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The East German Child Care System: Associations with Caretaking and Caretaking Beliefs, Children's Early Attachment and Adjustment

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The present paper describes the origins of the child care system in East Germany. Exploring the changes that followed German reunification and democracy, we specifically focus on the political interactions between the East and West and the unique child care situation in the reunified city of Berlin. Drawing upon studies conducted before and after reunification, we examine the early care practices and caretaking beliefs in Eastern and Western families and in public child care, reviewing research on children's early attachment and adjustment. Two questions are particularly important: (1) whether patterns of early care in socialist East Germany adversely affected development and (2) whether the process of sociopolitical change itself introduced levels of stress that affected childrearing and child adjustment. Data from numerous studies suggest that the sociopolitical changes contributed to behavior problems and insecure attachments when parents had difficulty adapting, suggesting that preoccupation with their own problems, rather than the political system itself, was responsible for adverse effects on children.

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INTRODUCTION

Before the reunification of Germany, many more child care and after-school programs were available in East than in West Germany. When the Berlin Wall was breached in 1989, for example, 56% of the children under three, almost all of the children between three and six years of age, and 88% of those between seven and 11 were enrolled in child care facilities in the East (Deutsches Jugendinstitut, 1993). Much smaller proportions of the children in the West attended child care facilities, and the philosophical and pedagogical orientations differed as well.

In the present paper, we describe the origins of the child care system in East Germany, exploring the changes that followed German reunification and the introduction of democracy and the free-market economy. We focus specifically on the political interactions between East and West and on the unique child care situation in the reunified city of Berlin. Drawing upon studies conducted in both the Eastern and Western parts of Germany before and after reunification, we examine the early care practices and caretaking beliefs of East German parents and professional care providers, and review research on developing attachments to mothers and care providers in East and West Berlin.

The East German Child Care System

Origins of the Child Care System

Because child care systems must be viewed in the context of the entire society or culture (Lamb, 1998; Lamb & Sternberg, 1992), we first describe the basic ideological features of the child care systems that evolved in East Germany before exploring their impact on families and children. Following the Marxist critique of traditional capitalist societies, a completely different and "more humanitarian" social structure was sought in all spheres of life, with equality between men and women defined as the central goal. Labor was viewed as the "central sphere of life," with personal maturity fostered through mastery and achievement at work (Marx, 1867/1981). Work was mostly organized through state-owned companies and institutions which also coordinated regular professional, political and personal interactions. The attitudes, beliefs, and concerns of individuals and their families were extensively discussed, with the "guardianship of the state" ensuring that individual perspectives were shaped to maximize contributions to the new society (Henrich, 1990). Even though the nuclear family structure was viewed as a model during the socialist era in East Germany, nationalization was also encouraged as communism became more established (Engels, 1884/1964). Frequent attempts were made to limit family privacy, for example, and a strong commitment was made to societal rather than individual responsibility for the care and welfare of children in all of the Eastern block countries (Bronfenbrenner, 1972; Lamb & Sternberg, 1992). In East Germany, exclusive child care within the family was even denounced as a petit-bourgeois aspiration likely to have adverse effects on development and the establishment of social relationships (Schmidt-Kolmer & Schmidt, 1962). Public child care was portrayed as more professional and of better quality because it was constantly reevaluated and improved (Hille, 1985).

The Role of Mothers and Children

Mothers

The roles of women in East and West Germany were differentiated by the leftist ideology of the German emancipation movement in the 1930s as well as by the application of communist doctrine. Work outside the home was widely considered necessary for the maximization of women's fulfillment whereas housework was deemed likely to keep women "dull and oppressed" (Lenin, 1920/1960, p. 419). Homemaking mothers were thus devalued whereas employed mothers were offered a broad range of supports, including paid leave to perform housework or to care for sick children. In addition, child care centers and after-school programs were made available to infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children. By the time the child care system was fully elaborated, however, high rates of infant morbidity in child care facilities had forced many mothers out of work, causing widespread disruptions in the work force. During the 1970s, as a result, the basic maternity leave benefits available to new mothers were extended from eight weeks to 12 and then 18 months (for mothers having their third or later children). Perhaps because of these generous benefits, the socialist regime was widely tolerated by East Germans, who appreciated policies allowing young educated women to pursue careers while building their families (Schlegel, 1993) whereas mothers in the West took three-year or longer sojourns from the labor market and had great difficulty re-entering the labor force thereafter. Those who wished to continue working had to rely on family members, friends, neighbors, and paid babysitters to assist with child care. A 1988 survey of child care practices in 1,259 West German families with children under three years of age revealed that employed mothers primarily shared care with grandparents, who provided an average of 10.5 hours per week, followed by fathers (10 hours per week), and then friends and neighbors (4.5 hours per week). Not surprisingly, 32% of the children in that study were cared for by two or three care providers other than their mothers each week, and 15% and 7 % of the children were cared for by four and even five or more caretakers, respectively, on a regular basis (Tietze, 1998). The child care situation in West Berlin, however, differed (see below).

Children

The provision of publicly supported child care in East Germany reflected the communist belief that labor was a central component of everyday life. As a result, child care was designed to prepare children for integration into the labor force rather than to support their individual developmental needs (Schmidt, 1992). Playfulness and emotionality were denounced as irrational tendencies which might make people inactive and intellectually lazy (Lukács, 1988). Socialist educational concepts were thus designed to "bypass childhood," creating a "new socialist type of person" (Sixth Congress of the United Socialist Party [Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands] in 1963) by nurturing qualitatively different personal characteristics than in capitalist societies. Exaggerated ideas about childhood *plasticity* led to great emphasis on the role of public child care in integrating children into society (Shamin & Yelin, 1988). Lesson plans and curricula were carefully developed to foster child development and adjustment. Socialist theories of education viewed childhood as a transitional phase between the incompleteness of infancy and the "totally evolved individual" (Marx, 1867/1981, p. 56) and based educational practice on the amelioration of child *deficits* (Schmidt, 1992). As in the other East block countries (Krupskaia, 1972), pedagogical concepts in East Germany emphasized *collectivism,* with individual behaviors deemed appropriate only when they furthered group oriented aims and attitudes. Public child care was thus

expected to complement families by encouraging egalitarian beliefs and concepts about sharing in young children.

Structure and Shape of the Child Care System

By the time it had been fully implemented nationwide, the East German child care system comprised nursery schools (*Krippe*), kindergartens (*Kindergarten*), and after-school programs (*Hort*) available universally at almost no cost to the users. From the mid 1960s, this system became a crucial component of the Unified Socialist Education System (*Einheitliches Sozialistisches Bildungssystem*) that also included schools, colleges, and universities throughout the country. In this system, age-homogeneous grouping was the norm. At all levels, the curricula were centrally devised, introduced, and supervised so as to promote state-socialist pedagogical concepts. To implement this system, educated personnel were needed, of course. Whereas care providers in West Germany attended a three-year course that prepared them to care for children under the age of 11, Eastern care providers in each of the three care systems (*Krippe*, *Kindergarten* and *Hort*) attended separate, specialized three- to four-year courses (see von Derschau, 1997, for discussion). Unlike their counterparts in the West, East German care providers were given training with respect to children of specific ages and became familiar with caretaking procedures, play, and safety issues relevant to children of specific ages. Child care providers were also required to play a musical instrument at all Eastern colleges. By the end of the 1980s, nearly 80% of the care providers in the East as opposed to only 50% of the care providers in the West were specifically trained (Deutsches Jugendinstitut, 1998; Statistisches Amt der DDR, 1990).

Kindergartens have a long history in both parts of Germany, and thus by 1989–1990 nearly 80% of the 3- to 6-year olds in the West and almost 100% of those in the East attended kindergarten (Deutsches Jugendinstitut, 1993). All centers were open daily from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the East; however, only 17% of those in the West offered similar hours (Deutsches Jugendinstitut, 1998). Most facilities in the West provided morning and/or afternoon programs interrupted by lunch breaks during which children were supposed to go home, whereas facilities in the East provided meals and continuous care.

The differences between the East and the West were even more striking when care patterns for children under three and over six years of age were considered. For example, 5% of the elementary school-aged children in the West attended after-school programs compared with 88% of those in the East. Likewise, 2% of the Western children under three received out-of-home care, compared with 56% of those in the East (23% of those under one year of age and 89% of those between one and three years of age). Nationwide agreement about the importance of supervised after-school activities for elementary school age children led parents in the West to create programs for their children, while parents in the East relied upon state-supported programs which permitted children to complete their homework, participate in political and social organizations (like the *Junge Pioniere* and some junior units of athletic associations), and attend courses or workshops on a wide range of topics (*Arbeitsgemeinschaften*). By contrast, non-parental child care for infants and toddlers has been a controversial topic in West Germany for many years, and was often considered appropriate only when the quality of care within the family was suspect.

Nursery schools in Europe during the 19th century were characterized by poor quality care and high levels of staff turnover (Marbeau, 1845). East German nursery schools introduced in 1949 were designed to avoid these problems. Even though they followed carefully developed curricula with an increasing emphasis on stimulating experiences, the initial curricula (Schmidt-Kolmer,

1968) were heavily criticized because of the rigid daily routines and tutorial practices they imposed (Schmidt, 1992; Ahnert, 1998). By 1989, however, the Eastern curricula (Weber & Weigl, 1991; Weber, 1991) had been improved as a result of continued research, wheras Western attention was paid to research on early childhood education only in West Berlin (Beller, 1985).

The Special Child Care Situation in Berlin

Before Berlin's Reunification

Because of its special status and location in the middle of East Germany, surrounded by a wall, the child care situation in West Berlin was strikingly different from the situation in the other parts of West Germany with which it was affiliated. The Berlin Senat encouraged West Berliners to remain in the city by offering lower taxes and other economic supports. As in the rest of the country, nearly 11% of the Germans living in West Berlin were children under the age of 11, but maternal employment was much higher in the city than in West Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 1992). In 1989–1990, nearly 30% of all child care places available in the West (West Germany and West Berlin) were in West Berlin. As a result, nearly 20% of the children under three attended child care facilities in West Berlin, compared to 2% in West Germany. Kindergarten was equally available in West Berlin and in the rest of the country, but more after-school programs were available in West Berlin, with 30% of the children so enrolled in 1990 (Deutsches Jugendinstitut, 1998). Mixed-age child care centers (*Kita*), which included children up to the age of 11, were typical in West Berlin from the outset.

The Child Care Situation in Reunited Berlin

As in the rest of East Germany, the residents of East Berlin responded to the sociopolitical changes of 1989 in a way that immediately affected the child care system: birthrates declined dramatically and people moved in order to find work following the collapse of many industries in the East. In addition, local policies changed in both halves of the city, whereas outside Berlin the sociopolitical changes in the East hardly affected West Germany. In general, the availability of child care constituted an important resource for parents in the East, with shared child care arrangements remaining an essential component of everyday life for East German families. Reduced enrollment in the Eastern centers forced many to retain only those staff members willing to adapt their working patterns and curricula, however. Even though the care providers in the East were well-educated and trained, those who wanted to continue working had to attend evening courses in order to broaden their knowledge of children under years of age 11. The mixed-aged *Kita* groups that had been typical in West Berlin also became popular throughout East Berlin and the Eastern part of the country (Ahnert, 1998). Meanwhile, the Berlin Senat eliminated 37,000 unused child care slots in East Berlin between 1990 and 1997, making it possible to offer an additional 14,000 slots in West Berlin. After completing 100-hour relicensing programs, care providers in East Berlin were encouraged to take up work in the West.

Studies of Caretaking, Caretaking Beliefs, and Attachment in Child Care Centers

Caretaking Beliefs

Before reunification, care providers in the East were expected to translate state-socialist pedagogical concepts into everyday patterns of child care. Sturzbecher and Waltz (1999) thus assumed that the beliefs of care providers in the Eastern and Western parts of the country should still differ in 1994. Seven hundred kindergarten providers in the East (Brandenburg), 1,000 providers in the West (Nordrhein-Westfalen and Bavaria), and the parents whose children were cared for by those providers were asked to rank the importance of such qualities as *Individuality, Creativity, Social competence* and *Conformity*. Parents in East and West Germany had similar views about the importance of these qualities, whereas care providers in the two parts of the country responded in strikingly different ways. Care providers in the East valued *Social competence* and *Conformity* more and *Individuality* less than their counterparts in the West, suggesting that the ideologies of the former sociopolitical systems permeated the values of professional care providers much more than those of the parents.

Do these differing emphases on social competence and group adjustment affect the behavior of those caring for children? To what extent could Eastern care providers affect individual personality development? While care providers in the West tended to be young women gaining their first experiences in childrearing, the majority of those in the East were already mothers, and many brought their own children to the centers. The professional attitudes of care providers in the East thus reflected their own personal attitudes about motherhood (Rauschenbach, Beher, & Knauer, 1995), although the official curriculum imposed leadership which forced them to direct and control the infants' behavior. When the decision was made to maintain and reform the child care system in the East following reunification in October 1990, the practices of care providers had to be defined differently. Adopting more flexible curricula and routines to accommodate individual differences among children, care providers began attributing greater importance to emotional needs than to cognitive stimulation, and redefined themselves as companions rather than teachers.

Caretaking and Infant–Care Provider Attachment

Ahnert, Lamb and Seltenheim (2000) compared videotapes of 40 East German one-year-olds in child care before German reunification (1987–1989) and 70 East German infants of the same age in care after reunification (1993–1997). The care providers' behavior during the 4 months after enrollment when the care providers' support was most likely to be needed was assessed, using measures of *Attentiveness* and *Adequate responsiveness* to individual infants as well as Arnett's (1989) four ratings of care providers' group-level behavior: *Empathy* (the extent to which the care providers encouraged and were attentive to children); *Punitiveness* (the extent to which they placed high values on obedience); *Dedication* (the extent to which they were truly interested in the children's activities); and *Control* (the extent to which they supervised and limited the childrens' behaviors). Infants were also seen in Ainsworth and Wittig's (1969) Strange Situation with their primary care providers five months after enrollment. Care providers did not differ with respect to dedication and punitiveness, but control predominated before reunification, whereas empathetic behaviors, attentiveness, and responsiveness were consistently higher following reunification. Not surprisingly, secure infant–care provider attachments were more common in the post- than in the pre-reunification samples. Interestingly, independent assessments of infant–care provider

attachments in a West Berlin sample in 1984–1985 (Rottmann & Ziegenhain, 1988; Ziegenhain & Wolff, 2000) revealed no significant differences between the patterns of infant–care provider attachment in the two parts of Berlin before the political changes (see Table 1). In addition, similarly high levels of disorganized [D] behaviors suggested that some of the care provided before reunification was developmentally inappropriate in both East and West Berlin centers at that time, even though the caretaking ideologies differed. Unfortunately, the quality of care was not systematically evaluated in that West Berlin sample, but Andres and Dippelhofer-Stiem (1991) surveyed 65 care providers in 34 West Berlin centers in 1988 and reported greater concerns with safety rather than the provision of educationally and socially enriching experiences. Infant–care provider attachments in West Berlin were not reassessed ten years later as they were in East Berlin. Thus, the information contained in Table 1 is asymmetrical, suggesting that improvements in the quality of care provided in East Berlin centers might reflect both progress in early childhood education and changes in caretaking ideology.

Table 1: Infant–Care Provider Attachments in Different Sociopolitical Contexts

Sample Characteristics				**Infant–Care Provider Attachments**					**References**
Year	*Berlin Location*	*Infant Age* [Months]	*n*	*Avoidant* [A]	*Secure* [B]	*Resistant-ambivalent* [C]	*Disorganized* [D]	*Non-attached*[a]	
	Before Political Changes								
1984–1985	West	19	31	23% (8)[b]	32% (10)	13% (4)	29% (9)	—	Rottmann & Ziegenhain, 1988 Ziegenhain & Wolff, 2000
1987–1989	East	16.7	40	22% (9)	20% (8)	10% (4)	38% (15)	10% (4)	Ahnert, Lamb, & Seltenheim, 2000
	After Political Changes								
1993–1997	East	19.5	64	38% (25)	39% (25)	3% (2)	8% (5)	12% (7)	Ahnert & Lamb, 2000

Note. [a] Non-attached infants were considered avoidant [A] in the West German sample (see Ahnert & Lamb, submitted, for discussion). [b]Total numbers in parenthesis; Pearson's Chi-squared statistics, χ^2 (n = 104) = 4.13, p > .025 with Bonferoni correction, considered eight secure of 40 attachments against 25 secure of 64 attachments before and after political changes, and χ^2 (n = 71) = 1.39, p > .10, related 10 secure of 31 attachments in that West sample against eight secure of 40 attachments in the East sample.

Studies of Caretaking, Caretaking Beliefs, and Attachment in Families

Caretaking and Caretaking Beliefs

In order to help understand the early family experiences of very young children in socialist East Germany, we interviewed 124 mothers in different cultures, before and after the reunification of Germany. All mothers were primary caretakers of 11- to 13-month-old infants at the time of the interviews (Ahnert, Krätzig, Meischner, & Schmidt, 1994). In the spring of 1989, half a year before the Berlin wall came down, we interviewed 39 mothers in East Berlin, as well as 17 mothers from Osnabrück (West Germany), and 22 Russian mothers (from Moscow), who were exposed to quite a different culture but similar state-socialist doctrines as the East German mothers. Because we aimed to explore whether and how caretaking beliefs in East Germany might have been affected by the state-socialist pedagogical doctrines, we first asked whether East German caretaking beliefs would resemble those of the Russian mothers who were exposed to the same state doctrines or those of the West German mothers with whom they shared a culture. Second, we asked whether caretaking beliefs in East Germany have been stable over time by interviewing 21 East German grandmothers about their beliefs at the time (in the 1960s) they were

Table 2: Maternal Caretaking Beliefs in Different Sociopolitical and Cultural Contexts

Sample Characteristics			Caretaking Beliefs							
Year	*Location*	*n*	*Acceptance*		*Competence*		*Integration*		*Solicitude*	
			M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Long Before Political Changes										
1963–1965	East Berlin	21	50.0	9.8	50.7	10.2	49.8	9.9	49.5	9.5
Before Political Changes										
1989	East Berlin	39	51.3	9.2	50.4	9.7	51.9	8.3	46.9	8.4
1989	Osnabrück	17	49.7	9.0	51.0	7.6	56.0	9.0	53.3	7.6
1989	Moscow	22	51.3	8.4	46.1	11.3	40.6	7.8	54.2	8.8
After Political Changes										
1992	East Berlin	25	52.8	8.4	52.2	8.4	52.5	7.9	50.4	8.8

Note. MANOVA with all East Berlin samples (Factor: Time [long before, before, and after political changes]) revealed no time effect on caretaking beliefs, $F(8, 180) = .87$, $p < .10$. MANOVA with the samples in 1989 (Factor: Culture [Moscow, East Berlin and Osnabrück]) suggested multivariat effects on caretaking, $F(8, 146) = 42.51$, $p > .001$, and univariate analyses revealed cultural effects on maternal competence, $F(2, 75) = 27.35$, $p > .001$, and infant's integration, $F(2, 75) = 32.76$, $p > .001$.

raising the mothers of the target children, when the socialist education system was not fully established. In 1992—when Germany was already reunified—we interviewed 25 additional East Berlin mothers and contrasted them with the grandmothers as well as with the mothers studied in 1989.

The Toddler's Family Situation Questionnaire ([TFS] Ahnert, Zeibe, & Lilie, 1989) was used to assess four internally consistent dimensions (Cohen's kappa between .79 and .88): *Acceptance* tapped the mothers' perceptions of infancy as a special phase to be enjoyed rather than wished away (e.g., Item 37: I'll be glad when my baby matures beyond infancy and becomes clean and independent); *Maternal competence* tapped confidence in the respondent's own behavior and beliefs rather than others' advice (e.g., Item 80: Without guidance about how to handle my baby, I sometimes would not know what to do); *Infant's integration* assessed the extent to which the infant was integrated into everyday life (e.g., Item 74: It can be difficult to include infants in everyday routines, such as joint meals, visits, and shopping); and *Maternal solicitude* indexed maternal concerns (e.g., Item 38: My baby often does dangerous things, so I have to watch him/her all the time).

Multivariate analyses of variance revealed no differences among East Berlin subsamples attributable to the time at which the data were gathered, but there were striking differences with respect to culture such that the Russian in 1989 mothers viewed the infants' integration and the mothers' caretaking competence as much different and more problematic than German mothers in both groups did (see Table 2). Although all samples were small and the focus was on the care of infants at home, the findings point to the enduring similarities in the German culture rather than the effects of ideology during German separation.

A similar conclusion was suggested by observations of the everyday experiences of three-month olds over the course of the day. Comparing the behaviors of East and West German mothers in Halle and Bochum, respectively, in 1996–1998, Schölmerich and his colleagues reported more similarities than differences between the samples (Schölmerich, 1999). Likewise, no significant differences were found when Ahnert and her colleagues (Ahnert, Klein-Isberner, Breßler, Hoffmann, & Rickert, 1997) compared the behaviors of East Berlin mothers (1993) and West German (Osnabrück) mothers (1991) caring for their three-month olds.

We also wondered whether parents would adapt their attitudes once they began sharing child care responsibilities with public facilities. Two months before school began, Sturzbecher and Kalb (1993) asked 77 East German (Magdeburg) parents of 6- to 7-year old kindergarten children about their beliefs regarding *Basic virtues*, *Social competence*, and *Conformity*. *Basic virtues* focused on organization, cleanliness, politeness and ambitious behavior whereas *Social competence* focused on open-mindedness, reliability, empathy, self-esteem, and family orientation, and *Conformity* tapped the ability to play alone and popularity with adults and peers. The Eastern parents' rankings of these values in 1990 were compared with equivalent rankings provided in 1988 by a sample of West German parents. In both samples, basic virtues ranked highest, followed by social competence and then conformity. Sturzbecher & Waltz' (1999) study of over 500 mothers from the West (Nordrhein-Westfalen and Bavaria) and over 200 from the East (Brandenburg) in 1994 revealed similar findings, underscoring the strong impact of culturally-based attitudes and suggesting that East German parents resisted the state-socialist education doctrines, even when their children were exposed to the public child care system.

Infant–Mother Attachment

Although East German authorities viewed attachment theory as "offensive to women's emancipation" (Schmidt-Kolmer 1987, p. 10) Ainsworth's Strange Situation was used in 1987–1989 to assess the infant-mother attachments of 40 11- to 13-month olds in East Berlin (Ahnert, Meischner, & Schmidt, 2000). Classification of the attachment patterns in part of the sample using Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall's (1978) procedures revealed that 45% were securely attached [B], 42% were avoidant [A], and 10% were resistant-ambivalent [C]. Reclassification of the entire sample involving Main and Solomon's (1990) procedures to identify disorganized features revealed that 50% were secure [B], 38% avoidant [A], 7% resistant-ambivalent [C], and 5% disorganized [D] (Ahnert, Lamb, & Seltenheim, 2000). Interestingly, when Ziegenhain (Rottmann & Ziegenhain, 1988; Ziegenhain & Wollf, 2000) studied 35 infants in West Berlin in

Table 3: Infant-Mother Attachments in Different Sociopolitical Contexts

Sample Characteristics				**Infant-Mother Attachments (in %)**				**References**
Year	*Berlin Location*	*Infant Age [Months]*	*n*	*Avoidant [A]*	*Secure [B]*	*Resistant-ambivalent [C]*	*Dis-organized [D]*	
	Before Political Changes							
1987–1989	East	12.2	40	38	50	7	5	Ahnert, Lamb, & Seltenheim, 2000
1984–1985	West	11.2	35	26	49	6	20	Rottmann & Ziegenhain, 1988 Ziegenhain & Wollf, 2000
	During Political Changes							
1990	East	12	47	41	36	14	9	Ahnert & Schmidt, 1995
1990–1991	West	12	76	16	38	7	39	Rauh, Ziegenhain, Müller, & Winjoks, 1999
	After Political Changes							
1993-1997	East	14.9	70	46	49	4	1	Ahnert & Lamb, 2000

Note. MANOVA with all East Berlin samples (Factor: Time [long before, before, and after political changes]) revealed no time effect on caretaking beliefs, $F(8, 180)= .87$, $p < .10$. MANOVA with the samples in 1989 (Factor: Culture [Moscow, East Berlin and Osnabrück]) suggested multivariat effects on caretaking, $F(8, 146)= 42.51$, $p > .001$, and univariate analyses revealed cultural effects on maternal competence, $F(2, 75)= 27.35$, $p > .001$, and infant's integration, $F(2, 75)= 32.76$, $p > .001$.

1984–1985, they reported 49% to have secure [B], 26% avoidant [A], 6% resistant-ambivalent [C], and 20% disorganized [D] attachments to their mothers. In these quite independent studies, therefore, there were no East-West differences in the proportion of attachments rated as secure. Moreover, between 1993 to 1997, Ahnert and her colleagues studied 70 mother-infant dyads in East Berlin and found that 49% were secure [B], 46% were avoidant [A], 4% were resistant-ambivalent [C], and 1% were disorganized [D], much as in 1989 (Ahnert & Lamb, 2000).

Even though the Eastern and Western samples were matched with respect to their socioeconomic characteristics and all infants were observed shortly before child care entry, one might argue that the Western samples were atypical because so few mothers in that part of the city used child care whereas this was typical in the East. Rauh et al. (1999), however, reported very few differences in attachment distributions among West Berlin dyads with employed and unemployed mothers. However, it appeared that disorganized behaviors were more prominent among insecure infants in West Berlin, whereas avoidance was common among insecure infants in East Berlin (see Table 3). Because attachment security was unaffected by the political changes, and because maternal caretaking and caretaking beliefs in the East did not differ considerably from those in the West (Ahnert et al., 1994; Ahnert et al., 1997; Schölmerich, 1999; Sturzbecher & Kalb, 1993; Sturzbecher & Waltz, 1999) the evidence suggests that the communist regime had minimal effects on attachment security.

Studies of Children's Attachment, Adjustment and Family Stress during German Reunification

In 1992, Doerfel-Baasen, Raschke, Rauh, and Weber (1996) re-contacted 93 Berlin children—48 from the East and 45 from the West—who had all experienced extensive child care before reunification and had later entered the reunified Berlin school system which had been modeled after the Western system. They predicted that the East Berlin preschoolers would have more difficulty adjusting to a school system for which they were not prepared, but when researchers assessed attachments using Hansburg's (1972) Separation Anxiety Test at the end of the first school year, no differences in attachment security between East and West were apparent. Almost 45% of both the Eastern and Western children were described as securely attached. Insecurity was characterized by avoidant [A] patterns in the East whereas disorganized [D] patterns were more common in the West, however.

Teachers also rated internalizing and externalizing behaviors at school over the first four weeks. Surprisingly, only one-third of the troubled children (mostly boys) came from the East whereas two-thirds came from the West, although there were no differences in school grades. Marital conflict was more common among families with troubled children. Doerfel-Baasen et al. (1996) therefore suggested that gender-specific and family-oriented problems rather than the political system experienced by the children early in life were responsible for the behavior problems. When the investigation was extended to examine school admission in 1995 and 1996, Rauh (1999) reported that both East Berlin and West Berlin families were anxious about the future and some felt disadvantaged by the political changes. Associations between the political changes, family-oriented problems and school adjustment were also discussed by Schlegel (1999) who reported that many preschoolers in Saxonia—in the Southern part of East Germany—delayed enrollment in school because their behavioral problems were so obvious. By 1998, 14% of the 45,000 preschoolers were held back, compared to a stable 1% ten years earlier. Schlegel (1999) argued that extremly high unemployment rates in that area (up to 20%) created family

environments in which children received less attention because their parents were preoccupied with their own problems.

The underlying problems were investigated in a longitudinal study of 86 East Berlin families between January 1989 and September 1994 (Ahnert & Schmidt, 1995). All families were recruited from registration lists at child care centers, even though they were first seen at home during the maternity leave period, shortly before the infants had their first birthdays. Four subsamples were distinguished on the basis of the time of recruitment: (1) before and (2) after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, as well as (3) before and (4) after the currency union in July 1990. Both events promoted the eventual reunification of Germany in October 1990, and might have affected citizens more than the reunification itself. Most importantly, East Germans received money in the summer of 1990 that was interchangeable with Western currency for the first time, giving them access to the free market economy, and enabling the start of individual economic reconstruction. Ahnert and Schmidt (1995) studied the parents' work conditions, as well as their activities and interests at home during the period between the currency union and German reunification. In 31% of the families, the mothers (but not the fathers) were unemployed or employed part-time, whereas one-third of the fathers' jobs were uncertain and required lengthy commutes, mostly to West Berlin. In interviews, employed parents stressed that they felt pressured and undervalued in their jobs, while homemakers felt useless because they were unemployed and thus unable to take advantage of the political changes. Instead of conceptualizing life from the perspective of homemakers as the majority of their counterparts in the West did, 95% of the unemployed Eastern women studied sought re-entry into the labor force by retraining for those jobs that were available in the area. Activities and interests at home also changed tremendously, as the parents redefined their everyday routines. Time budgets revealed that these parents spent less time with their children than they did working or engaged in other activities outside and inside the family.

When we observed mothers and infants in Ainsworth's Strange Situation, Subsample (4), comprising 47 families, differed greatly from Subsamples (1) to (3). In Subsample (4), only 36% of the infant-mother attachments appeared secure, compared with 14% that were resistant-ambivalent [C], 41% avoidant [A], and 9% disorganized [D]. Interestingly, Rauh and her colleagues (Rauh, Ziegenhain, Mueller, & Winjoks, 1999) explored infant-mother attachments around the same time in 76 West Berlin families, and found similarly low rates of secure [B] infant-mother attachments (38%) as well as unusually high numbers of disorganized [D] patterns (39%). The rates of avoidant [A] (16%) and resistant-ambivalent [C] (7%) classifications were similar to those observed in other pre-reunification samples in West Berlin (see Table 3). Rauh et al. (1999) attributed the differences to high levels of emotionally imbalanced and hostile maternal behavior attributable to family stress. Interestingly, when Ahnert and Schmidt (1995) used the Freiburger Personality Inventory ([FPI] Fahrenberg, Hampel, & Selg, 1983) in the East Berlin longitudinal study to explore associations between patterns of attachments and dimensions of maternal personality, they found similar associations. Levels of tolerance for frustration were significantly lower and levels of aggression significantly higher in insecure (as opposed to secure) infants in Subsample (4) but not in the other subsamples. Perhaps the mothers' emotional instability under pressure led them to behave inappropriately, and thus fostered increases in the numbers of insecurely attached infants. Overall, problematic patterns of infant emotional development in Berlin were more prominent in 1990–1991 than either before or after that period (see Table 3).

DISCUSSION

In this paper, we have examined the ways in which patterns of early child care experiences in the socialist era might have affected the quality of children's attachments. Because East Germany was a closed society, and because contacts among the German people – even among researchers – were sharply limited, few researchers examined and compared social conditions in East and West Germany before reunification, and few social scientists in the East continued their research because almost all Eastern research institutions, including the Eastern Academy of Science, were dissolved following reunification. The available studies were limited with respect to sample size and methods, and many focused on behavior right after the fall of the Berlin wall on the assumption that behaviors observed at that time might still reflect residual effects of the former sociopolitical circumstances. Despite these limitations, however, we believe that important insights into early emotional development have been obtained. Two questions are particularly important:

(1) whether patterns of early care in socialist East Germany adversely affected development and (2) whether the process of change itself introduced levels of stress that in turn affected childrearing and child adjustment.

Clearly, state-socialist education doctrines and the East German child care system were designed to shape attitudes and behaviors from the earliest ages, but these attempts to prepare citizens for socialist society were never fully implemented. For example, nonparental child care for infants under one year of age proved to be so problematic that the maternity leave period was instead extended, despite ideological commitments to public infant care. Furthermore, the quality of care in the centers was inconsistent; some of the education concepts concerned with the amelioration of deficits were not readily comparable with established caretaking techniques, like play, and were thus mostly neglected whereas strategies intended to promote standardized group behaviors facilitated the regulation of group dynamics and were thus implemented. Even though the majority of the care providers had difficulty neglecting children's apparent needs while honoring philosophical beliefs, they tended to provide care that on occasion included developmentally inappropriate interactions. As a result, infants often failed to develop attachments to care providers, and their family relationships became more important than ever. However, differences in infant-mother and infant–care provider attachments were seen in West Berlin (Rottmann & Ziegenhain, 1988; Ziegenhain & Wollf, 2000) as well as in other Western cultures (see review by Ahnert & Lamb, 2000) suggesting that secure attachments are less likely to occure with a child care provider than with the primary caretaker. Yet, the reform of the East German child care system challenged individual care patterns and restimulated the discussion on improvements in early child care education in all of Germany (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen, und Jugend [BMFSFJ], 1994).

Furthermore, families did not incorporate state-socialist concepts into their childrearing beliefs; they preferred to create their own niches and networks, rather than have the state interfere with their privacy (Ahnert & Schmidt, 1995; Gaus, 1983; Lemke, 1991). Even though East German parents made thorough use of the child care system, they quite successfully socialized their children to be family-oriented and close to their parents as seen in many surveys of adolescents performed shortly after the changes (see review by Walper, 1995). Overall, the socialist society thus failed to reshape the German psyche, although it left preferences and beliefs that appeared East-specific following German reunification. For example, the fact that Eastern women sought paid work even when their jobs were not satisfying, instead of helping their families to adjust

psychosocially, is understandable in light of their past experiences. Likewise, the fact that adolescents in the East claim autonomy for themselves later than Westerners, or that occupational preferences are established earlier by Easterners than by their counterparts in the West may also reflect the system to which they were exposed in early childhood (Silbereisen, 1999).

Research on infant-mother attachments has reported that distributions across attachment categories vary in diverse parts of Germany (Gloger-Tippelt & Huerkamp, 1998; Grossmann, Grossmann, Spangler, Suess, & Unzner, 1985; Spangler & Grossmann, 1993; Spangler & Schieche, 1998; Suess, Grossmann, & Sroufe, 1992; Völker, Keller, Lohaus, Cappenberg, & Chasiotis, 1999), but we were able to focus exclusively on the Berlin area. Comparisons between the patterns of attachment at various points in time revealed remarkable equivalence between East and West in the proportion of secure infant-mother attachments. Insecure patterns differed consistently, however, with insecure-avoidant [A] patterns predominantly in the East and disorganized [D] patterns more common in the West. Children in the East were thus just as likely as children in the West to form secure attachments, but were probably encouraged to establish independence earlier than those in the West. The strikingly high rates of disorganized [D] patterns in West Berlin (only 15% appeared typical in middle-class samples [see van IJzendoorn, Schuengel, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1999]) suggests that infant-mother dyads in the West may continue to experience greater levels of stress than in the East. In addition, the contrast between avoidant and disorganized patterns of insecure infant-mother attachments in East and West may reveal different images of children and different beliefs about the shared roles of parental and non-parental care facilities. For example, parents who enjoy their children but do not like their daily life patterns to be disturbed (Süßmuth, 1990), and parents who seek child care but do not like to share responsibilities with providers in the centers (Rottmann & Ziegenhain, 1988), might have been more common in the West than in the East, where the societal climate allowed parents to make time for their children along their own needs. Why the majority of Eastern parents did not transfer all responsibilities to the centers, as opponents of child care in Germany had assumed, however, is not clear (see Ahnert, Rickert, & Lamb, 2000, for further research).

The sociopolitical changes in 1990–1991 themselves could have fostered problematic child development in both East and West if parents had failed to adjust, although the sources of family tensions at this time clearly differed in the two parts of the city. The results of sociological analyses suggested that Easterners felt betrayed by the years that they had spent in a collapsing system and thus aggressively tried to catch up (Gensicke, 1992), while Westerners felt threatened by the invasion from the East and carefully tried to protect their privileges. After the currency union, the contrast between East and West was further strengthened by such policies as the salary disparity assuring that Easterners were paid 60% of the salary paid to Westerners doing the same work. In addition, Eastern women were forced from the labor market, experiencing blows to their self esteem that clearly affected family functioning, childrearing, and fertility rates. Yearly surveys of well-being among East Germans, however, reveal increased satisfaction (Winkler, 1992, 1995, 1999). After ten years of adjustment by the people of East Germany, therefore, researchers may now need to shift their focus from East-specific experiences to the coping skills and strategies of East <u>and</u> West Germans.

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