

*Social Sciences*  
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*Acceptance of New Technologies*

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### **Acceptance of genetically modified food in Germany and the US: The impact of culture**

According to cross-cultural surveys German and US citizens differ in their attitudes towards genetically modified food (GMF). Germans on average have a somewhat more critical attitude towards GMF than Americans. Former studies that aimed at explaining these cross-national differences by focusing on socio-demographic characteristics of the populations, on knowledge or risk-benefit assessments do not explain these differences satisfactorily. By focusing on the influence of culture we offer an alternative view on the cross-national differences in acceptance of GMF.

Culture can be understood as a semantic tool for sense-making and opinion-forming. To explore the role of culture we focused on two variables that appear relevant with regard to GMF attitudes: appraisal of nature and trust in institutions. Firstly, food can be understood as a part of nature. Thus, the perception of food quality and food-related risks might partly depend on the concept of nature. We assume that higher appraisal of nature supports disapproval of GMF. Secondly, scientific and technical innovations like GMF may lead to unintended social, environmental or health risks. One strategy to deal with these innovation-caused uncertainties is trust. Focusing on general trust in institutions as part of the political cultures we assume that a higher level of trust corresponds to more acceptance of GMF.

The presentation will show results of a representative cross-national telephone survey conducted in Germany and the US. This study confirms the relevance of culture for explaining cross-national differences in acceptance of GMF.

#### References:

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