced in older respondents and had risen more rapidly in line with increasing risks.

In respect of *educational level* we surmised that individuals with a higher level of education were more likely to be able to react flexibly to the large number of changes and to adapt to them or learn something different. Merton suggested that they thus have more means at their disposal for taking advantage of social developments and achieving the culturally determined goals. Moreover, low-skilled workers as a group run the biggest risk of unemployment (Diewald 2006, 286ff.; Ebbinghaus et al. 2006) and face greater occupational instability (Grotheer et al. 2005, 150f.). Thus qualifications obtained through training and work can be said to have a segmenting effect (Struck and Köhler 2005, 15). Following on from these assumptions, not only ought people with a lower level of education have a higher initial level of anomie but

the level should rise more sharply due to the growing significance of educational qualifications and the associated risks.

We see *gender* as another key demographic variable. For some years now, women have been under particular pressure. True, as education has expanded their training opportunities have improved, but they are still disadvantaged in many occupations, both as regards career opportunities and in terms of equal pay for equal work. “Evidently the contradiction between emancipation on the one hand and the codification of (gender) inequality and discrimination in the flexible, market-centered capitalist mode of production on the other have brought the problem to a head but not necessarily led to a solution” (Frey et al. 2005, 276).

Imbalances still exist in the family context, too. Thus women are still confronted to a greater degree with the need to reconcile family and career. Regardless of the quality of a partnership, “the major share of family tasks” (Pinl 2004, 23) falls to women as “managers of everyday life” (Ludwig et al. 2002). Young women in particular face numerous difficulties because training, occupational integration, and finding a partner and starting a family are compressed into a very short timeframe, the so-called “rush hour of life” (Hurrelmann and Albert 2006, 17). That being so, we assumed that gender was still a “structuring principle” (Frey et al. 2005, 277), that women (also because of the lack of female role models) would therefore have more difficulties with the increasingly complex demands than men, and that their individual experience of anomie would not only be more pronounced but would also have increased more rapidly in recent years.

To augment the sociodemographic characteristics we tested the influence of *political orientation* on the individual experience of anomie. In contrast to most previous studies, which tend to see a right-wing political orientation as a reaction to uncertainty and lack of orientation, we assumed

<sup>14</sup> Stolz (2000) is one of the few researchers who does not see political views as a reaction to the individual experience of anomie but regards traditionalistic and conservative values as a possible

cause of heightened lack of orientation (in a world that is detraditionalizing itself). At a correlative level he is also able to confirm this assumption (Stolz 2000, 155). Here as in the studies mentioned earlier,

the problem of cross-sectional design remains, with many alternative directions of causality being consistent with the data (see, for example, Bollen 1989).

with reference to Stolz (2000) that political alignment might encourage anomia.<sup>14</sup> Looking at current social trends, one can ascertain that in many respects they run counter to the convictions of individuals with a right-wing political orientation. This discrepancy might produce uncertainties. Accordingly, we assumed that fear of traditional values being lost or eroded, the increase in ethnic and cultural heterogeneity, growing internationalization, etc., would go hand in hand with uncertainty about orientation and behavior. This assumption does not conflict with previous views that see right-wing political views as a possible reaction to individual experience of anomie, but is seen as augmenting them. Accordingly, we assumed not only that people with a right-wing political orientation would display higher levels of anomie but also that these levels would have risen more rapidly over time.

### 3. Sample, Measurement Instruments, and Statistical Method

#### 3.1. Sample

To test our hypothesis we used data from the longitudinal project “Group-focused Enmity” (Heitmeyer 2002). Since 2002 an annual representative survey with its main focus on prejudices has been augmented by a longitudinal design. In the analyses in this paper, we were able to take three waves into account (2002: N=2722; 2003: N=1175; 2004: N=825). This was a relatively short period for investigating possible developmental effects on individual attitudes. However, it was also a period when radical changes took place (e.g. an increase in the unemployment rate, a rise in corporate bankruptcies [after a decline in 1999], a drastic drop in the number of people employed in industry (e.g. the construction industry), and so we presumed there would be impacts. Data was collected at all three test times via computer-assisted telephone interviews. Response rates for the total panel and the panel after adjustment were nearly identical. The actual response rate for Wave 2 was just under 58 percent, which is satisfactory, while for Wave 3 it was 77 percent, which is good. Only in Wave 1 there was some systematic panel mortality as regards sociodemographic

characteristics. Here, men and eastern German respondents were more likely to agree to be reinterviewed. Table 2 shows the distribution of sociodemographic factors relevant to us in the initial sample.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 2: The sample**

Sample	N = 2,722
Gender	Male: 44.3% (N = 1,207) Female: 55.7% (N = 1,515)
Age	Average: 45.94 (S.D.=16.26)
East/West	Eastern Germany: 35.5% (N = 966) Western Germany: 64.5% (N = 1,756)
Education	Tertiary: 18.4% (N = 496) Abitur (university entrance qualification): 21.1% (N = 569) Mittlere Reife (secondary school level I certificate): 35.6% (N = 959) Hauptschule (basic school-leaving certificate): 24.3% (N = 653) No qualification: 0.5% (N=14)
Political orientation	Left-wing: 5.9% (N = 157) Left of center 22.1% (N = 583) Middle of the road 61% (N = 1.612) Right of center 9.2% (N = 244) Right-wing 1.7% (N = 46)

#### 3.2. Measurement Instruments

A very wide range of scales is now available for recording individual experiences of anomie (Robinson et al. 1991, 291ff.). This is due not least to the diverse definitions of anomie and anomia (e.g. Wakenhut 1983, 35ff.; Passas 2000, 97). Along with the Srole scale (1956), German researchers mainly use the scales developed by Middleton (1963) and by McClosky and Schaar (and, in German, Fischer and Kohr 1980). The two items we used come from the latter. Although McClosky and Schaar (1965) maintained that these items were used to measure “normlessness,” at the content level the items are more consistent with Seeman’s

<sup>15</sup> Checks of systematic panel mortality took the form of three logistical regression analyses. The findings show that readiness to be reinterviewed

among men in Wave 1 (odds ratio = 1.36,  $p < .05$ ) and among respondents from eastern Germany (odds ratio = 0.76,  $p < .05$ ) was higher. For Waves

2 and 3, in contrast, sociodemographic characteristics no longer play a part (Christ 2006).

“meaninglessness” dimension, which places the emphasis on an inability to understand events and their interconnections. Thus, they do not measure normative disorientation in the sense of Merton or Durkheim. Anomia in the present parameters can be understood rather as an expression of uncertainty of orientation and action in respect of social conditions resulting from rapid changes. The scale of McClosky and Schaar (1965) is simultaneously the only one to refer explicitly to social change and the individual loss of orientation to which it gives rise, even though the authors, unlike Durkheim, did not conceive of anomie as an attitude arising from rapid pace of social change, but as a stable disposition acquired early in life (similarly to Hopf et al. 1999). However, this would indicate that individual experience of anomie should appear relatively stable over a certain period. Within the context of our analyses we also pursue this question.

The items are:<sup>16</sup>

1. Everything has got so confused that nobody knows what's what any more.
2. Matters have become so difficult these days that you don't know what is going on.

Internal consistency of the items is satisfactory across all three waves (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .82$  (W1);  $.88$  (W2);  $.88$  (W3)). Possible responses were placed on a scale of 1 to 4, the extremes being “totally incorrect” (1) and “totally correct” (4). Furthermore a test of validity shows that the measured property can not simply be reduced to a feeling of (relative) deprivation. In fact, there are positive intercorrelations between cognitive anomia and different kinds of deprivation, but all of them are very low.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The third available item in the data record, “Everything used to be better because you knew what you had to do,” had to be excluded from further analyses in view of the low factor loading (multidimensionality). At the content level the weak load can be explained in terms of this item relating to the past, whereas the first two anomia items relate to the perception of current social conditions (with no yardstick for comparison).

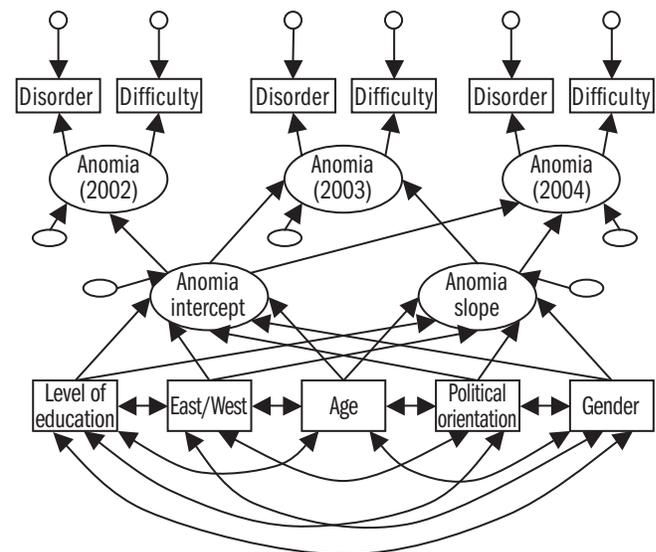
<sup>17</sup> The intercorrelations between anomia and different types of deprivations are (in all three waves) between  $r = .12$  und  $.24$ . In contrast, the correlations between anomia and the fear of a social decline are a little bit higher ( $r = .31$  to  $.34$ ).

<sup>18</sup> It is based on the idea that the individual growth of a given construct (anomia) constitutes a function that is based on a latent intercept and a latent slope (growth factor), including random sampling errors. While the latent intercept maps the starting

### 3.3. Analysis Strategy and Method

We chose the Latent Growth Curve Model (LGC) as method of analysis, supplemented by multiple group comparisons (see Figure 1). LGC was developed by McArdle and Epstein (1987) and Meredith and Tisak (1990). This statistical method opens up a series of new analysis possibilities for testing our hypotheses (Schlüter et al. 2006, 319; Reinecke 2006; Bollen and Curran 2004, 2006).<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 1: Simplified LGC model with exogenous variables (sociodemographic characteristics)**



LGC models make it possible to answer a large number of possible questions. Four aspects are especially relevant. In addition to the interindividual initial level of the construct of interest, in our case anomia, one can

value of the longitudinal design, the slope reflects the average individual rate of change over time. A univariate LGC with observed indicators can be described as follows:  $y_{it} = \alpha_i + \lambda t \beta_i + \epsilon_{it}$ .  $y_{it}$  is the observed value for each individual  $i$  at the point in time  $t$  for the indicator  $y$ .  $\alpha_i$  denotes the latent intercept and  $\beta_i$  the latent slope or growth factors. As the subscript  $i$  indicates, these factors are assumed to vary from individual to individual.

- first, estimate *interindividual changes* directly. If the slope factor (growth factor) is significant it means that the characteristic has changed over time. This makes it possible to answer the question whether anomia remains stable over time and thus tends to reflect a disposition, or whether there are intraindividual changes that indicate that the level of anomia depends on external factors.
- Second, *interindividual differences* in the intraindividual changes can be estimated. Significant variance in the slope factor shows that there is interindividual variability in the change in a characteristic. In terms of our complex of questions this would mean that anomia has not increased to the same extent in all respondents in the panel over the course of time, but that there are differences between respondents.
- Third, *determinants for intraindividual changes* can be included in LGC models, and the causes of interindividual differences in intraindividual changes can be examined. In our case, this means that one can test empirically whether, for instance, the level of education as an exogenous variable is an explanatory factor as regards predicting the change in anomia (Christ et al. 2006).
- Fourth, LGC models can be used to carry out multiple group comparisons. This enabled us to test whether the same, or different, sociodemographic characteristics were significant for explaining change in the anomie level in eastern and western German respondents.<sup>19</sup>

Figure 1 shows a chart of the model structure. The upper section shows the two indicators of anomia at the test times 2002, 2003, and 2004. It is assumed that they are explained by the underlying latent variable anomia and the random measuring error. The three variables anomia in 2002, 2003, and 2004 are themselves explained by the slope and intercept, along with the error. In the lower part of the chart,

the demographic variables west/east, educational level, age, gender, and political orientation are shown as directly measured variables that are all assumed to correlate. According to our hypotheses, they in turn impact on the slope and intercept, which are assumed to be error-prone.

In accordance with the analysis options described, our *first* step was to show the initial level and rate of change of anomia. The *second* step was to show which sociodemographic variables (determinants) were explanatory factors for the initial level and rate of change of anomia during the period 2002–04. The *third* and final step was to examine on the basis of multiple group comparison whether sociodemographic variables differed between eastern and western respondents in respect of their ability to explain the initial level of and change in anomia over time, and thus whether there were specific interaction effects.

#### 4. Findings

##### 4.1. Initial Level of and Change in Anomia

Table 3 shows the average values and standard deviations of the two apparent indicators of anomia during the period 2002 to 2004. The average scale mean for anomia is shown in Table 4 (2.54). First, however, one must state that the data appears sufficiently compatible with the LGC model.<sup>21</sup> The significant variance in the intercept in Table 4 indicates that there are *interindividual differences in the initial level of anomia* between respondents. In addition, comparison of the mean values at all three test times shows a change in that anomia increases during the course of time (see Table 3).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The model on which the analyses are based contains secondary latent variables (see Figure 1). It is a complex, conditional factor-of-curves model (Reinecke 2005, 321ff.; McArdle 1988; Duncan et al. 1999), in other words the slope and intercept factor are each secondary factors.

<sup>20</sup> All of the following analyses were undertaken using the AMOS 6.0 software program (Arbuckle 2005).

<sup>21</sup> The  $\chi^2$  value shows a 0.6 ratio to the degrees of freedom, and the other fit indices also show satisfactory values (RMSEA: .000; pclose: 1.0; CFI: 1.000). Relationships between indicators and constructs are set at equal levels over time so as to ensure metric invariance. For the importance of ensuring metric invariance in analyses with longitudinal data, see, for example, De Beuckelaer 2005).

<sup>22</sup> At the frequency level the increase is as follows: In 2002, 47.7 percent of respondents felt the statement that “everything is in such a mess nowadays” was largely or entirely true, while 45.5 percent of respondents largely or entirely felt that “things have become so difficult nowadays.” In 2004 the proportion of respondents who felt that these statements were largely or entirely true had risen to nearly 65 percent.

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of anomia indicators observed in the three panel waves**

	t1 (2002)			t2 (2003)			t3 (2004)		
	N	M	(SD)	N	M	(SD)	N	M	(SD)
Anomia Disorder	2705	2.57	(.91)	1166	2.78	(.90)	825	2.90	(.88)
Difficulty	2705	2.53	(.89)	1173	2.73	(.90)	824	2.87	(.87)

The significant slope factor (S<sub>i</sub>) in Table 4 indicates that the extent of the linear latent rate of change in anomia over the observation period increased significantly, by an average of .173 at each test time, and that there are therefore systematic *intraindividual changes*.<sup>23</sup>

This data provides provisional confirmation of our basic assumption that anomia is not a stable state but a reaction to rapid changes in society. The significant variance in the growth factor (slope factor) shows that this does apply equally to all respondents. Although the variance is relatively small (.02) and therefore points to only minor *interindividual differences in the change in individual experience of anomie* during the period from 2002 to 2004, this significant indicator, as shown in Table 4, should not be ignored, especially given that the data refer to a period of only two years.

**Table 4: Intercept and growth factor (slope) of anomia (2002–04)**

	Intercept		Slope	
	M	0 <sup>2</sup>	M	0 <sup>2</sup>
Anomia	2.54	.393	.173	.020
p	.001	.001	.001	.019

Accordingly, we examine below whether and to what extent sociodemographic characteristics such as being from eastern or western Germany, age, educational level, gender, and political orientation shed light on *interindividual differences*, on the initial level of anomia and on the *intraindividual rate of change*.

#### 4.2. Initial Level of and Changes in Anomia and Incidence Patterns

First, one should note that the fit indices for this model are in the satisfactory range (default model:  $\chi^2 = 66.34$ ;  $df = 33$ ; CFI = .994; RMSEA = .019; p-close: 1.0). The central section of Table 5 shows that all sociodemographic characteristics significantly influence the initial level of anomia (intercept), with educational level having the greatest effect. The negative path coefficient ( $b = -.33$ ) shows that the degree of anomia in individuals with a lower level of education is higher than in persons with a higher educational level. This provisionally confirms our hypothesis (H4a) and is consistent with most previous findings.<sup>24</sup>

**Table 5: The effect of sociodemographic variables on the initial level and change rate of anomia (b\* = standardized coefficients)**

Effect of sociodemographic characteristics on the intercept and slope of anomia	Intercept		Slope	
	b*	p	b*	p
Eastern Germany	.21	.001	-.22	.004
High level of education	-.33	.001	-.03	n.s.
Age	.11	.001	.05	n.s.
Women	.13	.001	.03	n.s.
Left-wing/right-wing	.13	.001	.05	n.s.

Place of residence (eastern or western Germany) also has a relatively strong effect ( $b = .21$ ). The initial level of anomia is higher in eastern German than in western German people. Thus the longitudinal data (H1a) confirms the finding from several trend analyses (Hüpping 2006). However, given the minor difference in the degree of anomia in eastern and western German persons immediately or shortly after reunification (see especially Blank 2003, based on a similar instrument of measurement), one cannot attribute the difference simply to the change of system. Rather, one must assume that initial optimism has increasingly given way to a general feeling of uncertainty of orientation and action due to the ongoing deterioration in economic conditions. This

<sup>23</sup> By setting two of the estimated basic coefficients a constant linear development trend must be assumed.

<sup>24</sup> The findings of Rippl (2002), based on data from a sample of young people, are an exception in this respect. She found no significant mean differences in anomia between young people attending different types of school.

line of argument is supported indirectly by a comparison of the findings of a survey of changes in values (Meulemann 2002) and ESS data (European Social Survey 2002). Whereas in the early 1990s respondents from eastern Germany showed a higher level of support for the merit principle than those from western Germany, this support declined as time went on to a level that was noticeably lower than the level of support among western German respondents. The less eastern German respondents are able to identify with the new order, or the more strongly they associate with the old order and the more keenly they perceive a deterioration in their own situation, the more likely they are to reject the merit principle (Meulemann 2004, 170).<sup>25</sup>

The effects of gender and political orientation on the anomia level are somewhat less marked, but likewise highly significant. Our hypotheses (H5a, H6a) were that women and individuals with a right-wing political orientation in 2002 would be more anomic than men and persons who tended to be more to the left of the political spectrum.

Finally, age is the weakest explanatory factor for the initial level of anomia ( $b = .11$ ). The finding that older persons suffer more from anomia merely confirms hypothesis H2a. In contrast, younger people, as the findings of the most recent Shell youth surveys corroborate (Hurrelmann and Albert 2002, 2006), seem increasingly to adjust to changing circumstances in such a way as to be geared to fundamental needs and concrete problems. They are thus better able to avoid potential disappointments (“the pragmatic generation”).

Yet this effect can also be explained by age alone. Thus, one can assume that as people grow older their willingness and ability to adjust to changed situations declines. In their study on youth and anomia (temporal disintegration), Morgenroth and Boehnke (2003) point out that age is an

important indicator for explaining individual experience of anomie because it plays a key role in codetermining embeddedness in temporal structures and order. They thus surmise that juveniles, especially, are heavily prone to anomia. In contrast, our data shows that older age groups feel unsettled by the social conditions. Thus at the same time the phase of identity formation in youth has a smaller impact on the feeling of uncertainty of orientation and action than is the case with older people (e.g. those reaching retirement age).<sup>26</sup>

Summing up, one can state that all the variables included impact on the initial level of anomia. The next question is whether and to what extent these characteristics also explain the rate of change in anomia. The significance and extent of the effects of our chosen variables on the slope (factor) of anomia provide some indications.

The findings are listed in the right-hand section of Table 5. It is striking that, with the exception of inner-German origin, no characteristic has a significant effect on the anomia slope (H2b-6b). Moreover, the east/west effect does not bear out our hypothesis. Therefore we cannot confirm any theoretical propositions concerning the rate of change of anomia. We had assumed that anomia among people in both eastern and western Germany would increase in equal measure between 2002 and 2004 (H1b). However, the significant negative effect ( $b = -.22$ ) tells us that was a sharper increase in the sense of lack of orientation among western German persons. Accordingly, eastern German persons are more anomic in absolute terms, but lack of orientation among western German persons has increased more in relative terms. Moreover, this finding is corroborated as a trend by data from the Group-Focused Enmity survey (Hüpping 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Similar results are found in Roßteuscher (2004, 421): the value type of the realist who at the same time has the highest anomia ratings is in eastern Germany also the value type with the most pronounced longing for the GDR of old.

<sup>26</sup> There can, however, be no definite clarification of whether this is a genuine age effect or a specific generational feature (generation effect). To clarify this issue, additional panel data from different periods would be required.

This unexpected result is rendered more explicable by the fact that a noticeable deterioration of the economic situation set in only at the turn of the millennium, while respondents from eastern Germany had confronted and experienced economic crises just a few years after the political turnaround in eastern Germany.<sup>27</sup> Thus the (ongoing) negative economic trend is not a sudden change for them, but at most a further deterioration of an already precarious situation. In addition, statistical arguments can also be made. First, the variation in the slope factor is very small, which makes it hard to find significant predictors for this effect. Second, the rate of agreement among respondents from eastern Germany at the starting point in 2002 was already so high that, due to the associated ceiling effect, a further increase was less likely. However, if the anomia level in the west rose more sharply in recent years, the question of the pattern of incidence arises again. Might some of the chosen characteristics not only affect the initial level but also the rate of change, but are relevant only for western or eastern German persons and were obscured by the previous composite model?

This assumption was tested separately for eastern and western German persons on the basis of a multiple group analysis. This makes it possible to examine whether there are interaction effects between predictors and belonging to east or west.

#### 4.3. Determinants of Anomia Dynamics for Eastern and Western Germany

The model is supported by the empirical data, as is reflected in the global fit measures ( $\chi^2$ : 89.98;  $df$  = 58; CFI = .994; RMSEA = .014;  $p$ -close: 1.0). Table 6 shows that all sociodemographic variables had a significant effect on the initial level of anomia in 2002 in both western German and eastern German persons.

**Table 6: Initial level of anomia by different determinants (West and East;  $b^*$  = standardized coefficients)**

Effect of sociodemographic characteristics on the intercept (initial level) of anomia	West		East	
	$b^*$	$p$	$b^*$	$p$
High level of education	-.34	.001	-.34	.001
Age	.06	.045	.21	.001
Women	.14	.001	.13	.001
Left-wing/right-wing	.12	.001	.15	.001

Moreover, there are only minor differences in the strength of the effect of different predictors between the two sub-groups. Only in the case of age they are significant. (Although only the standardized coefficients are listed in the table, the finding that the strength of impact is similar also applies to the unstandardized effect coefficients that are not listed.) As regards age, the findings about strength of effect and level of significance indicate that this is a stronger explanatory factor in the east German sample. An additional  $\chi^2$  difference test showed that the strength of the effect of age differed significantly in the two sub-samples ( $p < 0.05$ ). Accordingly, the initial level of anomia among eastern German persons in 2002 correlated more closely with age than was the case with the western German sub-sample. This can be explained by the more drastic changes that the older cohorts in eastern Germany had experience in previous years.

With the exception of the age effect in the eastern German sample, the explanatory power of the indicators included in the two sub-samples diverges insignificantly from the findings for the overall sample. Thus even when the two sub-groups are analyzed separately, educational level is by far the predictor with the greatest explanatory power.

<sup>27</sup> Negative consequences of the economic crisis situation, such as the extent of employment instability, continue in absolute terms to be more marked in eastern Germany (Struck and Köhler 2005; Grotheer et al. 2005; Abraham 2005).

A different picture emerges when the sociodemographic variables are compared in terms of their explanatory power for the rate of change (the slope factor) of anomia in eastern and western respondents. Table 7 shows the strength of effect and level of significance of our potential predictors. Apart from political orientation in the western German sample, none of the potential predictors reaches a significant level.

**Table 7: Change in anomia by different determinants (West and East; b\* = standardized coefficients)**

Effect of sociodemographic characteristics on the slope (rate of change) of anomia	West		East	
	b*	p	b*	p
High level of education	-.06	n.s.	.03	n.s.
Age	.11	n.s.	-.18	n.s.
Women	-.02	n.s.	.19	n.s.
Left-wing/right-wing	.17	.038	-.31	n.s.

The effect of political orientation differs significantly in east and west. The level of anomie rose primarily among western German persons with right-wing political views. Thus Stolz's assumption (2000, 155ff.), based on a correlative finding, can be provisionally confirmed longitudinally, too, at least for the western German sub-sample. With reference to our chosen indicators, with the exception of the variable place of residence, little of the increase in individual experience of anomie between 2002 and 2004 can be explained by structural characteristics such as education, age and gender. In our analyses, individual attitudes, represented here by political orientation, seem to have greater explanatory power. Thus, the thesis that mainly people with few resources for coping with social transformation and the associated changes show greater anomic tendencies can only be upheld at the correlative level on the basis of our data. Whereas people with a low educational level, women, older people and people from eastern Germany are mainly the groups who are especially affected by, for instance, the negative consequences of making the labor market more flexible, the discrepancy experiences of persons with right-wing political views are not necessarily at the level of structural disadvantage. The assumption that persons with right-wing political views also possess fewer coping strate-

gies may be right. However, it seems equally plausible that the higher level of anomie emanates from the discrepancy between the values associated with their political views, such as keeping up traditions, demanding ethnic homogeneity, a clear order, etc., and social trends. The changes in society run contrary to their own personal views, which is not necessarily an actual disadvantage. Still, this correlation applies only to persons with right-wing political views. The findings of the analysis conducted by Schlüter et al. (2006) point in the same direction. In the context of a cross-lagged panel analysis, the authors found that authoritarian views associated with a right-wing attitude have a positive impact on the level of anomia.

Against the background of these findings and with reference to Merton's modes of adaptation typology, one can expect that those who are affected will show rebellion-type adaptation rather than innovation-type adaptation. Studies have shown that persons with right-wing political views are not only more likely to tolerate the use of illegitimate means (e.g. violence and discrimination towards certain groups such as political dissidents, immigrants, homosexuals, etc.) within a democratically constituted society, but also reject culturally determined goals and strive instead to create a new social order (Merton 1968, 310).

Thus our findings provide no support for the compensation hypothesis, according to which uncertainties of action and orientation can be offset by turning to right-wing (or right-wing extremist) attitudes (Parsons 1942; Heitmeyer 1997; Böhnisch 1994) or for the wealth of empirical evidence for it based on cross-sectional data (Fuchs 2003; Hüpping 2006). Our analyses show, however, that a higher initial level of anomia was observed in persons with a right-wing political orientation, and that the level of anomia rose significantly faster during the period from 2002 to 2004 among this group - but only in western Germany.

## 5. Summary and Discussion

Anomia, measured in terms of cognitive uncertainty of orientation and action, is not only verifiable in large sections of the population, but also increased significantly between 2002 and 2004. Our findings show that the initial level of anomia is connected to a not insignificant extent with

diverse sociodemographic characteristics. The strongest predictor is the level of education. This finding is contrary to views that the significance of socioeconomic factors in explaining individual experience of anomie is declining. Not only is educational level still a crucial indicator for determining socioeconomic position,<sup>28</sup> but it also plays an important role in dealing with complexity, the utilization of options, and risk limitation. Although its role as a guarantor of employment stability during the course of social (crisis) developments has been restricted, it is still a fundamental prerequisite (e.g. Abraham 2005, 122).

In addition to educational level, regional origin also has an explanatory component, inasmuch as eastern German persons showed a higher initial level of anomia in 2002. The effects for age, gender, and political orientation are seen to a somewhat lesser degree. Women, older people and those with right-wing political views were more anomic in 2002. However, the data did not support our assumption that young people in particular increasingly react to growing, diverse demands with anomia. This could be because younger age cohorts possess different coping strategies, e.g. as regards expectations, for reacting to the change in general conditions such as “the right to discontinuous employment” (Beck 1999, 33).

We also found in our analyses that although anomia has risen, it has not done so in equal measure across all respondents. Our determinants, with the exception of inner-German origin, have no explanatory power in respect of the increase in anomia. Surprising in this context is the finding that it is not belonging to the east, but rather to the west, that has an effect on the increase in individual experience of anomia. Although the absolute level of anomia was more pronounced among respondents in eastern Germany in both 2002 and 2004, in relative terms there was a sharper increase among the western German population during this

period. A separate analysis of east and west by means of a multiple group comparison produced two further findings about the comparative explanatory power of the characteristics included for the initial level and development of anomia in persons in eastern and western Germany. In the eastern German sample, age was a stronger factor influencing the initial level of anomia. Evidently, the fundamental, all-round changes in the general conditions of life in eastern Germany after the disintegration of the East German state (Diewald et al. 1996, 219) and the associated life experiences before and after reunification helped to increase uncertainty of orientation and action. Apart from age, there were no significant differences between the two sub-samples with respect to the impact of gender, educational level, or political views on the initial level of anomia.

A second finding that had been obscured by the all-German analysis relates to the development of anomia over time. Here, only a right-wing political orientation has a significant influence on the increase in individual experience of anomia, and then only in the western German sample. Thus, West-German persons with right-wing political views in particular have become more anomic over time. Therefore not only does a right-wing political attitude lead to a search for individually new patterns of orientation and structuring, but these in turn may trigger individual experience of anomie. This finding is new and runs contrary to previous patterns of interpretation that saw right-wing political attitudes as an anomic reaction. In terms of Merton’s adaptation typology one can in this case anticipate rebellion whereby those affected reject culturally determined goals and the means at their disposal in a (democratically constituted) society and aspire to a new social order instead.

Moreover, our finding can also be arranged as a supplement so as to permit one to “make a synthesis of Durkheim’s and

<sup>28</sup> An additional analysis taking employment status into account also showed nonemployment among respondents in the eastern German sub-sample to have had a positive effect on the level of anomia in 2002 ( $b = .141$ ;  $sig. = .001$ ). Its effect on the growth factor, in contrast, was significant in neither the

overall sample nor the two sub-samples. This finding must, however, be interpreted with caution inasmuch as the nonemployed included not only unemployed people but also pensioners, trainees, housewives, etc. At the same time this finding is an important additional factor. Employment thus seems

for the eastern German sub-sample to have an integrative and regulative force that impedes action and orientation uncertainties. Regardless of the nature of nonemployment, in contrast, nonintegration in labor market structures increases the level of anomia.

Merton's trains of thought and erect a theory that includes processes of social change that induce anomie, which in turn could lead to further social change" (Passas 2000, 104).

Summing up, one can thus state that sociodemographic characteristics, first and foremost educational level, are strong explanatory factors for the initial level of anomia, as various trend analyses have shown previously. However, apart from regional origin, broken down into east and west, they are not significant predictors for explaining the increase in individual experience of anomie. Along with political orientation there are obviously other influencing factors that we did not take into account. However, it is impossible to say on the basis of existing data whether these findings will have any long-term validity. In terms of research, it would be desirable to realize longitudinal studies over longer periods so as to identify structural effects on individual attitudes and behaviors with a higher degree of reliability.

In addition, future research should examine the significance of value orientation (Schwartz 1992) in explaining the level and development of anomia. In this connection, one must assume that values such as stimulation and self-direction tend to have a negative effect on the initial level and development of anomia, while security, conformity and tradition tend to bring about positive effects. This supplementary investigation would also permit more precise conclusions about the effects of political attitude.

It would also be desirable to examine the extent to which anxiety about loss of social standing and growing job insecurity can explain the extent and development of the individual experience of anomia (Dörre 2007). Although these still correlate with socioeconomic position, the correlation has become less clear. Fears of loss of social standing, and a growing job insecurity, affect all status groups. Nowadays, everyone is called on to adapt to changing social conditions (Ehrenberg 2003, 222).

Finally, one has to analyze the relationship between the cognitive and normative dimensions of anomia in more detail. For this purpose, longitudinal data are needed to find out more about their potential causal relationship.

"Thus it would be counterproductive to regard the causes of anomie as identical at all times and in different places and to limit the search for anomie-inducing factors to the seemingly universal. The very fact that the concept lends itself to different hypotheses— depending on historical circumstances and the field or analysis level to which it is applied—makes it so useful and strong" (Passas 2000, 107). In addition to searching for further individual factors, it would also be desirable to supplement longitudinal data by macro-indicators. This would simultaneously provide the opportunity to test explicitly the relationship between anomie and anomia that we assume.

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