

# When Do People Believe in Socialism?

Testing Hypotheses for Germany with the ALLBUS  
(German General Social Survey)


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## Questions to be addressed

During its 40 years of existence, a major goal of the GDR („German Democratic Republic“, the Communist part of Germany) was to bring about a belief in a socialist world view and to instigate citizens to contribute to the establishment of a socialist state. The present paper asks two questions:

- **To what extent did the GDR succeed in bringing about a belief in socialism. In this presentation this means: to what extent did a belief in socialism survive unification on October 3, 1990?**
- **How can success or failure in establishing a belief in socialism be explained?**



**It is striking that these questions have not yet been addressed in the literature – or did I overlook references?**

To answer the questions **three hypotheses** are proposed and tested with the **ALLBUS** (the German general social survey).



## Contents of the Presentation

- Three propositions explaining the belief in socialism
- Description of the data set used to test the propositions: this is the cumulated Allbus 1991 to 2010
- Measurement of the variables
- Some findings
- Some notes on the application of rational choice theory to explain the belief in socialism (ONLY BRIEFLY)
- Discussion



# Theory: Explaining the Belief in Socialism

## 1. The Socialization Proposition

The GDR took numerous measures to create "socialist personalities," for example:

- Founding of socialist organizations (e.g. FDJ);
- centralization of the media to propagate the views of the party;
- monopoly of the socialist party SED;
- establishing an extensive surveillance system;
- getting children early under the influence of a socialist education (kindergarten, schools);
- permanent propaganda praising the blessings of socialism;
- blocking contacts to West Germany and to other capitalist states (no freedom of traveling, blocking availability of media).



**A success of these measures is to be expected under two conditions:**

- Those who advance the belief in socialism have a high status and are thus trustworthy.
- The beliefs can be validated (i.e. are consistent with the facts).

Both conditions were **given at the founding phase of the GDR.**

The **conditions changed** later (from the mid-seventies onwards) AND after unification.

**Here is a summary of the predictions:**




Thus, the socialization efforts in the GDR should have had some impact:

**Prediction 1:** The overall average belief in socialism shortly after unification is higher for those born in East than for those born in West Germany.

After unification, new beliefs were propagated by West German politicians (with high status like Helmut Kohl). We thus expect:

**Prediction 2:** The more time after unification has passed, the lower becomes the belief in socialism for those born in East Germany. For those born in West Germany the belief in socialism should slightly decrease (there was never a socialization to a socialist world view – but institutional failure became more apparent after unification – see below).




Assuming that the conditions for acquiring beliefs in socialism were more favorable in the first phase of the GDR and that belief change is rather costly we expect:

***Prediction 3:***

- (a) Those who were born **early under Communist rule** have a stronger belief in socialism than those who were born shortly before or shortly after unification.
- (b) For those who were **born in West Germany** the belief in socialism should not depend on year of birth.





**Catholicism and Protestantism** were to some extent a competing world view to socialism – see the role of the church in socialism and the pressure of persecution of those holding a Christian world view.

***Prediction 4:*** Members of the Catholic or Protestant church will have weaker beliefs in socialism than those who were not members of any denomination.



# Summary of the socialization proposition

## The belief in socialism is

- East > West
  - Socialization efforts were strong in East Germany, not in West Germany.
- declining after unification in the East (less in the West)
  - Socialization stopped in the East after unification.
- for early born East Germans > for later born East Germans
  - Conditions for acquiring beliefs in socialism were more favorable in the first phase of the GDR. Assumption of „inertia“ of beliefs.
  - Year of birth is irrelevant for West Germans.
- Catholics/Protestants < no religious affiliation.
  - Christian religion is to a large extent a competing world view to socialism.



## 2. The Perception of Institutional Failure Proposition

As time went by it turned out that the promises of socialism were inconsistent with the facts. This discrepancy between facts and beliefs was cognitively unpleasant. I assume:

**The stronger the perception of institutional failure was, the weaker was the belief in socialism.**

The ALLBUS does not include indicators for perceived institutional failure.


I take **proxies** and make the following **assumptions**:



Two predictions are made:

A **first assumption** is that those who think that unification has more advantages for the East perceive that socialism is in need of improvement and, thus, perceived institutional failure. Thus:

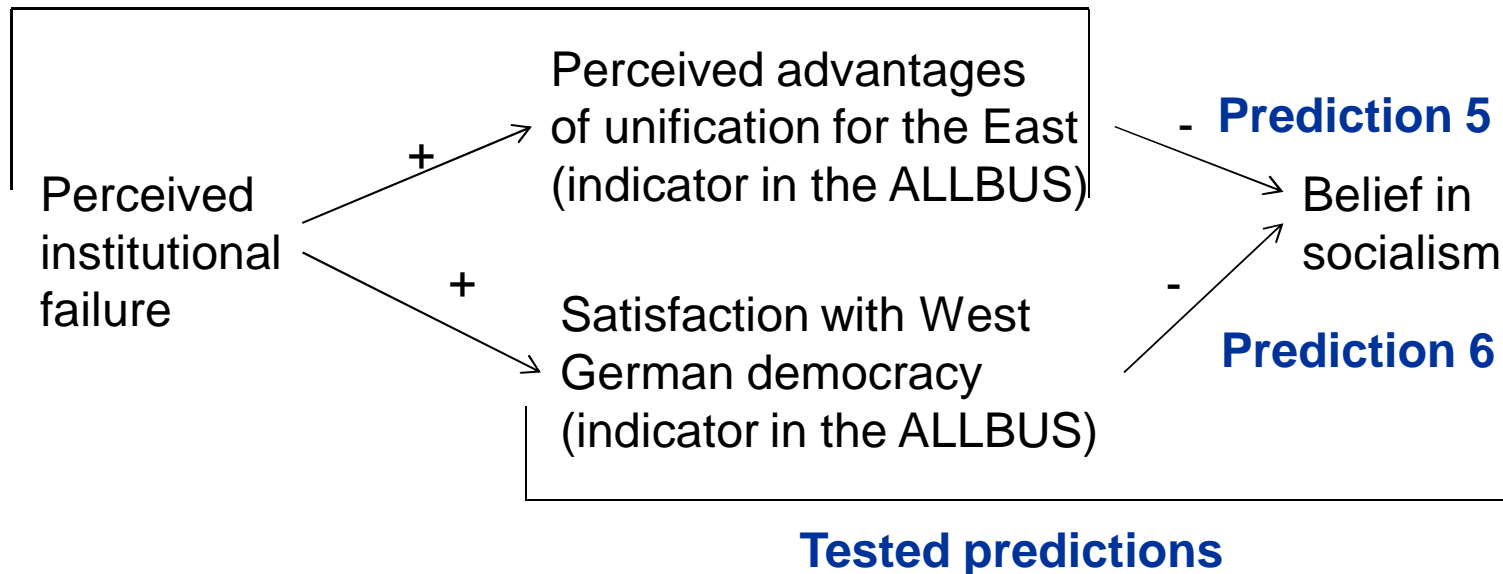
**Prediction 5:** The stronger the belief that unification has more advantages for the East, the higher is perceived institutional failure and, in consequence, the lower is the belief in socialism.



A **second assumption** is that **satisfaction with German democracy** is an indicator for perceived institutional failure of socialism. The prediction thus is:

**Prediction 6:** The stronger the satisfaction with German democracy, the stronger is the perception of institutional failure of socialism and the lower is the belief in socialism.

**Untested assumptions** to measure perceived institutional failure:



If this model is correct we would expect that the **values of the indicators increased after unification** – due to the exposure to the failures of socialism. Exactly this is the case.



### 3. The Status Deprivation Proposition

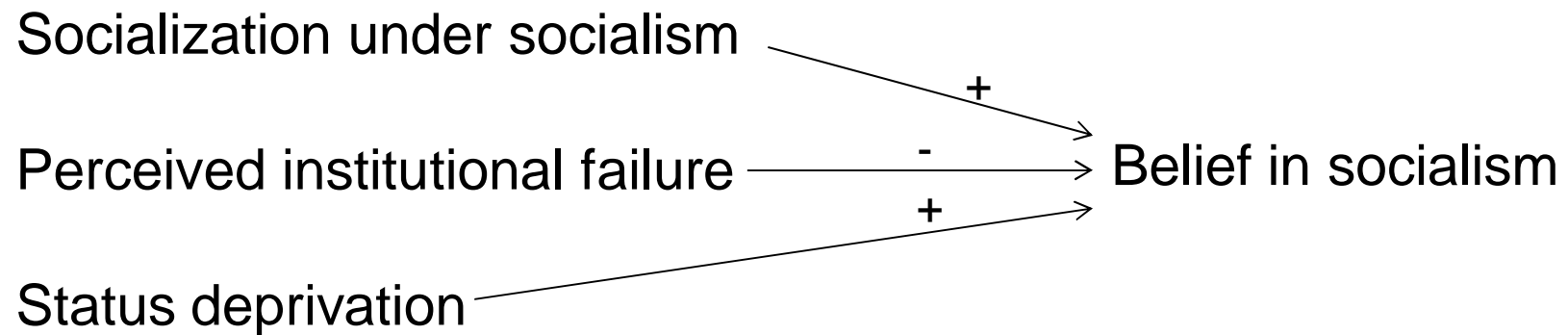
**General proposition:** Institutions are preferred when they meet individuals' needs, i.e. when they are most advantageous to them.

**A socialist society** is in the interest of those who lack resources (like education) and entrepreneurial skills and inclinations. A **capitalist society** is preferred by those who are resourceful, have entrepreneurial skills and inclinations (and, thus, do not wish to be restricted to a large extent by state regulations).

The **status deprivation proposition** holds:

**The lower the social status of individuals is, the more they believe in socialism.**

## Summary of the propositions:







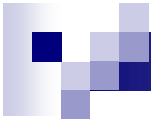
## The Data Set

The **ALLBUS** surveys (General Social Survey of Germany) are conducted for the united Germany **since 1991** (unification occurred on October 3, 1990).

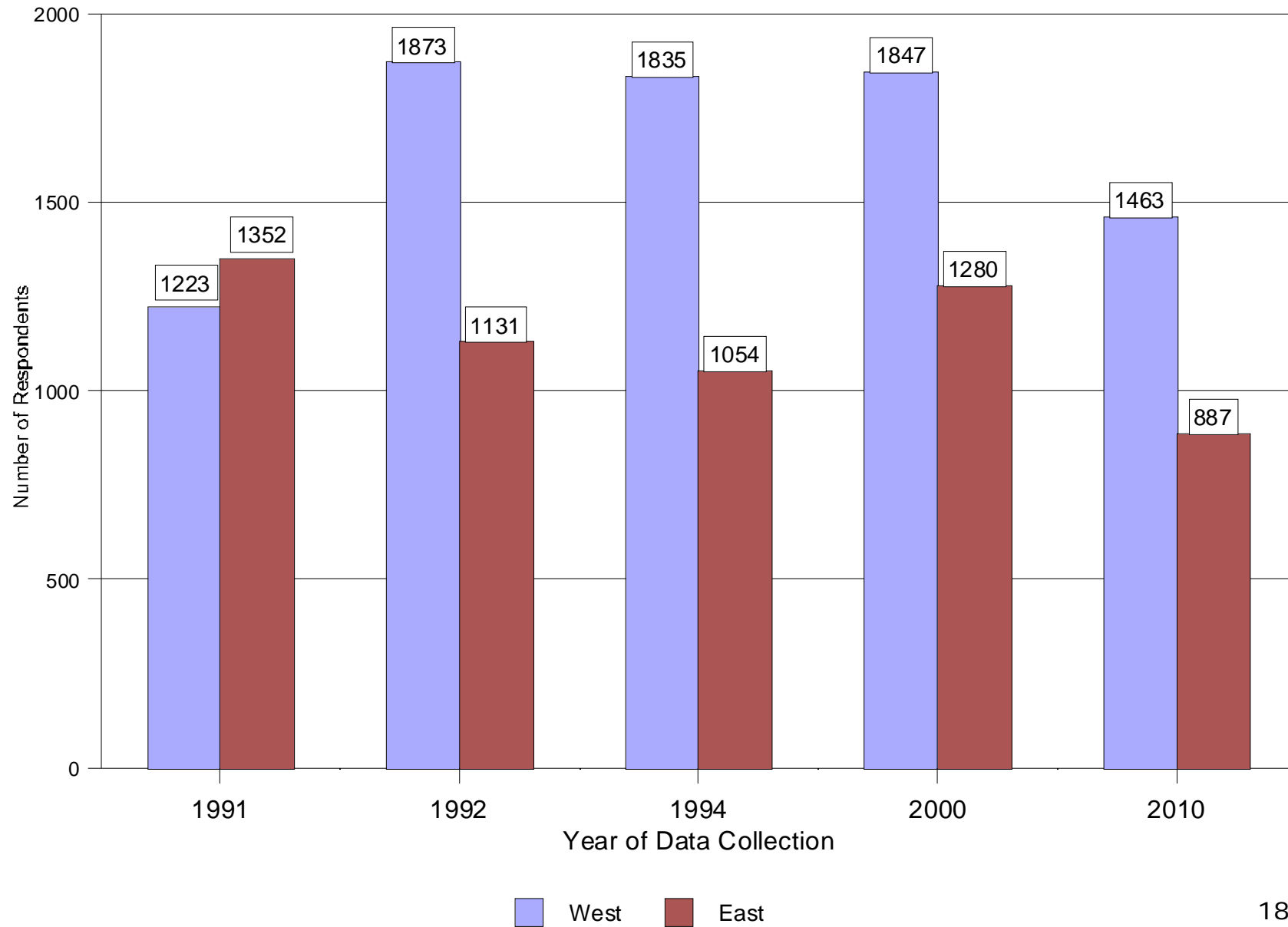
There are **five surveys** where the major item for measuring belief in socialism and a major independent variable – birth place – have been measured: 1991, 1992, 1994, 2000, 2010.

I use the **cumulated ALLBUS**.

The surveys are **not panel studies** but samples of different populations.



**Figure 1: Number of Respondents, for West and East Germany, ALLBUS 1991-2010**





## Measurement

The **dependent variable** is the following item.

**„Der Sozialismus ist im Grunde eine gute Idee, die nur schlecht ausgeführt wurde.“**

Antwortkategorien: 1 Stimme voll zu, 2 Stimme eher zu, 3 Stimme eher nicht zu, 4 Stimme überhaupt nicht zu. (Es erfolgte **Rekodierung** – **hohe Werte = starker "belief"**, Wertebereich 0 bis 3.)

**Basically, socialism is a good idea that was only badly carried out.**

Answer categories: strongly agree (1), rather agree (2), rather disagree (3), strongly disagree (4). **Recoded** from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree). High values = strong belief.



## What is the meaning of „socialism“?

Assumption: with „socialism“ Germans associate the version of socialism of the GDR, in particular:

- Means of production are state property
- Central economic planning
- Extensive welfare state.

**Prediction 1:** those who belief in socialism should believe in the welfare state to a high extent.

NEXT TABLE confirms this

## ENGLISH Items measuring the belief in the welfare state:

Items from the ALLBUS	r with „belief in socialism” <sup>2</sup>	Factor loading <sup>3</sup>
(1) The <b>state must take care that each citizen has a workplace</b> and that the prices are stable, even if this must restrict the freedom of entrepreneurs. 4 do not agree at all. Recoded: 4 strongly agree.	.25	.58
(2) The <b>state must take care that the elderly have a decent life if there is illness</b> , misery, and unemployment. 4 do not agree at all. Recoded: 4 fully agree.	.19	.56
(3) What is your opinion: Should <b>welfare benefits be cut in the future</b> or should the present situation not be changed, or should welfare benefits be extended? 4 should be extended. No recoding.	.19	.56
(4) The <b>economic profits</b> are distributed in Germany nowadays <b>on the whole in a just way</b> . 4 do not agree at all. Recoded: 4 fully agree.	-.26	-.55
(5) In Germany there still exist the old conflicts between the wealthy and working people. The <b>personal situation depends on whether one is member of the upper or lower class</b> . 4 do not agree at all. Recoded: 4 fully agree.	.30	.55
(6) I think that the <b>social differences in our country are, by and large, just</b> . 4 do not agree at all. Recoded: 4 fully agree.	-.23	-.64
(7) <b>Dependent variable:</b> Basically, socialism is a good idea that was only badly implemented. (1) strongly agree, (2) rather agree, (3) rather disagree, (4) strongly disagree. Recoded from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree).	-	.47

**Notes:** With the exception of item 3 all items were coded so that high values mean strong agreement (and not, as in the original data set, strong disagreement). The recoding is more reader friendly.

1 Translated by the author.

2 The bivariate Pearson correlations of the socialism item and the items (1) to (6) were taken from the correlation matrix produced in the factor analysis. All coefficients are significant at least on the .001 level.

3 We used Unweighted Least Squares (ULS) with Varimax rotation. N=1488.

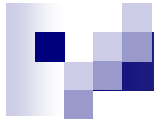
Fragen des Allbus zur Bedeutung des Ausdrucks „Sozialismus“<sup>1</sup>

	r mit „Glaube an den Sozialismus“ <sup>1</sup>	Faktorladung <sup>2</sup>
(1) Der <b>Staat muß dafür sorgen, daß jeder Arbeit</b> hat und die Preise stabil bleiben, auch wenn deswegen die Freiheiten der Unternehmer eingeschränkt werden müssen. 4 stimme stark zu.	.25	.58
(2) Der <b>Staat muß dafür sorgen, daß man auch bei Krankheit, Not, Arbeitslosigkeit und im Alter ein gutes Auskommen hat.</b> V178 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu recoded: 4 stimme voll zu.	.19	.56
(3) Wie ist Ihre Meinung: Sollten die <b>Sozialleistungen in Zukunft</b> gekürzt werden oder sollte es so bleiben, wie es ist, oder sollte man die Sozialleistungen <b>ausweiten</b> ? 4 sollten ausgeweitet werden.	.19	.56
(4) Die wirtschaftlichen <b>Gewinne</b> werden heute in Deutschland (1984: in der Bundesrepublik) <b>im großen und ganzen gerecht verteilt.</b> 4 stimme voll zu.	-.26	-.55
(5) In Deutschland (1984: In der Bundesrepublik) bestehen noch die alten Gegensätze zwischen Besitzenden und Arbeitenden. Die <b>persönliche Stellung hängt davon ab, ob man zu der oberen oder unteren Klasse gehört.</b> 4 stimme voll zu.	.30	.55
(6) Ich finde die <b>sozialen Unterschiede in unserem Land im großen und ganzen gerecht.</b> 4 stimme voll zu.	-.23	-.64
(7) <b>Abhängige Variable:</b> Der Sozialismus ist im Grunde eine gute Idee, die nur schlecht ausgeführt wurde.“ 4 stimme voll zu.	-	.47


**Anmerkung:** Mit der Ausnahme von Frage 3 sind alle Fragen so kodiert, dass hohe Werte hohe Zustimmung (und nicht, wie im Datensatz, hohe Ablehnung) bedeuten. Die Rekodierung ist leserfreundlicher.

1 Die bivariaten Pearson-Korrelationen der Sozialismus-Frage und der Fragen (1) bis (6) sind der Korrelationsmatrix entnommen, die bei der Faktoranaly ausgegeben wurde. Alle Koeffizienten sind signifikant auf dem .001 Niveau.

2 Wir verwendeten Unweighted Least Squares (ULS) mit Varimax-Rotation. N=1488.



**Prediction 2:** If the socialism item measures socialism as it was implemented in the GDR we would expect that **those who subscribe to a socialist world view would be inclined to vote for „The Left“ („Die Linke“)**, the successor party of the communist party (SED). This party still advances views that were common in the GDR.



In the **Sunday question** (included in the ALLBUS) – if there is an election next Sunday: which party would you give your (second) vote? – **belief in socialism should correlate with voting for the left.**

Those who intend to vote for the Christian democrats (CDU) have an average belief in socialism of 1.22 (N=3830). The average belief of those who want to vote for the Social Democrats (SPD) is 1.70 (N=5041) – this is the same figure as for the Green Party (N=1642).

**The prospective voters of „Die Linke“ have, as expected, the strongest belief in socialism, it is 2.44 (N=910).**



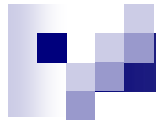


Table 1: Messung der Variablen

Name der Variable	Interviewfragen zur Messung der Variablen
<b>Abhängige Variable</b>	
Einstellung zum Sozialismus	Den Befragten wurde folgende Behauptung vorgegeben: „Der Sozialismus ist im Grunde eine gute Idee, die nur schlecht ausgeführt wurde.“ Antwortkategorien: 1 Stimme voll zu, 2 Stimme eher zu, 3 Stimme eher nicht zu, 4 Stimme überhaupt nicht zu. Es erfolgte eine Rekodierung, so dass hohe Werte eine positive Einstellung zum Sozialismus bedeuten.
<b>Unabhängige Variablen</b>	
Geburtsort Ostdeutschland	Befragte wurden gebeten anzugeben, in welchem Bundesland sie geboren waren. Befragte wurden gebeten anzugeben, in welchem Bundesland sie geboren waren. Die Antworten wurden so kodiert, dass 0 bedeutet „geboren in den alten Bundesländern“ und 1 „geboren in den neuen Bundesländern“.
Geburtsjahr	Diese Variable wird als quantitative und als kategorisierte Variable verwendet (siehe den Text). Hohe Werte der Variablen bedeuten, dass Befragte relativ <i>spät</i> geboren wurden (hohe Jahreszahlen).
Jahr der Datenerhebung	Der Allbus enthält die abhängige Variable in den Umfragen von 1991, 1992, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2006 und 2010. Der Geburtsort bzw. das Bundesland, in dem der Befragte geboren wurde, wurde nicht 1996, 1998 und 2006 gemessen. Das der Geburtsort in allen Analysen vorkommt, sind dies die Umfragen, die im Folgenden verwendet werden.
Religionszugehörigkeit	Die Frage zu Religionszugehörigkeit wurde in drei Dummy Variablen umgewandelt: Katholisch, Protestantisch, and keine Religionszugehörigkeit (jeweils 0 und 1).
<i>Wahrgenommenes Institutionenversagen</i>	
Vorteile der Wiedervereinigung für Ostdeutschland	Befragten wurden zwei Behauptungen vorgegeben, denen sie mehr oder weniger zustimmen konnten: (1) „Die Wiedervereinigung hat für die Bürger in den alten Bundesländern mehr Vorteile als Nachteile gebracht“ und (2) „Die Wiedervereinigung hat für die Bürger in den neuen Bundesländern mehr Vorteile als Nachteile gebracht.“ Vier Antwortkategorien waren „stimme voll zu“, „stimme eher zu“, „stimme eher nicht zu“, „stimme überhaupt nicht zu“. Die Antworten wurden so rekodiert, dass hohe Werte hohe Zustimmung bedeuten. Die Werte für das erste Item wurden von den Werten des zweiten Items subtrahiert. Hohe Werte bedeuten also, dass mehr Vorteile der Vereinigung für Ost- als für Westdeutschland wahrgenommen wurden.
Zufriedenheit mit der Demokratie in Deutschland	Befragten wurde die folgende Frage gestellt: „Wie zufrieden oder unzufrieden sind Sie – alles in allem – mit der Demokratie, so wie sie in Deutschland besteht?“ Sechs Antwortkategorien waren vorgegeben, von „sehr zufrieden“ bis „sehr unzufrieden“. Die Antwortkategorien wurden so kodiert, dass hohe Werte hohe Zufriedenheit bedeuteten.
Status- Deprivation	Die folgenden drei Interviewfragen wurden einer Faktorenanalyse unterzogen (ULS, Varimax Rotation): (1) Im Vergleich dazu, wie andere hier in Deutschland leben: Glauben Sie, dass Sie Ihren gerechten Anteil an den angenehmen Dingen des Lebens erhalten, mehr als Ihren gerechten Anteil, etwas weniger, oder sehr viel weniger? Mögliche Antworten waren: 1 sehr viel weniger, 2 etwas weniger, 3 gerechten Anteil, 4 mehr als gerechten Anteil. (2) In unserer Gesellschaft gibt es Bevölkerungsgruppen, die eher oben stehen, und solche, die eher unten stehen. Wir haben hier eine Skala, die von oben nach unten verläuft. Wenn Sie an sich selbst denken: Wo auf dieser Skala würden Sie sich einordnen? Die Skala reichte von 1 (unten) bis 10 (oben). (3) Der dritte Indikator ist das Nettoeinkommen, das durch eine offene Frage gemessen wurde. Die Faktorenanalyse ergab einen einzigen Faktor (35.5% erklärte Varianz). Von den Faktorwerten wurde eine Skala konstruiert. Diese wurde so kodiert, dass hohe Werte hohe Status Deprivation bedeuten.



Table 1: Measurement of the Variables

Name of Variable	Items to measure the variable
<b>Dependent variable:</b>	
<i>Belief in socialism</i>	Respondents were presented with the statement: „Basically, socialism is a good idea that was only badly carried out.” Answer categories: strongly agree (1), rather agree (2), rather disagree (3), strongly disagree (4). The variable was recoded so that <i>high values refer to a strong belief in socialism</i> .
<b>Independent Variables</b>	
<i>Born in East Germany</i>	Respondents were asked in which of the German states they were born. Code 0: not born in the new states (the former GDR), i.e. born in West Germany; code 1: born in the new states (the former GDR).
<i>Year of birth</i>	This variable is used as a quantitative variable as well as a categorized variable (see the text). <i>High values mean late birth (close to unification in 1990)</i> .
<i>Year of data collection</i>	The ALLBUS surveys that included the dependent variable were conducted in 1991, 1992, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2006 and 2010. Whether a respondent was born in the GDR or West Germany was not measured in 1996, 1998 and 2006. Since „year of birth“ is used in all analyses we analyze most of the time the <i>surveys from 1991, 1992, 1994, 2000 and 2010</i> .
<i>Religious affiliation</i>	The question on religious affiliation was transformed into three dummy variables, each with 0/1 (no/yes): catholic, protestant, and no religious affiliation.
<i>Perceived institutional failure</i>	
Advantages of unification for East Germany	Respondents were presented with two items. They could first indicate the extent to which they thought that unification had more advantages than disadvantages for the citizens in the <i>East</i> . Respondents were further asked whether they thought that unification had more advantages than disadvantages for the citizens in the <i>West</i> . The four answer categories for each item ranged from „fully agree“ to „fully disagree.“ We subtracted the scores of the second item from the scores of the first item. <i>High values thus mean that a respondents perceived more advantages of unification for the East</i> .
Satisfaction with democracy in Germany	Respondents were asked to what extent they were satisfied or dissatisfied with democracy as it now exists in Germany. Six answer categories were presented from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. Categories were coded so that <i>high values refer to high satisfaction</i> .
<i>Status deprivation</i>	A factor analysis was used (ULS, varimax rotation) to examine the dimensionality of the following three questions: (1) Extent to which a person thinks he or she receives a fair share, compared to how others live here in Germany. Possible answers were „much less“, „a little less“, „fair share“, „more than the fair share,“ with values from 1 to 4. (2) Respondents were asked to choose a value on a ten-point scale, referring to his or her social position: 0 (bottom) 10 (top). (3) Net income which was measured by an open question. A factor analysis with the three items yielded one factor (35.5% explained variance). From the factor scores a scale was constructed. The scale was recoded so that <i>high values refer to high status deprivation</i> .



## **Some Findings**

### **The Socialization Proposition**

**Is the belief in socialism stronger for East than for West Germans?**

Prediction: "yes".

**CONFIRMED – next figure.**

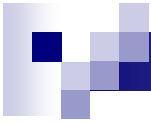
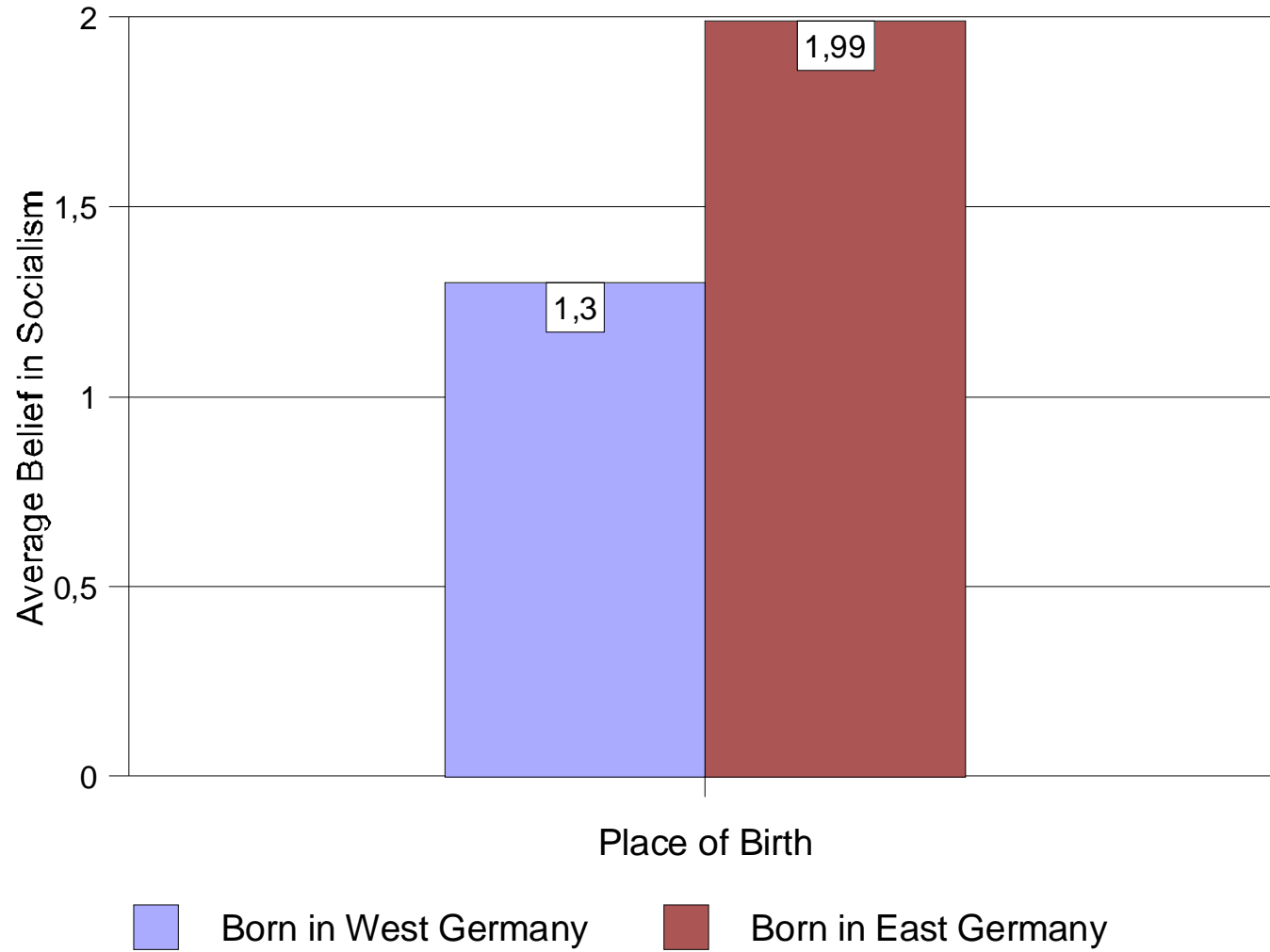


Figure 5: Average Belief in Socialism, by Place of Birth



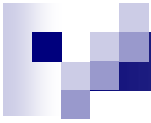
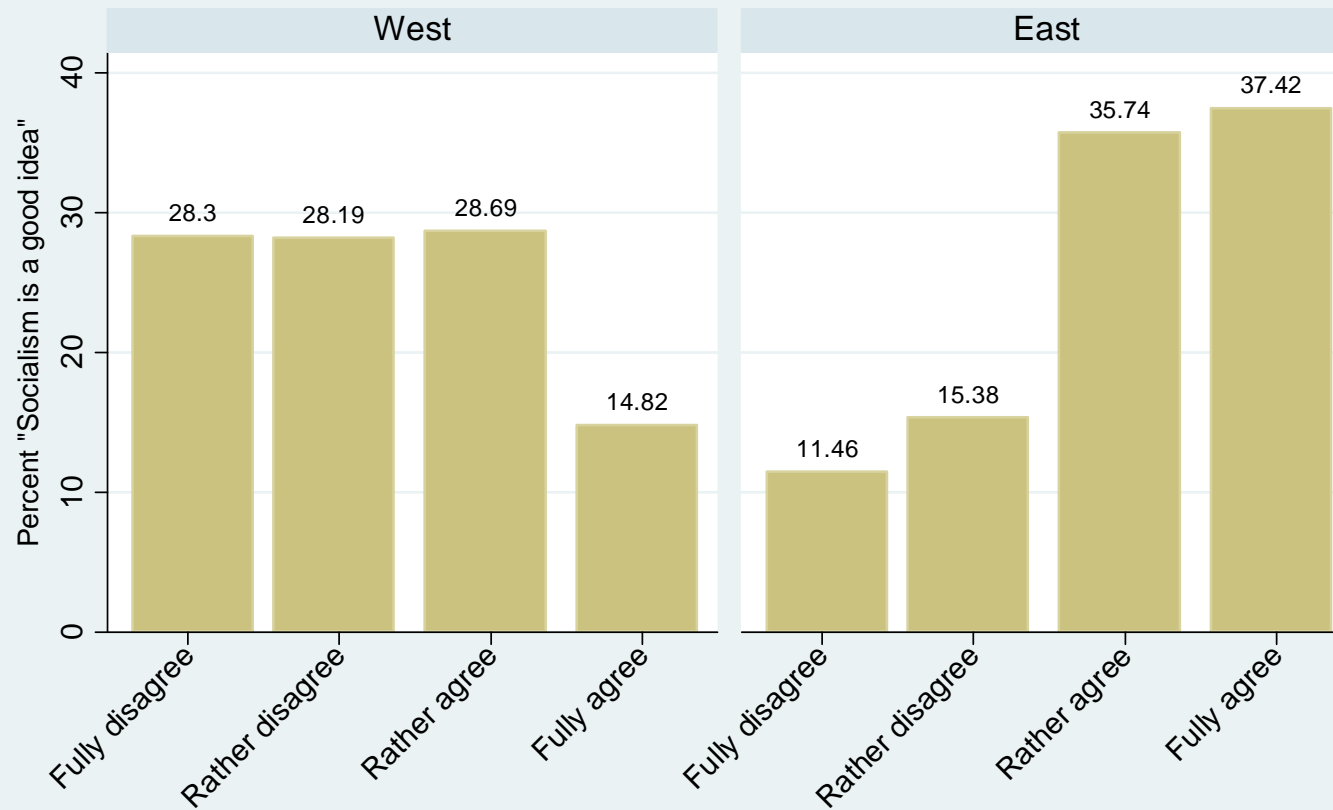
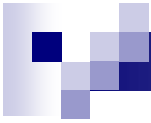


Figure 2: Agreement to "Socialism is a good idea" in West and East



Socialism is a good idea

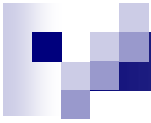
N for West Germany: 6734, for East Germany 4877.



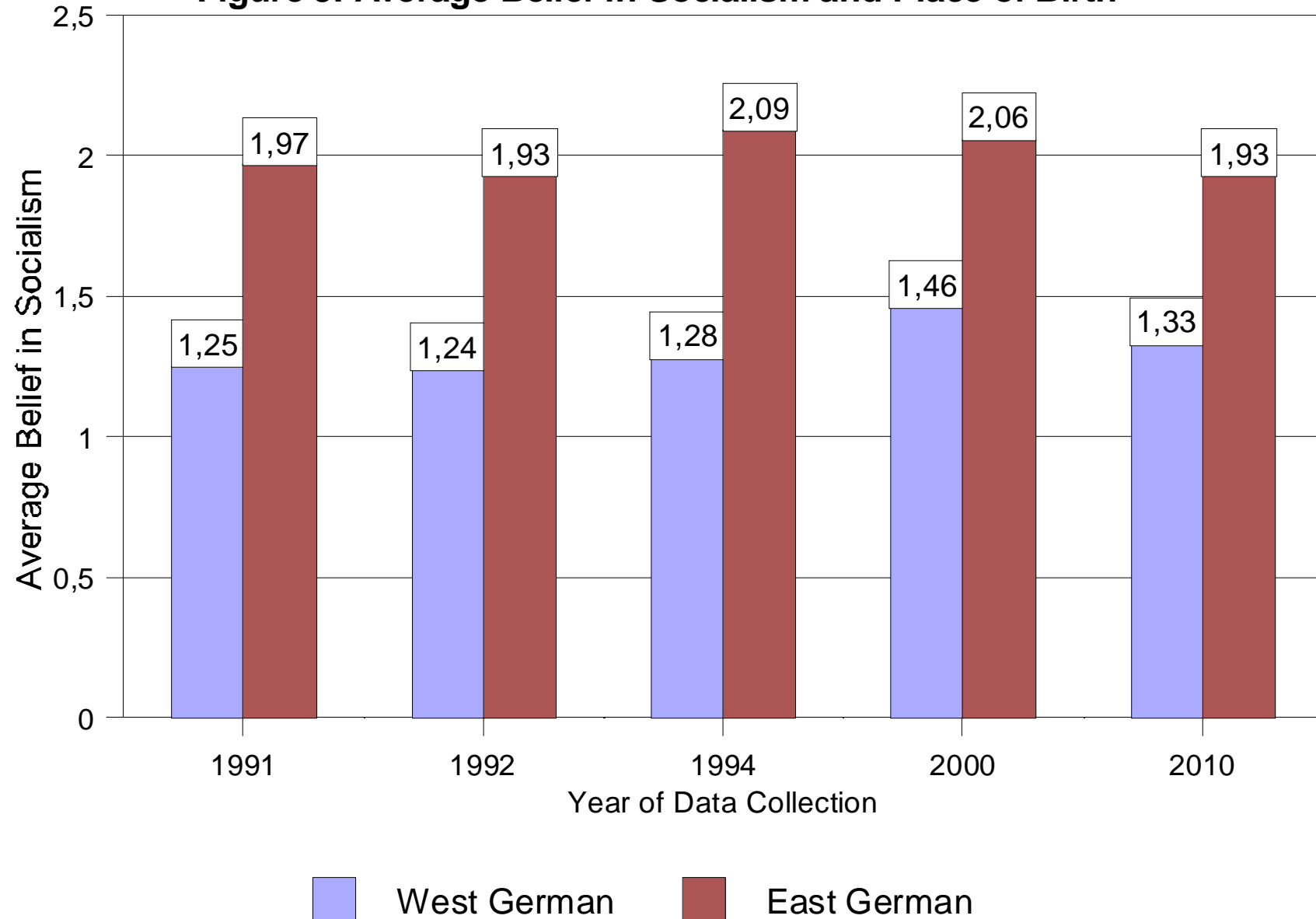
Does the belief in socialism decrease over time after unification for East Germans and only slightly decreases for West Germans?

Prediction: "yes".

**FALSIFIED – NEXT FIGURE**



**Figure 3: Average Belief in Socialism and Place of Birth**





## Notes on the previous figure:

- (1) Anova table: overall **differences** are highly **significant**.
- (2) **N** = 11610 (so everything is significant).
- (3) Eta = .32, Eta squared = .10
- (4) **Regression: Dependent „belief“; independent: dummies for year of data collection (reference category 1991). B's vary between -.08 to .13! This means, e.g.: for data of 1992, belief in socialism would increase by .13, compared to 1991. LOW EFFECT!**

**Thus, the belief in socialism is rather stable after unification in East and West.**





## Why is there no general decrease of the belief in socialism after unification?

- A belief in socialism has **no effect on everyday behavior** (like the false belief that – for example – in the US people drive on the left).
- **Changing a whole set of cognitions** like socialist beliefs is highly **costly**.
- It is by now common to engage in „**nostalgia**” glorifying the former GDR.
- To be sure, after unification the failures of socialism became easily apparent. However, many East Germans were also **disappointed by capitalism** and Western style democracy. This may be adduced to **justify** socialist beliefs.
- Depending on where people live **validating** beliefs in socialism is difficult. This means that for those individuals such beliefs are self-enforcing (i.e. not testable).

**Thus, there are good reasons to expect that there will not be much change in the belief in socialism after unification.**



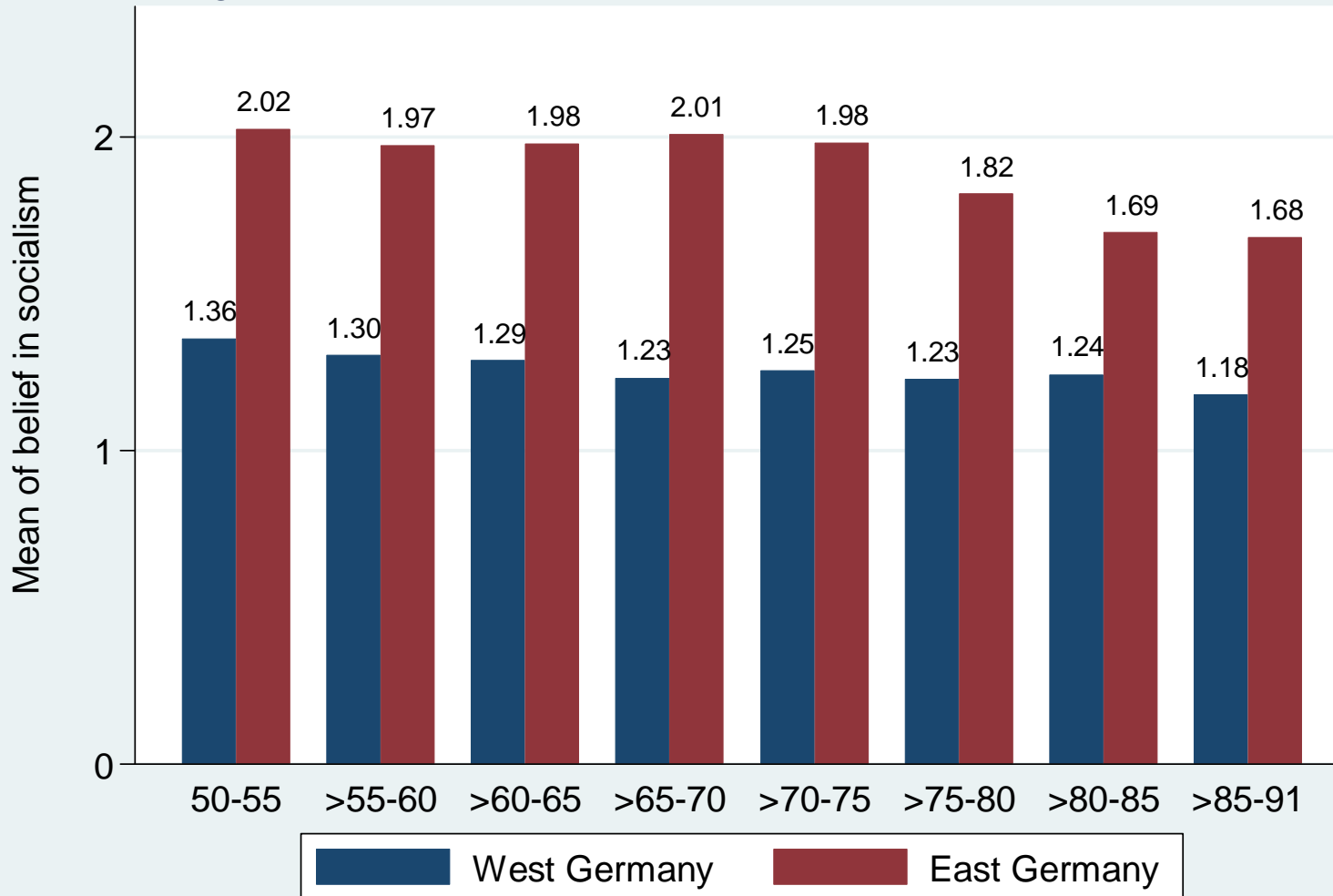
**Do those who are born early have a stronger belief in socialism?**

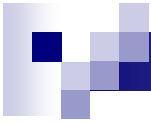
Prediction 3 says "yes."

**SOME CONFIRMATION – NEXT FIGURE**



Figure 4: Belief in Socialism and Year of Birth, in West and East





Let us now look at the **joint effects** of

- **birth place (East/West),**
- **year of birth** and
- **years of data collection**

on the

**belief in socialism**

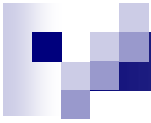
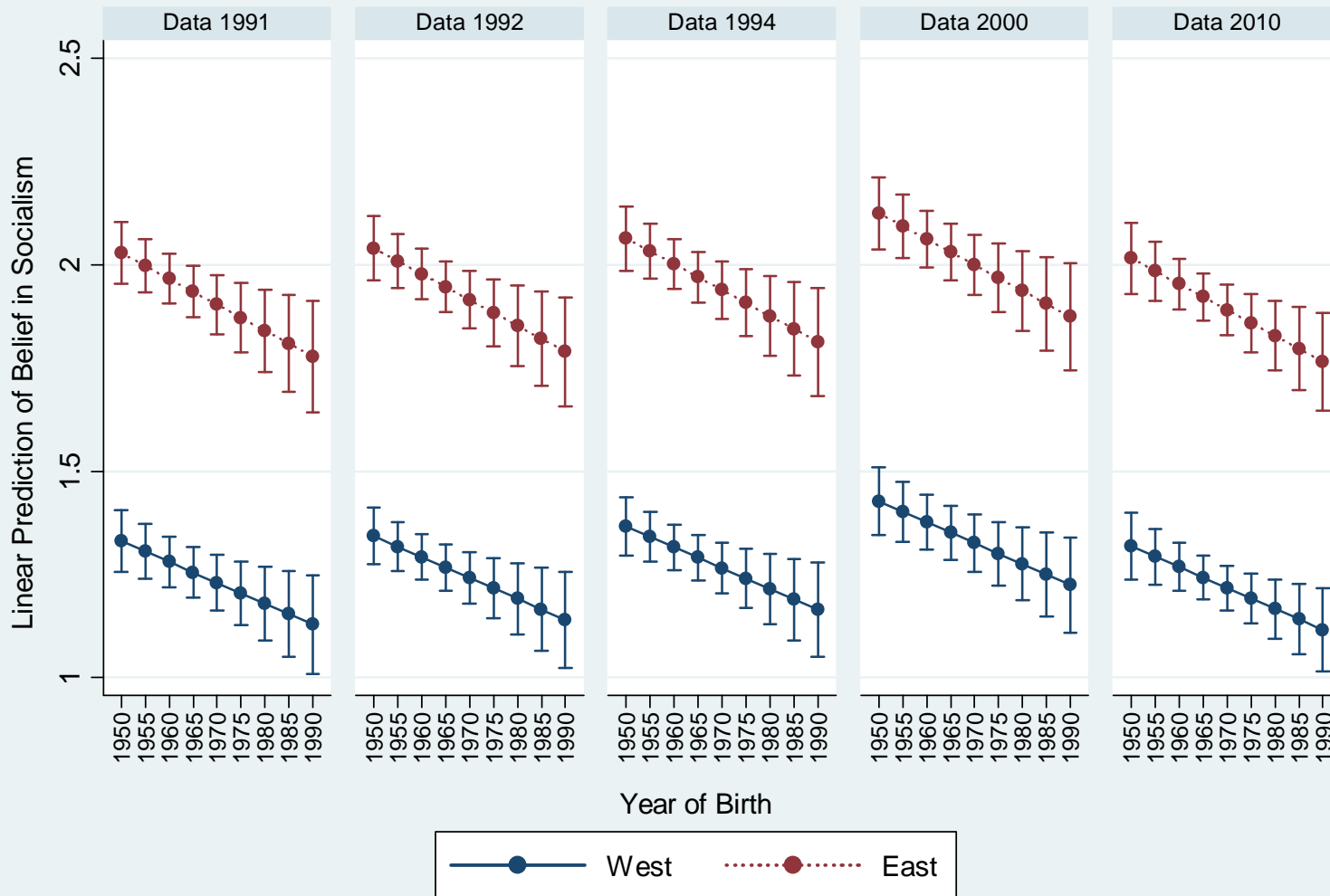


Figure 5: Predictions of Belief in Socialism, Two-Way Interactions, 95% Confidence Intervals





## Multivariate analyses – what are the joint effects of

- **place of birth (West/East)**
- **year of birth**
- **religious affiliation** (catholic/protestant – vs. no religion as reference category),
- **perceived institutional failure** (indicators: unification advantages for East, satisfaction with democracy in Germany),
- **status deprivation** (fair share, status scale, net income – factor score scale)?

Variables	Theoretical model	Adding demographic variables	Only statistically significant variables
Number of Model	1	2	3
<b>Theoretical variables</b>			
Born in East Germany (0/1)	.23** (.11)	.21** (.10)	.22** (.10)
Year of birth (1950-1991)	-.01* (-.04)	-.01** (-.04)	-.01* (-.04)
Catholic (0/1) <sup>1</sup>	-.28** (-.11)	-.29** (-.12)	-.29** (-.12)
Protestant (0/1) <sup>1</sup>	-.24** (-.10)	-.25** (-.11)	-.26** (-.12)
Perceived institutional failure (0-10)			
Perceived advantages of unification for East Germany (0-10)	-.05** (-.12)	-.04** (-.10)	-.04** (-.10)
Satisfaction with democracy in Germany (0-10)	-.05** (-.11)	-.04** (-.10)	-.04** (-.09)
Status deprivation (0-10)	.08** (.09)	.09** (.10)	.08** (.09)
<b>Demographic variables</b>			
Education (0 to 5)		.04 (.04)	
Family status (married) (0/1)		.01 (.002)	
Female (0/1)		.13** (.06)	.13** (.06)
Constant	14.04*	14.56*	13.74*
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.15**	.15**	.15**

NOTE: The value range of the dependent variable is between 0 and 3.

\*\* Significant at least at the .01 level, \* significant at the .05 level. N for all models is 2,186.

<sup>1</sup> The variable „religious affiliation” has three values: Catholic, Protestant and no religious affiliation. The latter variable was taken as the reference category.



## Comments on the previous table

No interaction effects found (I tested interaction effects of all pairs of variables ...)

Including years of data collection as independent variables does not have any statistically significant effect.

Ordered logistic regression yields substantively the same results.






## Some Notes on the Application of Rational Choice Theory to Explain the Belief in Socialism

It is common to apply rational choice theory (RCT) to explain **action**.

**Question:** Is it also possible to explain **beliefs** such as the belief in socialism with RCT?

This question can be answered in the affirmative if the formation, stability and change of beliefs can be explained by the common rational choice variables:

- 
- preferences,
  - constraints and
  - utility maximization.

In other words:

**Does the origin, stability and change  
of beliefs depend on costs and benefits?**

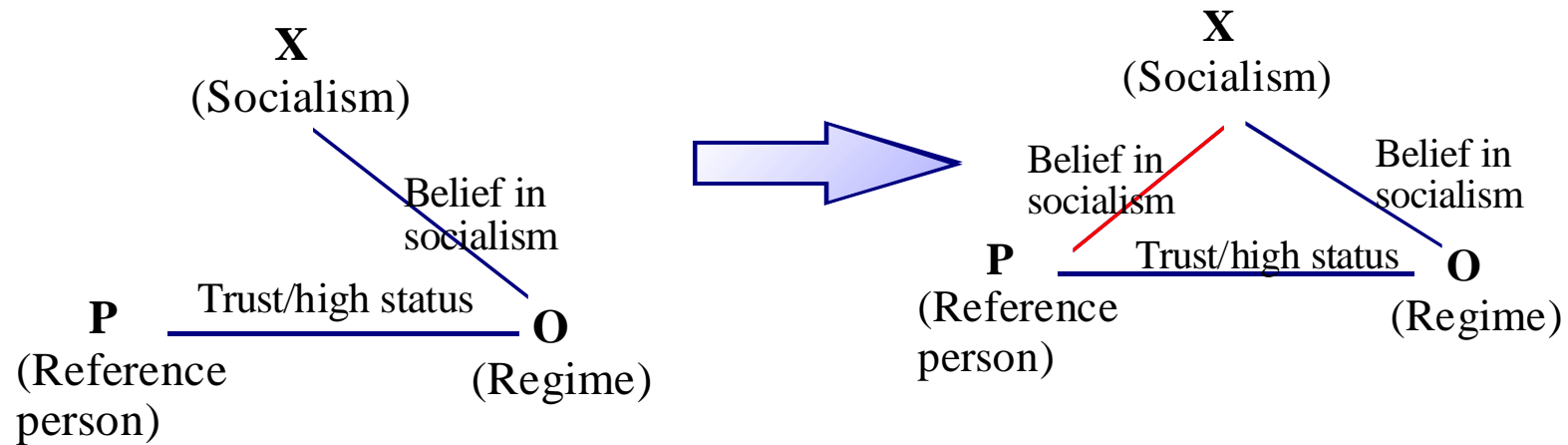


- **Socialization proposition**

- Learning in childhood** is governed by **goals** to obtain rewards and punishments.
- Learning through propaganda** – change of beliefs based on **goals** to attain cognitive balance.

**Constraints** are available reference persons and propaganda.

## Example: Application of balance theory:





## Assumptions:

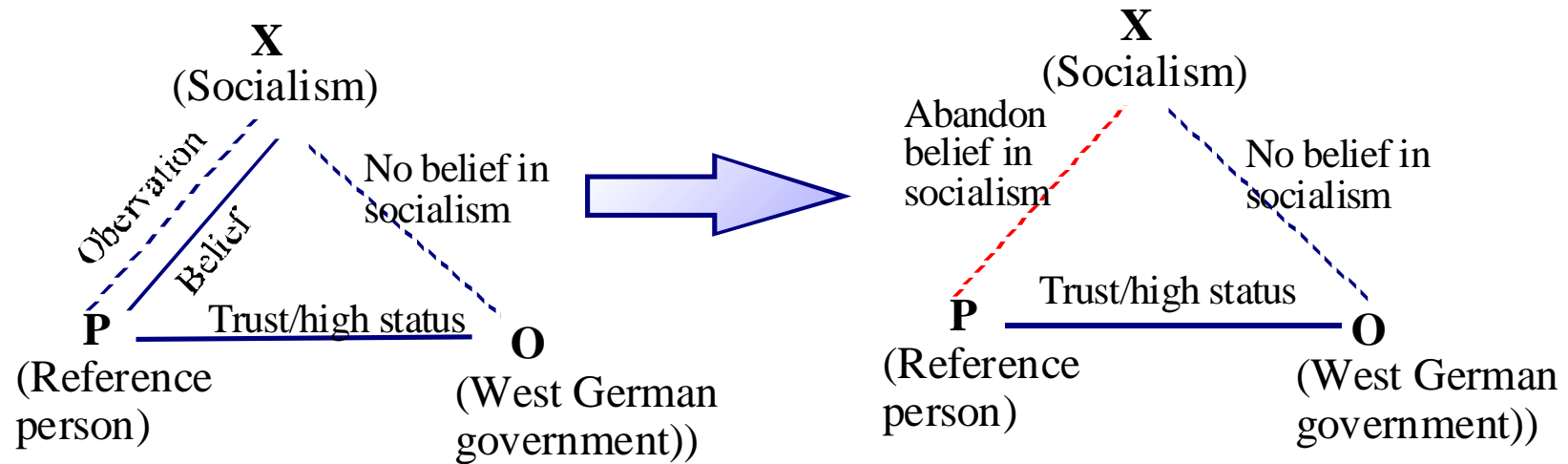
- "Balance" is psychologically pleasant (beneficial).
- Balance exists if three lines are positive -- or if two are negative and one positive.
- OX includes cognitive beliefs as well as perceived valuations.
- There may be pre-existing (positive or negative) beliefs about socialism (PX) but a major part of the population, we assume, has no commitment to socialism when the GDR was founded.



## ■ Institutional failure proposition

Discrepancy between **belief** and **reality** is cognitively inconsistent – there is a **goal** for consistency. Exposure to institutions is a **constraint** that is relevant for attaining the goal of cognitive consistency.

## Example:





- **Status deprivation proposition**


The proposition that **institutions are preferred (goal)** when they meet individuals' needs, i.e. when they are most advantageous to them, is a clear rational choice proposition.





This analysis suggests:

**Rational choice theory can be applied to explain cognitive beliefs.**



This proposition is also **compatible with the attitude theory by Fishbein and Ajzen** (e.g. 2009). It states that an attitude object (like socialism) is valued positively when it has, in the perception of individuals, a relatively large number of positive properties that are ascribed with high probability.

For a **disadvantaged individual** socialism has a relatively large number of advantages. This ensues a positive attitude toward socialism.

**Balance theory** would then predict that it is consistent when a positive attitude toward socialism is associated with the belief in the claims of socialism.



## Discussion

### ■ Improvement in theory:

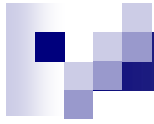
- (a) Could hypotheses about the **acquisition of religious beliefs** be applied?
- (a) When do **wealthy** people believe in socialism?
- (b) Apply more systematically **social science theories**, e.g. balance theory, attitude theory and rational choice theory.
- (c) More detailed hypotheses about socialization are important, e.g. about **effects of networks** such as beliefs of parents and their impact on children (cannot be tested with the ALLBUS).



- **Improvement in Measurement:**

- (a) „Belief in socialism“ should be measured in a more detailed way and not with one item only. Suggestion: **factorial survey!**
- (b) Other variables in the present paper were often measured with **proxies**. Better measurement desirable.
- (c) **Panel studies** are desirable to test causal order of variables.

- **Comparative research useful:** GDR/East Germany (which is a special case!) vs. other former Communist states. Perhaps wait until Cuba/North Korea collapse and then conduct a panel study. Why not doing a study in **RUSSIA???**



Thanks for your  
attention  
– whatever your belief  
in socialism is!