Cultural and historical differences in concepts of self and their effects on attitudes toward having and giving

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ABSTRACT - Concepts or self differ between cultures and time periods in terms of the extent to which they are group-based versus individually-based and the extent to which they are based on ascribed characteristics, doing, or having. These differences in the sense of self are shown to have systematic effects on consumer behavior resulting in an increased role for possessions in defining identity in large scale modern cultures.

INTRODUCTION

Epstein (1973) and Brim (1976) have insightfully suggested that our notions of who-we-are are not constant and are more properly regarded as individual theories that we test and revise according to our experience. It follows that these implicit theories of self may differ systematically between cultures and time periods that differ in the social roles and experiences provided for individuals. And inasmuch as possessions are commonly viewed as a part of self (e.g. James 1890, Allport 1937, McClelland 1951, Prelinger 1959, Dixon and Street 1975, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981), it also follows that there may be systematic cross-cultural and cross-temporal differences in consumer behavior that arise from these differences in concepts of self. The following comments provide a preliminary explication of these ideas.

TWO DIMENSIONS OF DIFFERENCE IN CONCEPTS OF SELF

One significant difference in the nature of concepts of self is the degree to which identity is derived from individual traits and actions versus from group traits and actions. This dimension bears a loose resemblance to Mary Douglas' (1970) concept of "group". Within contemporary Western cultures we are most accustomed to assessing the identity of self and others based on individual characteristics such as age, occupation, behavior, and various material symbols of individual status. To a substantially lesser degree we also base inferences about identity on group characteristic such as family background, national historical achievement and public symbols of cultural status (e.g., museums). Just the opposite is true in certain cultures and time periods which differ in the social roles and experiences provided for individuals. And inasmuch as possessions are commonly viewed as a part of self (e.g. James 1890, Allport 1937, McClelland 1951, Prelinger 1959, Dixon and Street 1975, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981), it also follows that there may be systematic cross-cultural and cross-temporal differences in consumer behavior that arise from these differences in concepts of self. The following comments provide a preliminary explication of these ideas.

Perhaps the clearest examples of group dominated concepts of self are the majority of so-called primitive societies. Levy-Bruhl (1927/1966) concluded that "It is scarcely likely that primitives have ever given a form, however indefinite to the more or less implicit idea they may have of their own personality." Kelson (1943) also noted a marked lack ego-consciousness in primitive man as illustrated by the lack of singular forms or usage in many primitive languages.

The plural "we," referring most often to the clan or tribe, is instead used in referring to behaviors, characteristics, and property ownership. Even when the singular form is used, the reference may still be to a larger group. As Best reports:

In studying the customs of the Maori, it is well to ever bear in mind that a native so thoroughly identifies himself with his tribe that he is ever employing the first personal pronoun. In mentioning a fight that occurred possibly...
In historical Western societies Tuan (1982) has also shown the development of an increasingly less shared and more individualistic awareness of self since the middle ages. He cites eight evidences of this trend:

1. Increasing importance of autobiographies,
2. Proliferation of family and self portraits (a trend also noted by Berger, et al. 1972),
3. Growing popularity of mirrors,
4. Recognition of the importance of childhood to the development of personality (changes are detailed by Gadlin 1978),
5. The adoption of individualizing chairs rather than benches,
6. Increasingly private and specialized rooms in the house (also emphasized by Braudel 19671973 and Laslett 1973),
7. More introspective drama and literature, and
8. The development of psychoanalysis.

As Bruner (1951) points out, self prefixes (such as "self-regard") did not appear in English until the rise of individualistic Puritanism in the 17th century. This movement toward greater self-consciousness is a movement away from conceiving of self primarily through group identity. An explanation for this trend may be found in part in the growth of the city with its corresponding increase in cultural anonymity and decrease in the ability for large scale groups to provide a sense of mutual identity (Mumford 1938; Form and Stone 1957).

These same factors contribute to movement on a second dimension of difference in concepts of self: the degree to which identity is ascribed, directly achieved, or indirectly achieved. In small scale and primitive societies, ascribed and directly achieved bases of identity dominate. Ascribed identity involves fixed expectations based on non-chosen traits such as sex, age, and inherited position. When these expectations are strong enough and inflexible enough, the question "who am I?" is not likely to arise because the answer is so automatic and incontrovertible that the individual seems born into an identity. Nevertheless, the question "how good am I at being what I am supposed to be?" remains. Answering this question leads to some directly achieved identity in even the most rigid of ascribed identity societies (termed "strong grid" societies by Douglas 1970; see Hanks 1949 and Douglas and Isherwood 1979). One is judged by self and others to be a good hunter or a good mother or a good chief according to behavioral traits, skills, interests, and accomplishments. In a small scale culture or isolated group these acts and performances are directly observable and known to all significant others. In this sense identity is directly achieved from doing.

In such cases it is possible to intentionally shape identity within the limits imposed by ascribed identity, abilities, and learned skills.

While both ascribed and directly achieved identity are available to varying degrees within large scale contemporary cultures, indirectly achieved identity inferred from symbolic possessions also becomes possible with the increased privacy and anonymity found in these cultures. This identity bias is indirect in that it treats possessions as tangible symbols of success at doing things that are either not visible or are not able to be Judged by an audience of significant others. Thus having is seen as an index of doing. Our clothing, housing, transportation, and other visible consumption is assumed to reflect our values, career success, and personality (Bek, Bahn, and Mayer 1982). In addition to material possessions, achieved titles (e.g. doctor), affiliations (e.g. Harvard), and awards may provide indirectly achieved identity regardless of actual performance. As a result, those with greater access to nonmaterial achievement and titles (e.g. professionals) may feel less need for material achievement as a means of indirectly gaining identity. Those, such as blue collar workers who have less access to non-material achievement and titles, may instead engage in what Chino (1952, 1955) described as compensatory consumption. In this case, material consumption is used as a substitute for the unavailable non-material signs of success.

An additional consequence of large scale society that encourages indirectly achieved identity is that through role specialization our lives become segmented. As Doob (1960) and Bensman and Lilienfeld (1979) note, in primitive societies the family or clan is the producing, consuming, and political unit and there is little role specialization aside from that based on age and sex. Together with the small scale of such societies, this means that the individual is always performing for the same audience and the roles of producer, consumer, family member, religious member, and tribal member merge into a single pervasive role. In contrast, in contemporary Western societies we perform these different roles at different times, in different places, and before different people. While each largely distinct audience is aware of an individual's performance in that one role, they can only be indirectly aware of the individual's performance in other roles. Since a key means of conveying and inferring indirectly achieved identity is through possessions, the use of possessions becomes a means for conveying an image of self that is potentially at variance with actual performance in these other roles. While it is socially acceptable to ask what one "does" for a living, it is not feasible to ask how well one does it. Thus, although wildly discrepant presentations of self may be identified as such by an audience, the individual has a large latitude of choice in the symbolic representations of self that can be successfully conveyed via material and non-material possessions (Goffman 1959; Schlenker 1975, 1978). Not only does increased anonymity across roles allow the presentation of different selves to different others, it also allows a situational segmentation of personal concepts of self (Schenk and Holman 1980). This expanded set of selves requires a broader array of goods that can serve as props or symbols of self in different roles.

None of the preceding discussion is meant to suggest that there is a necessary and linear progression from ascribed and directly achieved group-based identity to indirectly achieved individually-based identity. While this tends to be true in most comparisons of primitive and contemporary cultures, exceptions exist within each type of culture. Furthermore, the historic pattern of indirectly achieved individualism has occasionally reversed as in the dark ages following ancient Greece and Judea (Snell 1953). Nevertheless, there has been a clear tendency for more complex and sizeable cultures to become more individualistic and there are consequences of this individualization for consumer behavior.

**EFFECTS ON CONCEPTS OF SELF ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

**Forms of Ownership**

One correlate of cross-cultural and cross-temporal differences in concepts of self is in the nature of private property. The existence of grave goods in 100,000-year-old Mousterian burial sites (Leaky, 1981) as well as in more recent graves suggests that many moveable goods such as tools, ornaments, and weapons were privately owned even in Paleolithic times. A recent review of archaeological evidence by Alekshin (1983) suggests that ownership of such items differed by age and sex, but that prior to the third millennium B.C. men and women enjoyed nearly equal status in society (i.e. the number and quality of grave goods did not differ for each sex although men might have agricultural tools while women might have food preparation tools). After this time, the richness of grave goods suggests the development of more patriarchal and more socially stratified societies. It is noteworthy that the city, with its greater possibilities for individualization, also began to
Based on a detailed analysis of 285 primitive societies, Hobhouse, Wheeler, and Ginsberg (1915, p. 243) concluded that “private property in personal matters, weapons, dress, ornaments, appears to exist everywhere.” These objects were almost universally found to be regarded as the property of a single individual. This was not the case with food or dwellings, however. These belonged instead to the family, clan, or tribe. For example, a successful hunter or farmer might be expected to share the food he produced with the extended family clan. At the same time the food would not normally be shared with those outside the group.

Property in land is seldom personal in small scale primitive societies. Instead most land is owned by the group, even though usufruct privileges are normally given to individual members or families within the group. In some instances this right can even be passed on to others and traded or sold within the group (although not outside the group). Still the ownership rights are vested with the group, and upon non-use can commonly be re-assigned to another group member. Hobhouse, Wheeler, and Ginsberg (1915) concluded that less than one-tenth of all primitive societies studied had individual ownership of land. When the additional 15 percent feudal ownership and the more than 70 percent ownership by family, clan, or tribe are considered, fewer than five percent of the societies had no concept of land ownership at all.

Furthermore, feudal ownership of land by the chief was usually tantamount to communal ownership since the land was given out for use by clans or families. Both non-ownership and the dominant communal ownership forms were found to be most common among hunter/gatherers, less common among pastoral peoples, and least common among non-nomadic agricultural groups.

Lewinski (1913) suggested that two important factors in this progression toward private land ownership are labor and scarcity. When one invests labor in an object it becomes viewed as a part of self. Locke (1690) made this the basis for his treatise on property and government. Not until there is some system of labor payment is the investment of labor in land likely to be divorced from land ownership sentiments (Marx 1844/1975; Veblen 1898/1937; Elwood 1927). Prior to such development it is likely that the more labor is invested inland and the longer it has been used, the more it is viewed as private property. When the land is worked communally and harvests are shared with the group, it is natural that group ownership should emerge rather than individual ownership (Firth 1959).

Where individual ownership or usufruct privileges in land did exist, it was normally attached to the ascribed characteristic of being male. Not infrequently a wife could not inherit a man's property. At death the land not bequeathed automatically to a son was reallocated by the chief or elders. The principle of primogeniture (or occasionally ulteriority) meant that the land would pass intact to the family group without being fractionated. Thus, like food and housing, land was likely to be community property in small scale primitive societies. This is true only within the constricted nuclear family in large scale contemporary western cultures.

Distribution of Possessions

A second correlate of differences in concepts of self across cultures and time periods is in the extent to which ownership of consumer goods is concentrated versus dispersed throughout society. Since all societies have unequal distributions of directly achieved status, it is conceivable that this could be used to gain control over more resources and goods. However, all societies must deal with the envy that such an unequal distribution of possessions might provoke (Schoeck 1966). Envy that is unchecked might lead to anything from the evil eye and curses to vandalism and murder (Belk 1983). Foster (1972) lists four devices that might be used by one who fears the envy of others:

1. concealment of envy-provoking possessions,
2. denial (e.g. “Oh, it's really nothing”),
3. the “sop” (symbolic sharing—e.g. tipping, “My house is your house”), and
4. true sharing.

While some primitive societies engage in concealment of affluence in intentionally modest houses (Douglas 1972) and eating in secrecy, the difficulty of concealment in small scale societies encourages use of the other means of envy avoidance to a much greater degree than in large scale societies. This wish to not stand out is found for instance in the majority of primitive houses which follow traditional design and differ little between members of the community (Duly 1979). Duly also notes the lack of privacy and functionally specialized rooms that characterize native dwellings. This would seem to be a direct reflection of sense of self. So would the use of sharing to reduce the envy of others in small scale societies and to redistribute wealth in a way that precludes great wealth accumulation.

The traditional view of wealth accumulation, seen largely from the perspective of modern materialistic cultures, is that primitive hunter-gatherers have to work so hard to eke out a living that they are unable to accumulate the health that is possible to some degree in herding-pastoral Societies and more fully possesive have few personal possessions and move camps carrying less than a modern backpacker (Lee 1979, p. 445), this need neither reflect poverty nor a desperate state of struggling for survival. Instead, as Sahlin (1972) demonstrates, hunter-gatherer scribes like the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert may have much more free time (after performing all work functions) than modern Western peoples. This freedom from work comes partly from an abundant environment, but comes at least as much from wanting fewer material possessions. In fact, given what mobility is essential in such a culture, unnecessary possessions are viewed as a hindrance. Furthermore, in such a self-sufficient non-segmented society, possessions are not needed to cultivate a sense of self. Individuals whose identity comes from doing and who know that they can make another tool or implement should the need arise, need not seek security in having a large array of possessions. In modern cultures with division of labor and less access to directly achieved identity, the self confidence provided by having an array of possessions may largely substitute for the security derived from the knowledge and skills to be self-sufficient.

If hunter-gatherer societies choose free time over wealth accumulation, the same cannot be said of other primitive societies. For numerous pastoral societies the number of cattle owned was a measure of wealth (e.g. Einzig 1966; Kardiner 1939; Netting 1977; Shapera 1928). But while the potential for prestige generation is present in accumulation of cattle, the social system could still constrain or preclude these uses. For instance, Schapera (1928) notes that in South Africa if a tribal member grew too wealthy the chief would take his herds, thereby removing the prestige incentive to accumulate wealth. Einzig (1966) observed that, presumably because wealth in herds is utilitarian and visible, accumulations of livestock by an individual were expected to be shared with others in the tribe in times of need. The chief also, while able to accumulate wealth through his own herds without fear of confiscation, often received greater status and support by giving his wealth to tribal members in need or who had rendered some service to the tribe. Dalton (1961) suggests that a primary constraint against unshared accumulation of wealth in a primitive society is the fact that the community is too small to provide anonymity.

In agricultural primitive societies, vegetable foods replace animal foods as the primary early form of wealth. The hypothesis that envy avoidance in small scale societies prevents wealth accumulation and greatly unequal distribution of wealth is challenged by the food accumulation practices of the Trobriand Islanders of Hesian New Guinea, described by Malinowski (1922/1950) and others. In this society yams are harvested in far greater abundance than each household can consume and stored with obvious display intent in open, roofed pens or warehouses. Care is taken to display the best yams most visibly. For the most part the stored yams are left until the next harvest when they are thrown out to allow display of newer yams. The same competitive wealth acquisition is almost universally found to be regarded as the property of a single individual. This was not the case with food or dwellings, however. These belonged instead to the family, clan, or tribe. For example, a successful hunter or farmer might be expected to share the food he produced with the extended family clan. At the same time the food would not normally be shared with those outside the group.
However another Trobriand Island custom, that of Kula exchange, shows that wealth can be accumulated and valued without resulting in greatly unequal distribution of possessions. Kula exchange occurs between persons and villages and involves certain highly valued but largely nonutilitarian objects such as ceremonial axes, necklaces, rare shells, and other ornaments. While Kula exchange brings prestige and honor to the new possessor of such an item, possession is only temporary. Like a traveling athletic trophy, items involved in Kula exchange are re-circulated or exchanged for something else after not more than a year or two of possession. As a result of this obligation to keep valued objects in circulation, wealth does not remain concentrated and identity derives more from the act of exchange than from the possession of valued objects.

There are other indications that Trobrianders do not engage in wealth accumulation for the same reasons that a modern capitalist might. Some of the labor applied to the fields and to canoe building is communal. Wealth alone is not a means to rank; positions of tribal power are based on being able to attract loyal followers who will help fill food warehouses that can be used by such a "big man" to display to and to redistribute to followers at the lavish feasts which he organizes. Since others compete to attract followers, the big man often "... becomes miserly, consumes less food than anyone else, and works harder to set an example. Prestige, not a higher standard of living, is his reward" (Farb and Armelagos 1980, p. 152). Sahlins (1963) notes that by contrast, Polynesian chiefs who were born to their positions do enjoy a higher standard of living than others, more in the manner of feudal lords. But like big men, these chiefs and kings built storehouses that they filled with goods to redistribute to people in times of need (Malo 1903). The same sort of noblesse oblige seems to be present in many primitive agricultural societies (Coblentz 1965; Flannery 1972). The result is that even though the society may be two or three tiered in terms of prestige, the distribution of possessions is not still markedly different (thanks to redistribution), envy is curbed, and the group sense of self is exalted through the group's identification with a revered leader. (This same "they are us" orientation may explain contemporary tendencies to tolerate extravagant consumption by leaders, sports figures, and media stars with whom we may identify.)

Clearer inequalities in the distribution of wealth and possessions emerged in the Middle Ages in Europe. As Mason (1981) documents, conspicuous consumption by feudal lords and the clergy was common during this period. It was so common among the aristocracy that sumptuary laws were passed regulating permissible foods and clothing so that excessive conspicuous consumption would not become too wasteful and so that the distinctiveness of the few who were allowed to wear certain colors and fabrics and to eat certain foods would be assured. Similar developments had occurred in earlier classical Greece and Rome. A small merchant and craftsmen class began to emerge during these periods, but there was very little vertical mobility and status was still largely ascribed. With no formal education system, membership in the new middle class was largely inherited (Fallers 1984). This meant that conspicuous consumption was largely a means of competing horizontally (within class) and the primary bases for identity remained ascribed and (to a lesser degree given the growing scale of society) directly achieved. With the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism, several factors combined to encourage conspicuous consumption on a broader scale. The greater opportunity for social mobility makes such consumption a more viable means to express, confirm, and solidify one's social status. Because movement to larger cities for employment breaks down the extended nuclear family, there is less ascribed and directly achieved identity available and there are less effective group sanctions against invidious distinction. And because a larger city involves more segmented roles, greater anonymity (outside of immediate neighborhood or group), and a greater opportunity to present a potentially false sense of what one does, there is both reason and method to seek identity through possessions.

While various critics had long attacked the resulting inequalities in distributions of goods and the luxury expenditures of the wealthy (see Belk 1983), it was Veblen (1899) who first pointed out the ways in which conspicuous consumption and conspicuous waste could be used to assert and solidify status. Various authors have attempted to describe how conspicuous consumption may have changed in extent and form since Veblen's time (e.g. Steiner and Weiss 1951; Brooks 1979), but the fact that it has become a much more mass phenomenon rather than a practice restricted to the very rich, may be the most significant change (Mason 1981). Since an increasing proportion of all people now have the means, reasons, and abilities to use consumption as a means to assert and communicate identity and since re search shows that these messages about self tend to be well understood (Belk, Bahn, and Mayer 1982), it seems likely that consumption symbolism will continue to grow in importance rather than decline as some have suggested (e.g. Blumberg 1974, 1980; Felson 1976, 1978).

Gift Giving

A third correlate of cultural and historical differences is self concepts is in the purposes served by gift-giving. Gift-giving in various forms is prevalent in all known cultures. To be so ubiquitous it seems likely that there are certain common motivations for gift-giving even though other motivations, including identity-seeking, may affect its forms and functions. Two of these common motivations already discussed are to reduce envy and affect a redistribution of wealth. Perhaps another universal gift-giving motive, suggested by Isaacs (1935), is that "to be able to give is not to need" (p. 73). While this motivation is a symbolic one in Isaacs' view, a more controversial interpretation has been suggested recently from a sociobiological inclusive fitness perspective. In this perspective, gift-giving is seen as "reciprocal altruism" (Trivers 1971) in which one gives to others to secure the implicit promise and obligation of receiving reciprocal gifts and help from the present recipients when it is needed. The controversial aspect of this doctrine is less that it assumes a coldly rational gift-giver than that it pre-supposes an inherently individualistic basis for self.

When concept of self is group-based rather than individual-based, gift-giving within the clan or family takes on a unique meaning. Under these circumstances, giving to others may be seen as giving to oneself. Something of this motivation may be seen in the self-elation felt in presenting a son or daughter with a gift that makes them obviously happy. From the child's perspective the gift is self-enhancing because it fulfills a want, but more importantly, because the care in selecting such a gift shows that he/she is seen as a valued person and a valued part of the family group. From the parental giver's point of view, altruism and egoism merge because group-based identity is enlarged as the welfare of any group member is enlarged.

As the preceding example suggests, group-based identity is not totally lacking in the modern world. However, compared to smaller scale primitive societies the more restricted and segmented sense of self in modern industrial societies allows or forces a different type of giving to those outside of the immediate nuclear family. In such giving, gratifying the needs of the recipient brings the giver no satisfaction unless it also gratifies the needs of the giver in some way. One such way is through the successful presentation of self communicated through the characteristics of the gift selected. In one study (Belk 1979) comparing gift characteristics to self concepts of the giver and to perceived recipient characteristics, it was found that the giver's ideal self concept was most reflected in the characteristics of the gift chosen, followed by the giver's present self concept and only thirdly by the perceived characteristics of the recipient. This suggests that contemporary gift-giving may be more a means of enhancing the giver's concept of self than of means of enhancing a group-based identity.

A seeming exception to the hypothesis that identity in small scale cultures derives more from ascribed identity and doing rather than from having, is the potlatch custom of the Kwakuitl Indians and certain other tribes of the Northwest Coast of North America. This practice consists of ceremonious feasts given by a chief or other important person in which the main apparent goal is to humble rival guests by presenting them with food and presents that cannot later be reciprocated at a similar feast given by the guest. In addition, prestige is won by such materially contemptuous acts as destroying possessions, burning one's house, and killing one's slaves As with the big men of Melanesia, such acts of consumption require savings and personal sacrifices while possessions are accumulated. Among the Tingit, for example, it was rare to give as many as seven potlatches in a lifetime and no one is known to have given more (Oberg 1937/1973). While the intervening
accumulation and concentration of possessions might seem to involve seeking identity through having, two factors argue against this interpretation. One is that the potlatch results in a redistribution of wealth to more nearly equal levels and that the act itself shows a contempt for wealth that involves envy-reducing elements of denial, a sop, and true sharing. The other important factor to note is that all prestige involved in the potlatch accrues from what is done with possessions; merely having possessions counts for nothing.

**SUMMARY**

This paper has proposed that one key to understanding the differing attitudes toward possessions, conspicuous consumption, and gift-giving by different cultures and historical periods is the way in which self concept is defined. In small scale cultures identity tends to be group-based, ascribed, and directly achieved. In such a society possessions are not a source of prestige or other attributions to self. There are few differences in the number of quality of possessions owned and much ownership is group rather than individual. Gift-giving is a means of establishing and affirming social linkages, redistributing wealth to curb envy, and giving to extended self (due to feelings of affinity with others in the group).

In larger scale society anonymity and segmented roles lead to identities that are more individually based and indirectly achieved. Having becomes a substitute for doing. Conspicuous consumption is greater due to increased social mobility, less effective group sanctions against invidious distinction, and greater ability for possessions to convey a potentially false sense of what one does. The decline in group-based identity may also lead to situation-specific presentations of self with differing material props in each. Gift-giving becomes another means of conveying concept of self outside of the diminished family group.

Thus a primary distinction in moving from small scale to large scale culture is the increased use of possessions to help regain a lost sense of self. Other coping strategies are likely to involve the use of fractionalized subgroups to serve as smaller scale bases for identity and the identification with neighborhoods, places, formal groups, and states or nations to serve as less interpersonal anchors for the self. Although other factors must also be considered to fully explain differences in having and giving across cultures and time periods, and although possessions are only one of several modern bases for identity, the relationship between concept of self and macro-consumption practices is a rich one and deserves exploration.

**REFERENCES**


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Such values impact their attitudes regarding

the behaviour type hold to be aptest and most defective in a particular situation. Comprehending people having diverse cultural backgrounds is possible by developing an insight into the value systems or systems based on perception which they many have developed by means of their lives rooted in the culture of thin own. This indicates that cultural disparities from different orientations as people’s behavioural patterns. That apart, it is not merely national culture which impacts the values. Solid citizens may not get smooth promotion and have no great chances of getting a promotion despite about their job performance those workers who collaborate with them. The concepts like self-actualization Given that this conference brings together people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to fashion a more credible, influential and unified voice for civil society at the level of international governance, it is essential for all participants to be mindful of the multiplicity of cultural and linguistic challenges that may enhance or impede intercultural understanding. When interlocutors share the same cultural backgrounds and experiences, their communication is facilitated. They are more likely to jump to the same conclusions. Conference participants must be attentive and responsive to cultural differences in speakers’ use of traditional communicative styles that employ narratives of the past as a way to illuminate current issues. People have had to elaborate their own behavioral standards and to find their way around in an evolving situation. Obviously, the young people turned out to be more interested in and open to new practices and transformations than were people of the older generation. Today’s young generation is an indicator of the social and economic alterations that have occurred since the turn of the century. The practical significance of this research consists in the measurement of inter-generational differences in cultural values and economic attitudes. At first glance, it may seem that this article does not fit into the subject matter of a publication about psychology, but categories like cultural values and economic attitudes are psychological constructs.