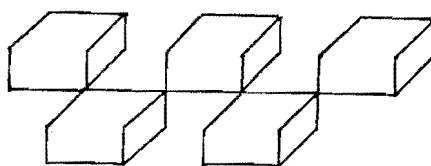


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Generational Differences in Political Value Orientations:
An International Comparison.

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Abstract: Generational Differences in Political Value Orientations: An International Comparison.

In this article we take up the discussion, introduced by Ronald Inglehart, that cohorts tend to create a political identity in response to their historical positioning. In doing so, we examine the differential spacing of cohorts for each of the four concepts constituting the Materialist - Postmaterialist dimension.

It has proved to be relevant to distinguish an economic and a non-economic domain: the latter shows the most pronounced spacing, whereas the former only has minor differences between cohorts, largely due to the level of education.

1. Introduction.

The significance of 'age' for an understanding of social behaviour in general and political opinions in particular is already present in ancient Greek thought. Plato considered the different goals of generations a determining force in important social changes and Aristotle claimed that political revolutions were the product, not only of rich-poor opposition, but also of father-son conflicts (Braungart and Braungart, 1986, p. 206). On a formal theoretical level a more scientific approach to the concept of 'political generations' only arose during the nineteenth century. The key issue was the discussion on whether the relationship between age and politics was the expression either of life-cycle-related variations, or of relatively stable cohort structuring: the positivists saw this in terms of a 'life-course development' perspective, whereas the romantic school of history did not regard biological age as a major explanation of social conflicts and changes, but rather the specific cultural and historic factors which structured the mentality of the generations in a sustained manner (Jansen, 1975).

During the Seventies, this historic approach to the generation concept enjoyed a renewed interest because it was able in a theoretically most plausible way to provide an answer to the question why a new political generation appeared to be arising. One of the protagonists of this renewed interest in the study of political generations was Ronald Inglehart, whose Silent Revolution Theory (1977) is sufficiently well-known. The overall majority of scientific studies in this tradition focussed on two pivotal questions.

First, there is the study of the 'Age-Period-Cohort' models which is mainly intended to test the relatively stable cohort stratification of value orientations, in order to illustrate as such the validity of the historical construction of sociological aggregates (Van Deth, 1984, Inglehart, 1985). Apart from the aggregated stability, recent panel research (Inglehart, 1990 and de Graaf, 1988) also shows that on an individual level there is a significant degree of durability of value convictions.

The second pivotal question derives from the existence of political generations and aims to outline the relationship between on the one hand the new generational cleavages in the political culture and on the other the diminishing significance of social classes (cf. a.o. Dalton and Flanagan, 1984 and Inglehart, 1977, 1984).

Related issues of scientific research have arisen from these two key questions. As the cohort interpretation of generational differences in value orientations received ever more powerful demonstration, scientific interest arose in the act of determining the nature of the socio-historic conditions that determine the socialization of value orientations (cf. a.o. de Graaf, 1988). The second pivotal question paved the way for a relation between postmaterialism and 'new' political facts, such as the peace movement, the increased tolerance with regard to homosexuals and the issue of abortion (cf. a.o. Inglehart, 1981, 1983, 1984, 1985, but also Müller-Rommel and Wilke, 1981 and Lesthaeghe and Meekers, 1987). However, the relation with voting behaviour is less clear (cf. a.o. Van der Eijck and Niemöller, 1986 and Middendorp, 1989).

Our research aims to provide a continuation of the research developments in the field of the socio-historic reading of political generations. We do so in an appropriate manner, viz. by using the information that is contained in the nature of

the cohort stratification: in view of the cohort interpretation of the generational differences, the differential spacing is a function of the period in which the socialization took place. However, first and foremost this approach requires a systematic study of the theoretical frame of reference. Hence the priority given to Inglehart's model, after which we will mention the major contributions made to it by other authors.

2. The Origin of the Postmaterialist Value Orientation

The basis of the Inglehart thesis has been repeatedly formulated in the course of his publications and can probably best be summarized in essence in the dual-hypotheses model (Inglehart, 1981, p. 881). The scarcity hypothesis claims that individuals' priorities reflect their socio-economic environment: one attaches relatively more importance to relatively scarce things. The socialization hypothesis stresses the importance of experiences in the 'formative years': values crystalize to a large degree in the human personality.

A major evolution in Inglehart's work can be distinguished in the interpretation of these socio-economic conditions. The original theoretical frame of reference (1971, 1977) was based on Maslow's individual motivation theory (1954) in which a distinction is made between lower physiological needs and higher social or self-actualization needs. Hence the centrality of two historic conditions: the increasing economic prosperity and the absence of direct war experience. Equal importance was attributed to the two in the first publications, but later on Inglehart attached increasing importance to the economic conditions (cf. van Deth, 1984). By 1981, the Maslowian needs theory is merely complementary to the principle of marginal utility in economic theories. The impact of the economic conditions is given extensive attention in this 'reexamining of the theory of value change,' whereas the direct war experience is no longer mentioned and the concept of 'physical security' features in the discussion in a rather inconspicuous way. This tendency to regard the economic basis of the generation theory as fundamental acquires momentum in the latest publications since the Inglehart thesis is connected ever more emphatically with the realignment of the political culture. (Inglehart, 1984, 1985, 1987 and Inglehart and Rabier, 1985).

However, one characteristic of the Maslowian needs theory retains its importance in the Inglehart thesis, viz. the hierarchic ordering. Van Deth (1984) doubts whether the ranking is appropriate for the theoretical frame of reference. In Inglehart's formulation of his basic hypotheses, the ranking is a key element. After all, the beneficial effects of the technological-economic evolution liberate people from their materialist worries, thus clearing the way for 'higher' values. Van Deth suggests that Inglehart insists too much on the positive effects of the socio-economic conditions; if one takes into account the negative consequences as well (increase of impersonal and sterile relationships, creativity-denying labour divisions, etc...), the evolution in a direct way also induces postmaterialist needs, albeit without necessarily going through the Maslowian needs hierarchy. The comparison made by Lesthaeghe and Meekers (1987) between Inglehart's postmaterialism and Bell's 'post-industrial society' which is characterized by the alienation with regard to the techno-economic order, is in the same line. On a

theoretical level, these postulates constitute a significant contribution to the Inglehart thesis because they imply that shifts in value orientations can take place independently from one another.

In the development of his hypotheses model, Inglehart is primarily interested in contextual variables, whereas individual characteristics and experiences are treated less systematically. One individual characteristic which has always been the subject of intense discussion, is the positive association of a higher level of education with the postmaterialist value orientation. Inglehart interprets the level of education in this regard without any second thoughts as an indication of the relative economic prosperity on a micro level: after all, the affluent are the ones who are eligible for higher education. Several authors have quite rightly made the remark that Inglehart is far too eager in his neglect of the intrinsic characteristics of education (cf. a.o. Lafferty, 1976, Marsh, 1975, van Deth, 1984 and de Graaf, 1988): the higher the level of education, the more one learns to stand up for oneself. Also, the creation of a 'cultural capital' equally has a distinct direct effect on the socialization of postmaterialist values.

De Graaf (1988) is the one who systematically balances against each other on the one hand the relative importance of the individual experiences and on the other the contextual situation in which the individual has grown up. He distinguishes four categories: (a) contextual variables, (b) individual background characteristics, (c) variables measuring the effect of the life cycle and (d) the present social context. The decomposition of the relation between the year of birth and the value orientation into a multiple regression analysis appears to confirm the Inglehart hypothesis: 31% of the correlation between postmaterialism and the year of birth is explained by the contextual variables, 23% by the individual background characteristics and 6% by the life-cycle indications. Surprisingly enough, of both contextual variables, only the 'intensity of war experience' variable is significant and not the 'G.N.P. experienced during the socialization years.' The fact that the intensity of war experience was not limited to the socialization years leads de Graaf to conclude that the socialization hypothesis is less dominant than Inglehart suspects. However, some degree of reservation is called for with regard to this interpretation. First, one cannot ignore that 27% of the relation between cohort and value orientation remains 'unexplained' in this model. The remaining 13% can be attributed to the other (insignificant) variables in the model, which mainly reflect the economic conditions. Moreover, the question arises whether 'the intensity of war experience' solely measures these experiences. The variable has been operationalized as the combination of a dummy 'born before or after the war' and a weighing per country (viz. the number of people deceased during the World War). It is in fact typical of the prewar situation that an economically secure environment for the masses never existed. In that sense, 'the intensity of the war experience' can also be made to function as an interactional term in the regression model, viz. the combination of economic experiences with wartime experiences and other culturally determined contextual variations. In view of the Inglehart hypothesis, it comes as no surprise that this 'interaction variable' will be the most important predictor in the model. Nevertheless, we share de Graaf's opinion when he says that it is important to know which experiences and which conditions affect the postmaterialist value orientation. With regard to the distinction between economic

and non-economic conditions, his analysis cannot provide us with any unequivocal answer. But he clearly illustrates how the impact of individual background characteristics has been neglected all too often. In that sense, even some influence on Inglehart's ideas can be detected. (cf. Inglehart, 1990).

3. Research Design and the Formulation of the Hypothesis

Research aiming to measure the relative importance of the economic conditions compared to the non-economic conditions inevitably must face some fundamental problems. The first problem has already featured extensively in the previous paragraph: 'economic prosperity' and 'physical security' as social conditions are interrelated to such an extent that it is hard to separate them by means of a specific operationalization. Secondly, one needs to note that the Inglehart hypothesis posits the combination of the two social conditions. On the other hand, this goes against the observation that the impact of the economic conditions has increasingly moved to the forefront. This appears to be a logical evolution since the number of postwar cohorts continues to increase, thus creating the need to explain the differences between these cohorts. In this case, direct war experience is less relevant.

One answer to the issue of our research can be found in the decomposition of the cohort stratification on the Inglehart index as far as the individual items are concerned. Especially the distribution with regard to the two materialist items is significant in this respect. Flanagan (1987) was right in noting that Inglehart's concept of materialism exceeds the economic connotation that it is spontaneously combined with. It also contains a conservative and authoritarian element. Rather than adopt Flanagan's strategy of making an ideological distinction between materialism and conservatism, we found our research on the different domains in which the more extensive concept of materialism can be expressed: the economic and the cultural domain. With regard to postmaterialism it is less obvious to distinguish distinct domains since -in essence- both can be subsumed under the cultural domain (cf. also Flanagan, 1987). However, we will follow in the footsteps of van Deth (1984), who claims to discern a 'romantic individualism' at the heart of postmaterialism. Postmaterialists are individuals who stress self-development (the individualist domain) but who do so from the perspective of a social consciousness (the social domain). All of these reflections with regard to the concept of Postmaterialism are summarized in the following scheme:

Scheme 1: The Conceptual Frame

<u>needs concept (Maslow)</u>	<u>items (Inglehart)</u>	<u>value concept</u>	<u>domain</u>
physiological needs	fight rising prices	Materialism	economic
safety needs	maintain order		cultural
belonging & esteem	more say in govern- ment	Postmaterialism	(social)
selfactualization	free speech		(individualist)

This conceptual frame offers an extension to the model which Inglehart (1977, p. 5) developed in reference to the Maslowian needs theory. However, the needs theory has stopped playing a central role in the development of the hypotheses model and in that respect we would by no means want to suggest a revaluation of the original relation between need and value. Irrespective of any needs theory whatsoever, the discussion of the Inglehart thesis led us to conclude that it was important to distinguish between the diverse domains in which the value orientations are expressed. And we do connect these domains to the operationalized items.

The logic of this scheme is quite simple: individuals' value orientations can be geared to diverse domains of the political culture and vice versa specific social events can influence the value orientations by way of these domains. The central assumption is that a change in the substructure of the society (e.g. the economic prosperity) influences the value orientations (materialism) by way of the subdomain (the economic).

In this respect it becomes relevant to interpret the differential spacing of the cohorts on the Inglehart index in view of the relative share of the diverse domains. Indeed, the differences between subsequent cohorts do not take place in a linear fashion; they exhibit a time pattern of acceleration and deceleration (Lesthaeghe and Moors, 1990). The question has even been put explicitly: can the deceleration of the cohort differences between the youngest categories be attributed to the economic crisis? Cohorts then can have similar experiences in a specific domain, yet differ in others. Not only the extent to which the experience differs in one domain, but also the combination of experiences in diverse domains has an impact on the extent to which subsequent cohorts differ in their value orientations. In the conceptual frame, the four statements function as 'single-item' indications of the respective domains. In general terms, the hypotheses can be described as follows:

- (a) There is a direct relation between the nature of the historic experience and the domain in which the value orientation manifests itself: the economic conditions have an impact on the economic domain of the materialist value orientation, whereas security conditions are more likely to manifest themselves with regard to the cultural domain.

- (b) The combination of the diverse historic conditions is contributory to the accelerating or decelerating differences between subsequent cohorts.

Starting from the historic conditions under which individuals have grown up, more concrete expectations may be formulated.

(c) Economic Materialism

In general we can expect a distinct cohort stratification with regard to the economic domain of the materialist value orientation. The economic history in Western Europe is characterized by a continual growth interspersed with temporary periods of crisis. In that sense we expect a fairly systematic cohort stratification in the preference for 'fight rising prices'. There is no way to determine in advance in any unequivocal way whether this connection between the cohort stratification and the evolution of prosperity is linear or not : if the accelerating economic growth is taken for granted, a slight decrease of the growth rate can easily be considered as a 'threat', whereas the same growth rate in economically less prosperous times may very well have a liberating effect. The one area in which one might presume a priori that a line of fracture will occur, is that between the cohorts born before and after World War II, since in the first situation economic conditions are experienced as extremely problematic. Beside this, other major differences between cohorts can possibly reflect relatively longer periods of crisis. However, we do expect relatively minor differences amongst the prewar cohorts because the economic situation was never of such a nature that the 'masses' could feel liberated from economic-material concerns.

(d) Cultural Materialism

'Maintaining order' has been operationalized as a degree of the feeling of security. In the original thesis (1971, 1977) the direct war experience determined the degree in which one would permanently appreciate physical security. In this respect, World War II constitutes a fundamental line of fracture, something which should also be reflected in the cohort stratification.

Inglehart is less clear on the subject of how cohort divisions take shape alongside this line of fracture. After all, his expectations are based on the combination of experiences, in which the war experience defines the line of fracture and the economic evolution defines the gradual cohort stratification. Consequently, a systematic stratification with regard to the physical security is not explicitly expected, so that a possible empirical stratification does not necessarily constitute a falsification of the Inglehart thesis. In that case, one merely needs to reevaluate this component.

(e) Postmaterialism

The chances of a postmaterialist pattern of response increase to the extent that one has grown up in an economically and physically secure environment. No specific expectations with regard to the two postmaterialist concepts are formulated

in the Inglehart thesis because one cannot make any hierarchical distinction between the two. Hence the question as to what part both items share in the cohort stratification on the value index, remains unanswered. However, in its entirety the expectations with regard to the postmaterialist cohort stratification constitute the equivalent of the combination of the afore-mentioned expectations with regard to the materialist items: a systematic stratification with World War II functioning as a fundamental line of fracture. Yet, postmaterialism is explicitly associated with anti-establishment movements and social activism (feminism, green movement, etc...). In that respect significant generational differences can be expected to manifest themselves in the social domain of the postmaterialist value orientation (i.e. more say in government). A possible 'explanation' for this can be found in Van Deth's hypothesis that the techno-economic environment increases the impersonal nature of human contacts and thereby has a direct impact on the appreciation of social contact and commitment.

4. Methodological Approach

The study of the cohort differences in value priorities is not without its problems. Firstly, the cohort spacing that is observed must not be an artefact of the moment at which it was measured. Specific period effects (1) and/or measuring errors may influence the results. This analysis is based on the assumption that the sum of the cohort differences in the course of an extended period of observation serves as the best indication of the actual cohort differences.

Secondly, we need to take into account that the differences noted do not solely reflect macro-social conditions. Individual background characteristics also play a part, so they should be included in the model as 'control variables'. Particularly important are the individual characteristics which are distributed on a generational basis and as such contribute to an explanation of the relation between cohort and value orientation. By far the most significant variable to meet these requirements is that of education. Less important are the socio-economic characteristics of the parents (cf. de Graaf, 1988). Consequently, our analysis will incorporate education as a control variable. This may not provide us with a complete 'purification' of the cohort spacing for individual characteristics, but it does take care of the principal one.

The database we used consists of eighteen Eurobarometer surveys produced in the period from 1976 to 1986 (2). The birth cohorts were operationalized into five-year intervals, taking World War II as the point of departure for the distribution (cf. scheme 2). The age at which one finished one's education was recoded into four levels of education. The respondents who were 19 years of age or older at the time of the survey and were still in school, were included in the highest category of education. The operationalization of the dependent variable(s) creates some problems as the research hypotheses are based on the cohort differences both on the Inglehart index as well as the separate items. In addition to that, we should also get information about the relative share of each of the items in the cohort stratification on the value index. This problem is quite easy to solve if we take into account the fact that the Inglehart index can also be expressed as a function of the marginal distributions per item. These marginal distributions are made up of the

proportions of respondents who have selected a specific item as their first or second choice. It can be proved (3) that :

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Inglehart index (\% postmaterialists - \% materialists) =} \\ 100\% - (\% \text{ 'fight rising prices' + \% 'maintain order' }) \quad \text{or =} \\ (\% \text{ 'free speech' + \% 'more say in government' }) - 100\% \end{aligned}$$

In other words, it suffices to implement the analysis per item level. The summation of the cohort differences on both materialist items (or the mirror image of the postmaterialist items) perfectly reflects the distribution on the Inglehart index. Consequently, the share of each of the items in the cohort stratification on the scale can be read directly .

These properties can be summarized in an easy-to-read chart. If we use the distribution of one (post)materialist item (f.i. % free speech) as the first axis of a two-dimensional plot, and the other (post)materialist item (f.i. % more say in government) as the second, each cohort can be localized in reference with three axes (x,y,z). Indeed, each vertical projection of a point in the two-dimensional graph on the diagonal axes corresponds with the exact value on the Inglehartindex ($z = x + y - 100\%$).

chart 1 : here

Scheme 2: The Operationalization.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------|---|
| 1. Cohorts: | (1) | =born before 1914 |
| | (2) | =born between 1915-1919 |
| | (3) | =1920-1924 |
| | (4) | =1925-1929 |
| | (5) | =1930-1934 |
| | (6) | =1935-1939 |
| | (7) | =1940-1944 |
| | (8) | =1945-1949 |
| | (9) | =1950-1954 |
| | (10) | =1955-1959 |
| | (11) | =1960-1964 |
| 2. Education: | (1) | =finished education at 14 years of age or younger |
| | (2) | =15 or 16 years of age |
| | (3) | =17 or 18 years of age |
| | (4) | =19 years or older |
| 3. Inglehart Battery: | (1) | =item selected (first or second choice) |
| | (0) | =item not selected |

Itemlabels:	Price:	'fight rising prices'
	Order:	'maintain order in the nation'
	Democ:	'more say in government decisions'
	Freed:	'protection of freedom of speech'

Weighing coefficients were used in the analysis, so as to keep both the size of the sample survey and the relative number of respondents per cohort unchanged (4).

The charts listed below convey both the values observed (per cohort) as well as the values resulting from an analyses with level of education as the control variable (M.C.A. results). As far as the youngest cohort (1960-64) is concerned only the data during the 1981-1986 period was taken into account. Prior to this, the '1960-1964' cohort was too young to be incorporated in the sample survey in a stable and homogeneous manner. To eliminate period-biases we calculated the average difference from the cohort that is five years older during the 1981-1986 period and added this with the observed values from the older cohort for the complete datarange.

The analyses were repeated separately per country in order to chart culturally determined information. At the same time, this provides a control of the degree to which the results lend themselves to generalizations. Since the elaboration of both charts per country would harm the overall view, we opted for an aggregate of the different analyses.

The culturally determined information is then summarized in the comparison of three indices (table 1). The first of these can be considered as a degree of cohort variation (CV) since it indicates the extent of the average difference between on the one hand the youngest cohorts born after 1950 and on the other hand the oldest cohorts born before 1919. The second index (CVc) was analogously operationalized, albeit by means of the cohort differences after controlling for level of education. By comparing both CV indices in a ratio (viz. the third measure : $RCV = CVc/CV$) we can tell what share of the cohort differences that were observed can be attributed to the level of education: the lower the ratio, the higher the impact of education.

Finally, we calculated the relative share of the items in the cohort stratification (table 2) (5).

Chart 2 and 3 : here

Table 1 and 2 : here

5. Discussion.

The theoretical frame of reference predominantly stressed the generational differences in economic-materialist preferences. If we only look at the rough cohort distribution of the 'fight rising prices' item, expectations are more or less confirmed: there is a gradual cohort stratification with a deceleration in this pattern for the cohort that has experienced the problematic economic experiences during childhood (the cohort 1930-35). However, three distinct indications considerably undermine the expectations based on the Inglehart thesis.

Firstly, the difference between the younger and the older cohorts (CV values) in most countries is at $\pm 12\%$. Only Italy has a more pronounced difference (22%). Secondly, if we take into account the level of education, the cohort differences in five countries (Great Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark, France and Belgium) are distinctly leveled off (RVC): the stratification is largely the result of the individual background characteristic. In Ireland, Italy and West Germany, more than a third of the cohort stratification is also due to the level of education. Only in West-Germany and Italy do the cohort differences after control for level of education remain significantly higher than the average. In the case of West Germany, this can be attributed to the pattern of the youngest cohorts: all of the cohorts born before 1954 -after the control for education- are situated within a spread of 5%, whereas the difference between the '1950-1954' cohort and the youngest cohort amounts to 10%. In Italy, the gradual cohort stratification remains intact: this is due on the one hand to distinct cohort differences -similar to the ones in West Germany- amongst the youngest cohorts, and on the other hand to the fact that the cohorts born before 1919 are notably more materialistically orientated than the other cohorts.

A third factor in nuancing the frame of reference is the observation that the relative share of the economic-materialist item in the cohort stratification on the Inglehart index is quite limited in most countries (table 2). Taking into account the level of education, 'fight rising prices' in the afore-mentioned group of five countries contributes less than 25% to the cohort stratification on the Inglehart index. Ireland is also at a low of 23% in this respect. Only West Germany (37%) and especially Italy (51%) have higher figures (5). These observations imply that, if one takes into account the culturally determined variations in the cohort stratification of the youngest cohorts, the economic dimension only has a moderate impact on the cohort stratification in value orientations, in other words, the Inglehart index. Moreover, the cohort differences can largely be attributed to differences in level of education. Of course, Inglehart's interpretation of the level of education as an indication of individual economic conditions experienced in the course of the socialization years remains plausible. But in the light of our findings, this would imply that economic materialism is almost completely determined by individual economic conditions, with hardly any role left to play for the macro-economic conditions. This reasoning is quite unconvincing, since one can expect the lower social strata to feel relatively liberated from economic material worries during times of economic growth. Therefore it is safe to say that a more intrinsic characteristic of the level of education plays a part, viz. the higher the level of education, the higher the chances are that one is convinced that one can do something about the economic situation oneself, whereas those of a lower level of education in such a situation will be more likely to appeal to outside sources of assistance. Fight rising prices in a sense refers to the desirability of others (viz. the government) to intervene in the economy and hence the rough cohort differences refer less to differing ends (= economic materialism as a priority) but rather to a difference in means. Hence the significance of education as an explanation for the generational differences. Another scientific tradition indirectly contributes to these interpretations. Kohn (1977) and Alwin (1990), for instance, indicate that those of a higher level of education attach more importance to intrinsically orientated alternatives of behaviour, rather than conform to externally defined expectations of

behaviour. Generational differences in preferences for intrinsic characteristics can also be explained to a large extent by means of the level of education (Alwin, 1990).

The fact that the climate or macro-mentality of a society during a given era exerts a socializing influence on generations is reflected in the cohort distribution on two of the other items in the Inglehart battery, viz. 'maintain order' and 'more say in government'.

The cohort stratification with regard to 'maintain order' takes place in a quite gradual manner, with a pattern of acceleration for the cohorts born directly after World War II. The chart also shows that only the youngest cohort breaks through the expectation pattern: it will appreciate 'maintain order' relatively more than the cohort that is five years older. This pattern could be traced in all of the non-Anglosaxon countries. Cohort differences per country are substantial: in general, CV values are about 20%, with a high of 28% in France and an exceptional low of 11% in Great Britain. What is more, these differences cannot be attributed to the level of education. After a control for education (cf. RCV values), more than 70% of the cohort differences in all countries remain intact. The cohort spacing is of such a pronounced nature that our explanation of it must necessarily surpass Inglehart's original security concept. After all, maintain order also refers to the conservation of existing traditions and social relations and has a conservative authoritarian connotation.

In conceptual terms, the basic democratic item of 'more say in government' can be expected to feature as the polar opposite of 'maintaining order'. Both explicitly refer to basic views with regard to the political order. Empirically speaking, the distribution with regard to this postmaterialist item is in fact a fitting mirror image of the materialist item: there is a more pronounced cohort spacing which is quite resistant to the control for level of education. But no mirror-image analogy applies to the youngest category: it selects both 'more say in government' and 'maintain order' relatively more often than the cohort that is five years older. The fact that both items have relatively gained in importance with regard to the youngest category might indicate that there is a progressive polarization within that cohort regarding basic democratic views versus authoritarian convictions. However, partly because this pattern failed to substantiate in France, Belgium and the Netherlands, this final conclusion is very hypothetical and in need of additional empirical validation, which it was impossible to provide in this context.

The distribution with regard to the 'freedom of speech' item from more than one perspective constitutes the empirical mirror image of the 'fight rising prices' item discussed above. The cohort spacing is not as pronounced: only in France and West Germany do we roughly have a 20% difference between the youngest and the oldest cohorts (CV index), whereas in the other countries it is at 12% or less. Once again, education is a major source of explanation for the cohort differences and the cohort stratification for both 'fight rising prices' and 'freedom of speech' is almost identical. However, an analogous comparison per country indicated that the mirror image is not always a perfect one. This should not come as a surprise, since no direct polarity in conceptual terms can be established between 'fight rising prices' and 'freedom of speech'. But this is possible in an indirect way: 'fight rising

prices' strongly refers to interventions in the economy and hence to a socialist ideological standpoint, viz. safeguarding the employees' purchasing power. However, the liberal ideological equivalent will tend to stress free enterprise, but this item was not included as such in the battery of questions(6). Freedom of speech might be selected as a surrogate item, but the latter refers to a cultural principle as such, so that the choice of this item possibly derives from a dual interpretation. There is sufficient proof that 'freedom of speech' features to a large extent as the functional alternative to 'fight rising prices' in the Inglehart battery. The deviation from the general pattern which we can observe in France and West Germany may mean that in these countries 'freedom of speech' is selected relatively more often on the basis of the cultural principle as such. Note that the 'freedom of speech' item can also maintain its individualist connotation when used as a functional alternative to 'fight rising prices'.

The most important conclusion from our analysis is that with regard to the social construction of political generations in general and the Inglehart thesis in particular, a distinction needs to be made between the economic and the non-economic (or cultural) domain of the political value orientations. This typology is in line with Middendorp's research into the ideological dimensions of the Dutch electorate's reasoning. Middendorp traces a two-dimensional ideological distribution on the basis of the 'freedom-equality' opposition both on the economic and the socio-cultural level: on the one hand there is an economic left-right dimension (freedom versus equality respectively, with regard to government intervention in the economy) and on the other hand there is a libertarian-conservative dimension (freedom versus equality respectively, with regard to traditional values). This study is important for our research, because Van Rijsselt (1989) has demonstrated the existence of a clear cohort stratification with regard to the libertarian-conservative dimension, whereas this is not the case for the economic left-right dimension. Felling and Peters (1984), who have been operationalizing comparable dimensions, come to the same conclusion. As far as the Netherlands are concerned, the results of our analysis of the Inglehart battery provide a complementary image: there is substantial cohort spacing for 'maintain order' whereas this is far less the case for 'fight rising prices'. Despite the distinct difference in measuring devices between Middendorp (rating) and Inglehart (ranking), the empirical distributions of the cohorts are quite similar. Hence the added validity of the relevance of the two-dimensional frame of reference (the economic versus the non-economic domain of the political culture) for the construction of political generations. However, the two studies are not absolutely identical. Middendorp includes the two postmaterialist items in the libertarian-conservative dimension, whereas only the cohort distribution for 'more say in government' is similar to the pattern which van Rijsselt has established. However, we have already indicated that the Inglehart battery does not offer a rightwing-economic alternative for 'fight rising prices', so that 'freedom of speech' is probably used as the functional alternative. This implies that the distinction made earlier on between the social and the individualist domain of the postmaterialist value orientation (cf. the first scheme) becomes blurred. One final culturally determined characteristic demands our attention. We always

assumed that the level of education contributes to an explanation of the relation between cohort and value orientation. Even though education explains the relation between generations and the preference for 'maintain order' and 'more say in government' only to a limited extent, we can detect an 'inverse' effect in the Anglosaxon countries: to some extent education functions as a suppressor. This is a remarkable conclusion since education does reduce cohort differences when it comes to the two other items. The explanation for this suppressor effect of the level of education is only hypothetical and should probably be looked for in the more intrinsic characteristics of the education system. Traditions have always played a major part in the Anglosaxon education system, and the stress on tradition increases with the level of socialization that is attained. Hence our suspicion that the normative nature of socialization plays a significant role. But since the normative element is not exclusively linked to the level or length of education, this hypothesis has as yet been insufficiently tested on an empirical basis.

5. Conclusion

In answer to the question as to what the social construction is of political generations, it seemed particularly relevant -also with regard to the Inglehart thesis- to take into account the economic and the cultural domain in which political value orientations manifest themselves. The most pronounced generational differences can be located in the cultural domain. We noted that 'maintain order' and 'more say in government' could be considered polar items. In both cases, the empirical relation with the birth cohort was highly similar: the older the cohort, the stronger the ties with the existing social relations and traditions; the younger the cohorts, the stronger the affinities with basic democratic principles. This characterization did not entirely apply to the youngest cohorts, born between 1960 and 1964. On the basis of this analysis, one cannot claim in any unequivocal terms that there is a polarization within this cohort. However, it is important to note that the generational differences can only partly be attributed to the 'level of education' individual background characteristic. Even though not all of the individual characteristics were included in the model, this does constitute a strong confirmation of the postulate that socio-historic conditions have a socializing effect with regard to value orientations. But they appear to explain intracultural variations rather than differentiate between economic and non-economic priorities. After all, the generational differences in terms of the economy (fight rising prices) are less pronounced and, moreover, they can be largely attributed to the level of education: because those of a higher level of education have been trained to take initiatives themselves, they will be less likely to make an appeal to others (i.e. the government) to intervene. 'Intervention' is opposed to 'freedom', but in view of the absence of economic freedom as such from the Inglehart battery, respondents who prefer the economic freedom will look toward 'freedom of speech' as an alternative. Empirical proof exists that this item fulfils this function to a considerable extent, but we do need to keep in mind that freedom of speech possesses a cultural (and hence dual) content validity. Therefore, the conceptual polarity of the items is by no means absolute.

Notes:

- (°) This article is partly the result of a productive 'dialogue' with the remarks which the anonymous readers made on the occasion of a first version. Hence my sincere expression of gratitude to them.
- (1) The trend which the cohorts followed with regard to the Inglehart index does not run parallel in all of the countries. In the Netherlands, Denmark, West Germany and Great Britain the Inglehart index goes up from 1980 onwards, whereas in the other countries it remains constant or even shows a downward trend. (cf; Lesthaeghe and Moors, 1990)
- (2) We thank B.A.S.S. for putting the material at our disposal. The data for 1979 were not included in the analysis.
- (3) Argumentation:

Crosstabulation : First by second choice on the (short) Inglehart-scale.

Correspondence between item preference (1=item chosen, 0=item not chosen) and the Inglehartindex (% postmaterialists - % materialists)

Count						Row Total
Tot	Pct	MAINTAIN ORDER	MORE SAY	RISING PRICES	FREE SPEECH	
		1	2	3	4	
MAINTAIN ORDER	1		59	171	120	351
			3.5	10.2	7.2	20.9
MORE SAY	2	56		89	158	304
		3.3		5.3	9.5	18.1
RISING PRICES	3	196	103		204	504
		11.7	6.2		12.2	30.1
FREE SPEECH	4	144	240	133		516
		8.6	14.3	7.9		30.8
Column Total		396	402	394	483	1674
		23.6	24.0	23.5	28.8	100.0

Inglehartindex

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= \% \text{ postmaterialists} - \% \text{ materialists} \\
 &= (9.5+14.3) - (10.2+11.7) \\
 &= +1.9 \\
 &= \text{total\%} - (\% \text{ maintain order} + \% \text{ rising prices}) \\
 &= 100 - ((20.9+23.6) + (30.1+23.5)) \\
 &= +1.9 \\
 &= (\% \text{ free speech} + \% \text{ more say}) - \text{total\%} \\
 &= ((30.8+28.8) + (18.1+24.0)) - 100 \\
 &= +1.9
 \end{aligned}$$

- (4) The basic assumption in this analysis is that the average difference between the cohorts at several points in time constitutes the best possible indication of the actual differences. Demographic differences in the sample composition and age need to remain the same in order for trend fluctuations not to have any impact.
- (5) In calculating the share of the different items in the cohort stratification on the Inglehart index, item-determined cohort variations were controlled for the level of education (CVc values) and then related to the CVc values of the Inglehart index (=the sum of the CVc values of both materialist items (or both postmaterialist items) - the consequence of the characteristic mentioned under (3))

$$\text{e.g. share of 'Price'} = \frac{\text{CVc (Price)}}{\text{CVc (Price) + CVc (Order)}}$$

- (6) Flanagan also draws attention to the problems inherent in the multi-ideological interpretation of the Inglehart items. Our interpretation differs from the threefold conceptualization by Flanagan (materialist, libertarian, authoritarian) in that the Middendorp studies inspired us to take into account the possibility of a two-dimensional (or quadripolar) structure of the political culture.

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Table 1 : Indications of Cohort Spacing

Materialist Items						
	Fight rising prices			Maintain order		
	CV	CVc	RCV	CV	CVc	RCV
Belgium	-12,82	-4,01	0,31	-19,54	-17,45	0,82
Denmark	-13,48	-3,49	0,26	-20,71	-16,45	0,79
France	-11,80	-2,43	0,21	-28,05	-21,02	0,75
Great Britain	-12,83	-4,82	0,38	-10,40	-14,94	1,44
Ireland	-10,28	-5,71	0,56	-16,64	-19,29	1,16
Italy	-22,45	-13,77	0,61	-17,93	-13,01	0,73
the Netherlands	-10,50	0,78	<0,00	-23,70	-22,15	0,93
West Germany	-15,61	-10,00	0,64	-20,36	-16,76	0,82
Total	-13,73	-5,43	0,40	-19,67	-17,45	0,89

Postmaterialist items						
	More say			Freedom of speech		
	CV	CVc	RCV	CV	CVc	RCV
Belgium	20,25	13,80	0,68	12,10	6,22	0,51
Denmark	25,25	22,28	0,88	8,93	-2,34	<,00
France	20,66	12,23	0,59	19,19	11,22	0,58
Great Britain	18,49	21,49	1,16	4,73	-1,74	<,00
Ireland	19,18	19,49	1,02	7,75	5,76	0,74
Italy	31,64	23,22	0,73	8,70	3,56	0,41
the Netherlands	22,23	20,46	0,92	12,02	0,91	0,08
West Germany	17,43	13,67	0,78	18,55	13,09	0,71
Total	21,89	18,33	0,84	11,05	4,58	0,40

CV = cohort variation
average % of preferences of cohorts born after 1950 minus
average % of preferences of cohorts born before 1919

CVc = cohort variation after control for level of education

RCV = ratio of cohort variation
CVc / CV (proportion of CV which cannot be
attributed to the level of education)

Table 2 : Relative share of the items in the cohort
stratification on the Inglehart index.

A. Observed share.

	BE	DE	FR	UK	IR	IT	NL	WG	Total
price	0,40	0,39	0,30	0,55	0,38	0,56	0,31	0,43	0,41
order	0,60	0,61	0,70	0,45	0,62	0,44	0,69	0,57	0,59
democ	0,63	0,74	0,52	0,80	0,71	0,78	0,65	0,48	0,66
freed	0,37	0,26	0,48	0,20	0,29	0,22	0,35	0,52	0,34

B. After control for level of education.

	BE	DE	FR	UK	IR	IT	NL	WG	Total
price	0,20	0,18	0,10	0,24	0,23	0,51	-0,04	0,37	0,24
order	0,80	0,82	0,90	0,76	0,77	0,49	1,04	0,63	0,76
democ	0,69	1,12	0,52	1,09	0,77	0,87	0,96	0,51	0,80
freed	0,31	-0,12	0,48	-0,09	0,23	0,13	0,04	0,49	0,20

Chart 1

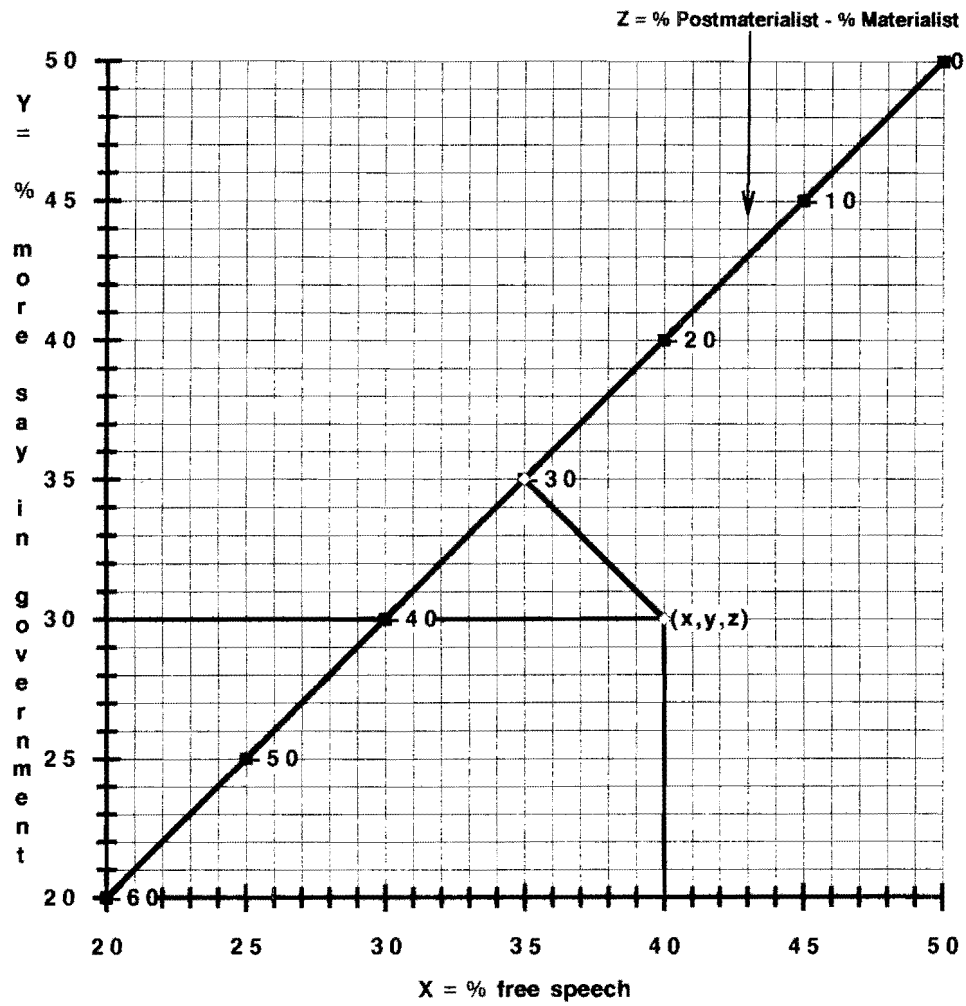


Chart 2 : Cohort Distribution

% 'fight rising prices' by % 'maintain order' (reversed scale)
(average values for 8 EC countries)

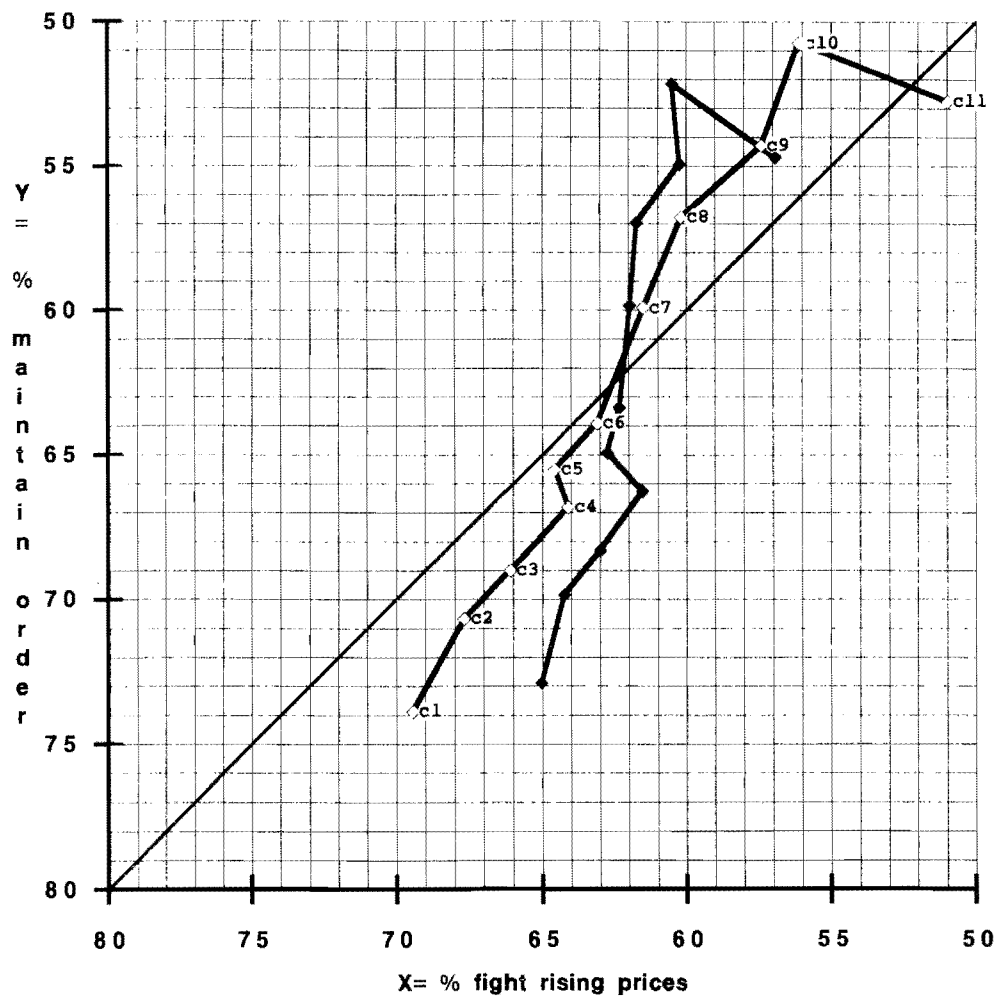
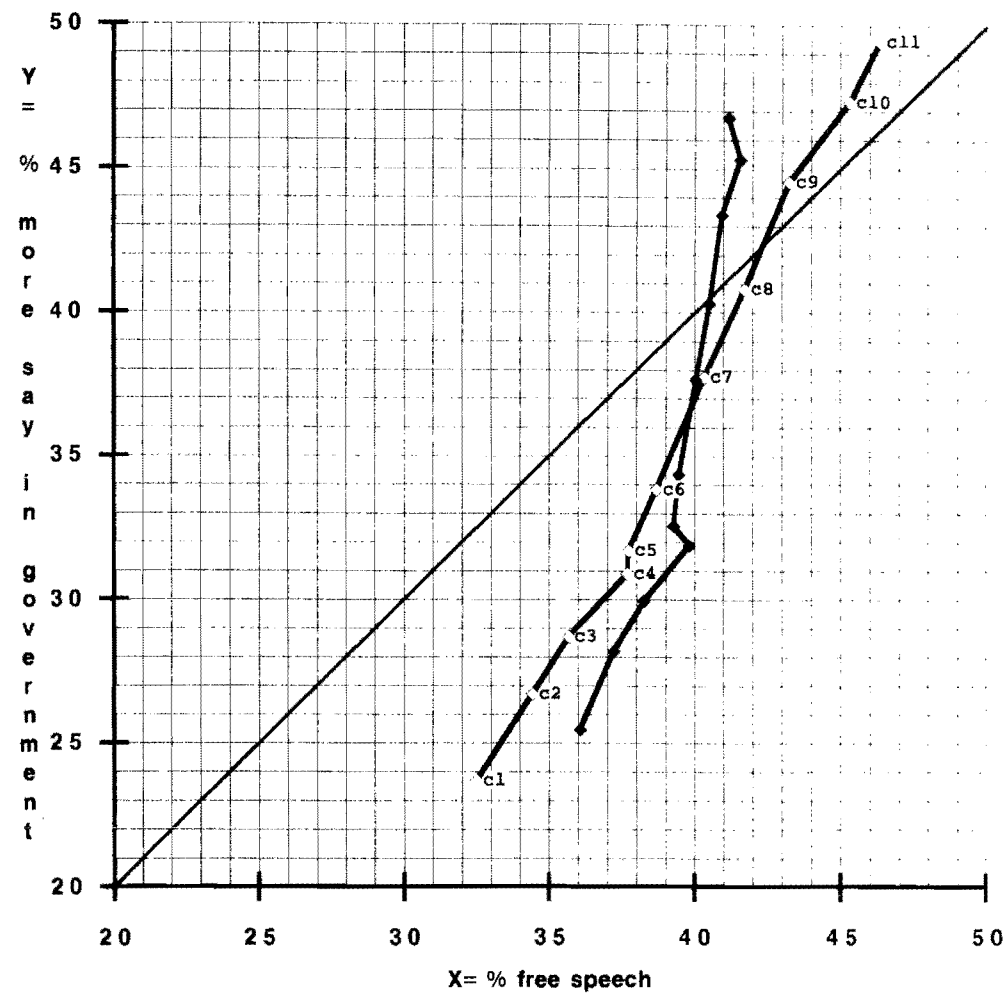


Chart 3 : Cohort Distribution

% 'free speech' by % 'more say in government'
(average values for 8 EC countries)



Observed values Values controlled for level of education

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