

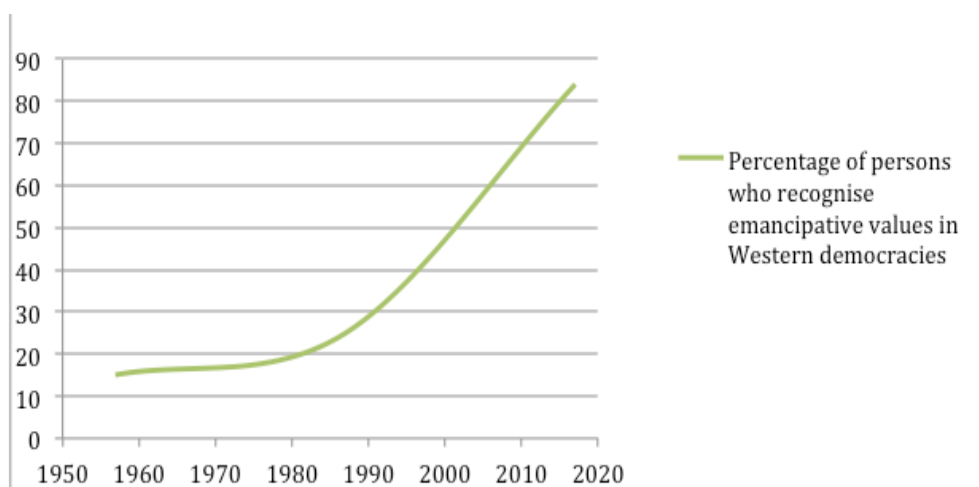
POPULISM: 'THE WORST DEAL EVER'

(Donald Trump)

An examination of the populist renaissance from a sociocultural perspective demonstrates that the rapid development of progressive beliefs and values has facilitated the populist renaissance. This is affirmed by The World Values Survey, which is a global network of social scientists studying changing values and their impact on social and political life.²⁶ The survey demonstrates that Western nations have undertaken significant value change over time. From conservative views in the pre-war era to embracing progressive ideals in the 21st century, the beliefs of persons, groups and institutions on the micro, meso, and macro level have undergone transformative change. Dr. Kenny states in his analysis, ‘occurring over a roughly sixty year period, the survey suggests accelerated modernisation processes, whereby value shifts have been rapid rather than gradual, leaving little time for persons to accustom to the changes.’²⁷ This intergenerational shift in values can be credited to the changing socialisation agents of individuals as a result of secularisation, globalisation, and modernisation. Over time, education and media have become more prominent factors in an individual’s socialisation, whilst religion and family have receded.²⁸ The impact and prevalence of this process is evidenced in a cross-cultural generation study I conducted, suggesting that transformative cultural change has contributed to the populist renaissance.²⁹

Among the Baby Boomer Generation respondents, 95% indicated in my questionnaire that within their life course they had witnessed ‘speedy’³⁰ recognition of progressive values: individual autonomy, LGBTQI rights, freedom of speech, democratic criticism, and human rights.³¹ Known to political scientists as ‘emancipative values’,³² the aforementioned have rapidly spread through the cultural diaspora of Western democracies, as evidenced in the figure below.

Figure 3: Percentage of persons who recognise emancipative values in Western democracies.



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²³ Sinha, Ashwani. 2014 Future World Economy Presentation. Slideshare.net. N. p., 2014. Web.

²⁴ Primary Research: Statistical Analysis.

²⁵ Primary Research: Statistical Analysis.

²⁶ WVS Database. Worldvaluessurvey.org. N.p., 2017.

For more progressive generations, such as Generation Y³⁴ and Z,³⁵ and well-educated middle classes, these values 'have fostered social inclusion and acceptance.'³⁶ However, for other demographics, such as the Silent Generation,³⁷ Baby Boomers,³⁸ and less educated sectors who have typically favoured conservatism, these emancipative values present a 'threat to their traditional way of life.'³⁹ Displacing familiar societal norms and abrading their privileged status, these values 'alienate,'⁴⁰ and therefore do not appeal to, these persons. This generational dissatisfaction is demonstrated in a poll by PerryUndem, 'a nonpartisan research and polling firm'⁴¹ which found that 59% of US Republican men resented modern value changes, subsequently feeling that their position in the social strata was inadequate. Of them, one is Dennis Halaszynski, an 81 year-old former police captain and Trump voter, who stated 'Progressivism, Liberalism – all these ideological beliefs have meant that the white man is a low person [in the social hierarchy] - everybody else is above the white man. No matter what happens in life, it seems like the white man is always at fault.'⁴²

These beliefs were also evident among Baby Boomer and Silent Majority generation respondents in my questionnaire, with 83% of males noting that their prior cultural predominance had been eroded.⁴³ These beliefs indicate that the increasing hybridisation of societies has created various groups, each with their often-oppositional desires. The generational frustration at the erosion of power and authority suggests that over time, dominant groups desire the establishment of an implicit social hierarchy. However, emancipative values, emphasising equality for all, diminish these systems of class and social differentiation. For older generations, males, the religious, ethnic majorities and less educated sectors, these progressive tides of cultural change have made them feel like strangers in their 'own country.'⁴⁴

²⁷ Primary Research: Interview.

²⁸ Agents of Socialisation | Sociology: Understanding and Changing The Social World. *Open.lib.umn.edu*. N.p., 2017. Web.

²⁹ Primary Research: Statistical Analysis of Questionnaire data.

³⁰ Primary Research: Questionnaire.

³¹ Primary Research: Questionnaire.

³² Emancipative values combine an emphasis on freedom of choice and equality of opportunities. Emancipative values, thus, involve priorities for lifestyle liberty, gender equality, personal autonomy and the voice of the people, establishing a civic form of modern individualism.

³³ WVS Database. *Worldvaluessurvey.org*. N.p., 2017. Web.