# Variables in Mental Disorders and Mental Health

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before. Inglehart (1997) explained shifts along these two dimensions with macro-eco-The Interplay Between Traditional and Modern Values and Interpersonal nomic developments: Industrialisation, *i.e.* the rise of the working class, is associated with a shift from traditional towards secular-rational values. Traditional values represent **Eva Heim** acceptance of existing hierarchies and power structures (*i.e.* male dominance, parental **Andreas Maercker** authority), strong emphasis on religion, and low levels of tolerance for abortion, divorce, and homosexuality. Post-industrialisation, *i.e.* the affluent conditions of the advanced industrial society and the rise of the service and knowledge sector, is associated with the previously described shift from survival towards self-expression values. Survival values are characterised by low subjective well-being and health, high emphasis on material-Abstract ist values, low tolerance for outgroups, and favouring authoritarian government, and Our research focuses on values and mental health, and possible mediating factors. Based on two value-related theories – Schwartz's and Inglehart's - we suggest a complex prediction model: It hypothesises that social supself-expression values the exact opposite. An important aspect of his theory lies in soport mediates the relationship between traditional values and mental health, whereas the relationship between cialization: Values are developed in childhood and adolescence and are transmitted bemodern values and mental health is mediated by resilience. We tested our model with three large student samtween generations. Based on data from the World Values Survey, Inglehart (1997) found ples from China, Russia, and Germany. By and large, our hypotheses were confirmed: Particularly traditional values were relevant for mental health by predicting social support and thence mental health. With regard to that the current economic conditions in a country – as a proxy for security and the covmodern values, the value of self-direction predicted resilience and – in consequence – mental health. Hedonism erage of human basic needs – only partly explained the population's emphasis on survivdid not show the predicted association with resilience. We discuss the implications of these findings and future al vs. self-expression and traditional vs. secular-rational values. The cultural heritage of directions. a country, such as being an Ex-Communist or an Ex-Confucian society, explained much more of variance regarding those values. Introduction

The World Mental Health Survey (Kessler & Ustun, 2008) showed high prevalences of mental disorders worldwide, as well as cross-national differences in prevalence rates. Previous research by our group (Maercker, 2001, 2004; Maercker et al., 2015; Maercker et al., 2009; M. Müller, Forstmeier, Wagner, & Maercker, 2011) has focused on people's value orientations to capture the complex relationship between culture and mental health. Values describe what a person believes is meaningful and important in life and are used to guide one's own behaviour and evaluate other people's behaviour (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990).

### Two theories on human values

Our work is based on two different value theories by Inglehart (1997) and Schwartz Schwartz, 2012; Hinz, Brähler, Schmidt, & Albani, 2005). (c.f. Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). Both theories part from the assumption that human val-When looking at these two value theories, the question arises how they relate to each ues are developed in view of basic human needs and motivations. Inglehart (1997) drew other, or whether they could be integrated into one framework. Datler, Jagodzinski, and on Maslow (1954)'s hierarchy of human needs to describe materialist vs. postmaterial-Schmidt (2013) tested both theories for their internal, external and construct validity. ist values as opposite poles of a continuum. Following Maslow, Inglehart (1997) argued Based on extensive analyses, they concluded that Inglehart's theory had lower internal that the increasing security and unprecedented wealth after World War II went along and weaker construct validity, whereas the Schwartz values were less consistent in their with a decrease in materialist values (routed in preoccupation with survival and physical predications of other parameters such as political attitudes, life-satisfaction, or genneeds) and with a concurrent increase in importance of postmaterialist values such as der equality. With regard to the question of how the two theories relate to each other, esteem or self-expression. In a later version of his theory, he described two dimensions Wilson (2005) found that postmaterialism was positively related to Schwartz' self-diof values: The first dimension encompasses traditional vs. secular-rational orientations, rection and universalism, and negatively to security. In the analysis of Beckers, Siegers whereas the second dimension contrasts survival vs. self-expression values as described and Kuntz (2012), postmaterialism and self-expression values correlated positively with

The Schwartz value theory (cf. Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990) similarly conveys that human values serve three requirements of human life: biological needs, the requirement of coordinated social interactions, and group survival. Based on this assumption, Schwartz and Bilsky (1990) proposed a circumplex-model of ten values: power; achievement; hedonism: stimulation: self-direction; universalism; benevolence: tradition; conformity and security. Values differ in terms of their motivational content. E.g. the power value encompasses the motivational goal of striving for economic wealth. The authors grouped those values into two higher-order dimensions: openness to change vs. conservation, and self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement. The cross-cultural validity of this model has been discussed and confirmed extensively (Bilsky, Janik, & Schwartz, 2011; Cieciuch &

self-direction and universalism, and negatively with tradition, conformity, and security. However, correlations were not higher than 0.4. The authors concluded that none of the Schwartz values – neither the single values nor the higher-order dimensions – did fully cover postmaterialism and self-expression.

sorted into eight clusters with similar correlation profiles before testing for the circular structure in each cluster. Three clusters including Latin European, American, German and Nordic European countries fitted the theorised model very well. The "ambiguous cluster" comprised different countries, one of which was as study by Maercker et al. Our own approach is driven by the question of whether and how values might influ-(2009) in China. In this cluster, the analysis resulted in a two-factor solution, with openence mental health. On the one hand, Inglehart (1997)'s theory provides a clear historness and self-enhancement values on one side, and conservation and self-transcendence ical framework on the development and transmission of human values, which is most values on the other side. According to Steinmetz et al. (2012) this two-factor solution relevant when dealing with rapidly changing societies such as China or Russia (Datler "could imply that values in these populations can reflect a modernism versus traditionalet al., 2013). Both China and Russia appeared in the upper left quadrant of Inglehart's ism dimension" (p. 71). two dimensional display of values: Both countries were characterised by high emphasis on secular-rational (in contrast to traditional) and on survival (in contrast to self-expres-**Empirical findings** sion) values. Inglehart (1997) explained the former result by the secularising effect of Our research initially focused on the relationship between traditional vs. modern val-Communism and Confucianism. However, the theory as such could not be used for our ues, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and possible mediator variables (Maercker purpose, since the two value dimensions as proposed by Inglehart are not clearly diset al., 2009; M. Müller et al., 2011). The traditional values sum score was obtained by tinguishable, and the validity of the measurement remains far behind the Schwartz valsumming the following three Schwarz values: conformity, tradition and benevolence, as ues. Moreover, since Inglehart included subjective well-being in his conceptualisation measured with the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ). Modern values encompassed of survival values, using this concept for investigating mental health would be a circular the PVQ scales of stimulation, hedonism and achievement. In the prediction model, two argument. On the other hand, the Schwartz theory offers a very sophisticated, broadly mediator variables were used which had previously proven to be relevant in the developvalidated and tested operationalisation of human values. The conceptualisation of values ment of PTSD: social acknowledgement as a victim and disclosure intention (Maercker in terms of motivational goals seems most relevant for mental health, since motivational & Müller, 2004; J. Müller, Mörgeli, & Maercker, 2008). In one study with Chinese and goals play an important role in mental health and mental illness (for a review, see Trew, German crime victims (Maercker et al., 2009), traditional values were negatively asso-2011). However, as we will discuss later, we assume that values do not directly affect ciated with social acknowledgement as a victim, which was in turn positively associated mental health, but through mediator variables that cover interpersonal aspects of social with inner pressure to disclose. High disclosure intentions predicted PTSD symptoms in sharing and dealing with adverse events. The ten values scheme is far too sophisticated both samples, which is congruent with previous findings. In a second study with Swiss for such complex analyses. elderly (M. Müller et al., 2011), a different picture emerged: Traditional values were In the studies from our lab (Maercker, 2001, 2004; Maercker et al., 2009; M. Müller negatively related to PTSD, and social acknowledgement was not a mediator this time. et al., 2011), we have combined the Schwartz' values into traditional and modern values. In the most recent study, Maercker et al. (2015) investigated the relationship be-Our concept of traditional and modern values differs from Inglehart's value definition: tween values, mental health indicators, and possible mediator variables in student pop-In our concept, traditional values comprise the two Schwartz higher-order dimensions ulations from three different countries (Germany, Russia and China). This study was self-transcendence and conservation, with a high emphasis on collectivism, submissive based on data from a comprehensive multi-site study of university students' mental self-restriction, preservation of traditional practices, protection, and stability. Modern health, Bochum Optimism and Mental Health (BOOM) Studies (Margraf & Schneider, values comprise the two higher-order dimensions self-enhancement and openness to 2014), a large research programme investigating predictors of mental health in a series change and represent motivations to pursue autonomy, success and dominance over othof cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. The sample sizes were N = 1,105 in Germaers. Our conceptualisation follows Inglehart's basic assumption that economic growth ny, N = 3,743 in Russia, and N = 9,019 in China. In all three samples, the frequency of goes along with a shift in values towards more self-expression and autonomy, but that females outweighed frequency of male respondents (60.3% in Germany, 65.5% in Ruscultural heritage (*i.e.* traditional values) would persist, as changes in values occur slowsia, and 64% in China). For more socio-demographic information, readers are kindly ly. A recent meta-analysis on the circular structure of the Schwartz values (Steinmetz, referred to the original paper (Maercker et al., 2015). Mental health was assessed with Isidor, & Baeuerle, 2012)ÿÿÿus¿ provided support for our theoretical assumption, at a 9 items questionnaire (Lukat, Margraf, Becker, van der Veld, & Lutz, 2014) which least for Non-Western countries. This meta-analysis (including 88 studies and the ESS) includes statements such as "I enjoy my life" or "I am often carefree and in good spircomprised 318 matrices with the correlations among the 10 values. The matrices were

its". No previous validation existed in Russian and Chinese language, thus the scale was

translated and back-translated. The scale was tested for measurement invariance and showed metric (but not scale) invariance (Bieda et al., 2015). For examining relation-& Schwartz, 2008).

and mental health. For this aim, we used two mediator variables, *i.e.* social support ships between variables, metric invariance is sufficient (Byrne, 2008; Davidov, Schmidt, and resilience. The choice of mediator variables was based on two different theoretical frameworks. The concept of social support was drawn from theories of social belongingness (Baumeister, 2005) which state that regular, satisfying social interaction are a basic First, we analysed correlations between the ten Schwartz values and mental health, human need and therefore relevant to psychological wellbeing. The concept of resilience in order to define which values would be most relevant for predicting mental health. is relatively new to psychology; it refers to ability to cope successfully with life stress In China and Russia, all values were positively correlated with positive mental health, (Richardson, 2002). The concept of resilience encompasses personality factors and spewhereas in Germany, only five values showed significant correlations (see Table 1). The cific skills that help an individual to achieve self-actualisation or re-establish their sense power value was the only one which correlated negatively with mental health in China of self after disruption. Social support and resilience were measured with previously val-(Pearson's r = -.05). The positive association between the Schwartz values and positive idated scales: For social support, the F-SOZU was used (Fydrich, Sommer, Tydecks, mental health is not surprising: All values can be conceptualized as approach motiva-& Brähler, 2009). This scale measures perceived emotional and instrumental support tional goals, and thus none includes avoidance motivational goals. Research shows that and social integration, the three of which are combined into one sum score. Resilience approach motivation is beneficial for mental health, whereas avoidance motivation negawas measured using the Resilience Scale (Schumacher, Leppert, Gunzelmann, Strauss, tively affects mental health (Spielberg, Heller, Silton, Stewart, & Miller, 2011). & Brähler, 2005) which consists of 11 items assessing personality characteristics. Both Tabla 4 scales were tested for measurement invariance. The F-SOZU showed full metric and the Resilience Scale partial metric invariance (Bieda et al., 2015).

	Germany	Russia	China
Security	01	.09***	.07***
Conformity	04	.12***	.19***
Tradition	.02	.09***	.09***
Benevolence	.14***	.26***	.35***
Universalism	.09**	.16***	.34***
Self-direction	.24***	.22***	.28***
Stimulation	.27***	.21***	.20***
Hedonism	.45***	.29***	.33***
Achievement	00	.13***	.20***
Power	.03	.09***	05***

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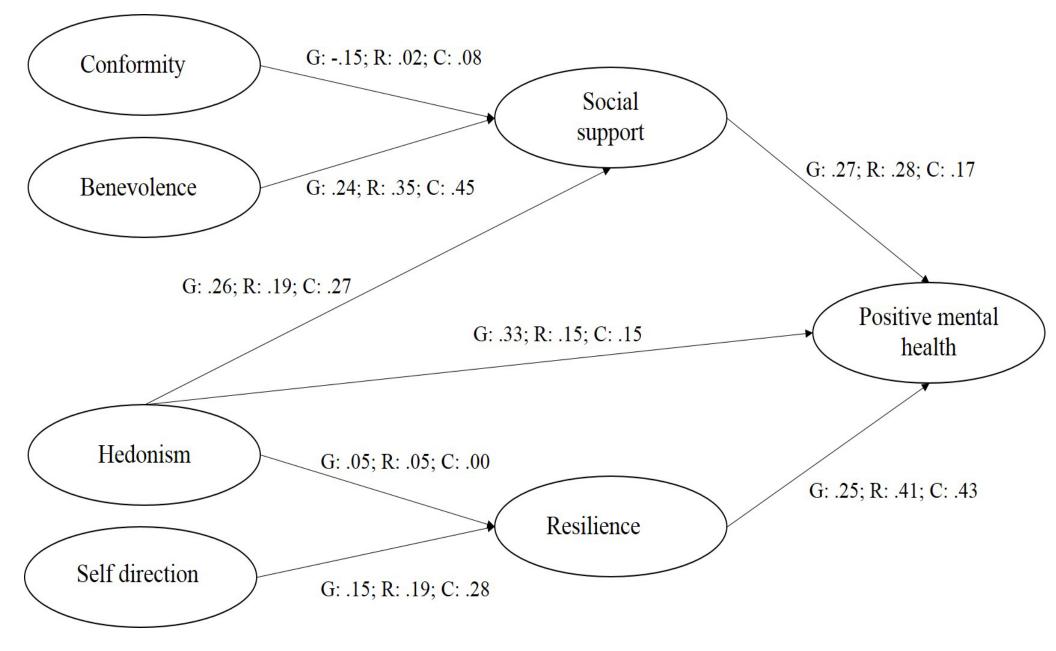
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\*\*\* *p*<.001

Second, we compared the countries regarding the importance they gave to the ten values. Drawing on Inglehart's model of value persistence, which posits that both traditional and modern values will be strongly held in rapidly changing societies, it was predicted that there would be national differences in the prevalence of traditional and modern values, with the prevalence being highest in China, followed by Russia then Germany. As predicted, both traditional and modern values were most prevalent in China, providing support for Inglehart's model; however traditional and modern values were least prevalent in the Russian sample. To explain this finding the authors turned to Durkheim's conception of 'anomie' as a lack or frailty of value orientations, most commonly found at societal level in countries that have experienced setbacks.

Third, we proposed a prediction model to explain the relationship between values

Based on the correlation matrix, we selected two pairs of values – one each for traditional and modern values – as predictors in our mediator model. The selection criteria were that the variables should be highly correlated with mental health and not being directly adjacent in the circular model of values. The traditional values selected were conformity and benevolence; the modern values were hedonism and self-direction. We hypothesised two different prediction paths for all three samples: there would be a positive association between traditional values and mental health mediated by social support, whilst the positive association between modern values and mental health would be mediated by resilience. The results of SEM generally supported the hypothetical model (see Figure 2): Benevolence and conformity (both traditional values) predicted social support, whereas self-direction (a modern value) predicted resilience; both interpersonal variables were associated with positive mental health. The predicted association between hedonism and resilience was not observed, but hedonism was directly associated with positive mental health. There was also an unexpected association between hedonism and social support, which warrants further investigation; hedonism remains an under-researched phenomenon. (For fit indices, readers are kindly referred to the original paper).



## Figure 1

Simplified path model for Germany (G), Russia (R), and China (C). All paths in the German sample with loadings >.10 are significant, the equivalent values for the Russian and Chinese samples are .02 and .01 respectively. Complete path models for each country with fit indices can be found in the original publication (Maercker et al., 2015).

# **Conclusions and Future Research**

Value orientation – and particularly traditional values – seem to be related to mental health, both in view of specific disorders such as PTSD and more generally (*e.g.*, positive mental health). The influence of traditional values on mental health is mediated by parameters of social interaction, *i.e.* social acknowledgement as a victim in PTSD, and social support in a more general way. In other words, values seem to shape ways of social interaction, which in turn has an effect on mental health. This finding is consistent with Schwartz' assumption that one function of values lies in the coordination of social interaction. Values affect how people deal with each other, what they consider appropriate, how they evaluate behaviour and whether certain events are considered part of normal life or not. In consequence, values (or at least some kinds of values) regulate the seeking and provision of help from others, particularly after stressful life events. Thus mental health is in the outcome of a complex interplay between values at the individual and societal levels and the patterns of social interaction that are associated with these values.

The available evidence suggests that this complex network of interactions is context-specific. A given level of endorsement of traditional values does not necessarily influence mental health outcomes in the same way in different groups; the nature of the association between values and mental health very much depends on the societal environment in which an individual lives. In other words, emphasis on traditional values might have both protective and negative effects on PTSD, depending on the social environment of a person. For example, it might be easier for Swiss elderly people with traditional values to disclose suffering resulting from grief or other stressful life events that would be relatively normal in this phase of life than it would be for Russian middle-aged adults to disclose post-traumatic stress, which is often related to fear and shame and thus more difficult to talk about.

In our student samples from three different countries, traditional values were associated with social support and positive mental health, which points to a protective effect of those values. We conclude that in groups where traditional values are more prevalent, 'normal' stressful life events (such as the loss of partner in late life) may elicit social acknowledgement and support, whereas unexpected negative life events such as being a victim of crime may be more likely to generate feelings of shame and guilt. Shame and guilt may in turn have a negative effect on both on victims' intention to disclose the relevant experience and on the other people's willingness to hear about it and provide practical and emotional support. Thus it is conceivable that traditional values might be protective for mental health as long as one "fits in". In turn, once an individual does not "fit in", either in terms of aversive life events or other conditions (*e.g.* homosexuality), traditional values might have negative effects on mental health. The findings presented here provide evidence of the complexity of the relationships among values, social support systems and mental health outcomes.

With regard to modern values, our results display a complex picture. In our most recent study (Maercker *et al.*, 2015), only self-direction, but not hedonism, predicted resilience, and resilience was positively associated with positive mental health as hypothesised. Self-direction is defined as 'independent choice of thought and action' and is closely related to autonomy; individuals who are highly self-directed prefer to be self-reliant and are less likely to seek support from others, which is consistent with its association with resilience. Hedonism is defined in terms of pleasure-seeking rather than social interaction, thus its positive association with social support remains to be explained. As already mentioned however, the body of evidence linking hedonism and mental health is limited.

Important questions remain to be addressed. One of the major challenges remains in finding a valid and parsimonious assessment of values for future prediction models. The Schwartz values scale is sophisticated and has proven to be valid in many cross-cultural studies. Schwartz recently refined his theory and expanded it onto 19 values (Schwartz *et al.*, 2012). This makes it nearly impossible to calculate more complex mediation models for predicting mental health outcomes, since the single values might have divergent effects and influence mental health through a variety of mediator and moderator variables. So far, our own division of the Schwartz values into traditional and modern values has proven to be a fruitful way of dealing with this problem. Theoretically, we followed In-

glehart's reflexions on value change and value persistence in the face of rapid economic and societal change. In terms of measurement, though, we drew on the well-established Fydrich, T., Sommer, G., Tydecks, S., & Brähler, E. (2009). Social Support Questionnaire (F-SozU): and cross-culturally validated measurement by Schwartz. Recent findings provided em-Standardization of short form (K-14). Zeitschrift für Medizinische Psychologie, 18, 43-48. pirical evidence on both overlaps and differences between these two theories (Beckers Hinz, A., Brähler, E., Schmidt, P., & Albani, C. (2005). Investigating the circumplex structure of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ). Journal of Individual Differences, 26(4), 185-193. doi: 10.1027/1614et al., 2012; Datler et al., 2013; Wilson, 2005). In our own research, we have used dif-0001.26.4.185 ferent combinations out of the Schwartz' values scale to describe traditional and mod-Inglehart, R. (1997). Modernization and postmodernization: Cultural, economic and political change in 43 ern values. We will continue in investigating a clear and coherent set of values to predict societies. Princeton, NJ: University press. Kessler, R. C., & Ustun, T. B. (Eds.). (2008). The WHO World Mental Health Surveys. Global Perspectives on mental health. the Epidemiology of Mental Disorders: Cambridge University Press. A further important limitation of our results is that they are all based on cross-sec-Lönnqvist, J.-E., Jasinskaja-Lahti, I., & Verkasalo, M. (2011). Personal values before and after migration: A tional studies; longitudinal data are needed to understand the causal relationships among longitudinal case study on value change in Ingrian-Finnish migrants. Social Psychological and Personality the variables investigated. Moreover, longitudinal data are needed on the dynamics of *Science*, *2*(6), 584-591. doi: 10.1177/1948550611402362 Lönnqvist, J.-E., Jasinskaja-Lahti, I., & Verkasalo, M. (2013). Rebound effect in personal values: Ingrianvalues in changing environments. By definition values transcend specific situations and Finnish migrants: Values two years after migration. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 44(7), 1122-1126. are generally assumed to be stable, trait-like constructs; however a longitudinal study doi: 10.1177/0022022113480040 of Ingrian-Finnish migrants (Lönnqvist, Jasinskaja-Lahti & Verkasalo, (2011, 2013) Lukat, J., Margraf, J., Becker, E., van der Veld, W., & Lutz, R. (2014). Test criteria of the positive mental health scale (P-scale). Unpublished manuscript. University of Bochum. found that one year after migration, the importance of universalism and security had

increased whereas the importance of power and achievement had decreased. A second follow-up showed that these values had returned to their original levels of importance. These results are highly relevant to our findings on values and mental health, as they provide evidence that values are responsive to social disruption. Given this evidence that values are dynamic, future research should consider how interpersonal processes are affected by changes in values in the long run. One might also consider whether and how mental health is influenced by changes in the priority given to particular values. These questions are of theoretical and practical importance in the rapidly changing environments of a globalised world.

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