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Youth centrism and conservatism
The political value of resisting the adult world

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Jugendzentrismus und Konservatismus

Der politische Wert des Widerstands gegen die Erwachsenenwelt

A basic controversy in the sociological debate about the cultural orientations of young people is the one between functionalist theory claiming that youth indulges in youth cultures in order to comply with societal demands and neo-marxist theory assuming that youth nurtures a tendency to establish rebellious youth cultures in opposition to the dominant culture. This article puts the controversy in a youth sociological perspective (e.g. by drawing on life course perspectives), and empirically focuses on shifts in political orientations of young people and adults. Young people who identify with their own age culture and resist adult culture, so-called youth centrists, have a central position in this article. Two Dutch data sets, a representative cross-sectional value study conducted in 1990 (n=1200) and a panel study covering the 1986-1994 period (n=145), show that youth centrists follow the overall cultural trends with much precision. There is one exception that prevents us from fully endorsing the functionalist view: youth centrists have conservative views of women and in this respect do run against the overall trend in Dutch society.

Eine grundlegende Kontroverse in der soziologische Diskussion über kulturelle Orientierungen von jungen Menschen ist diejenige zwischen der funktionalistischen Theorie, die besagt, daß Jugendliche sich in Jugendkulturen integrieren, um die gesellschaftlichen Anforderungen zu erfüllen und der neomarxistischen Theorie, nach der „Jugend" eine Tendenz beinhaltet, gegen die dominante (hegomoniale) Kultur zu rebellieren. Dieser Artikel integriert diese Kontroverse in eine jugensoziologische Perspektive, indem er sich auf den Blickwinkel des Lebenslaufes konzentriert, und empirisch den Wechsel bezüglich der politischen Orientierungen von jungen Menschen und Erwachsenen fokussiert. Jugendlichen, die sich mit ihrer eigenen Alterskultur identifizieren und der Kultur der Erwachsenen widerstehen, sogenannte Jugendzentristen, kommen eine zentrale Bedeutung in diesem Artikel zu. Zwei niederländische Datensätze, eine representative Querschittsstudie, die 1990 durchgeführt wurde (n=1200) und einer Panel-Studie, die den Zeitraum von 1986 bis 1994 umfaßt (n=145), zeigen, daß Jugendliche den Tendenzen der Gesamtkultur mit großer Präzision folgen. Es gibt nur eine Ausnahme, die uns davon abhält, den funktionalistischen Blickwinkel volkommen zu unterstützen: Jugendzentristen hegen ein konservatives Frauenbild und bewegen sich in diesem Hinblick gegen den Gesamttrend der holländischen Gesellschaft.

1. Resist and obey

Crises, turmoil, instability, and change are, in most youth studies, seen as the fundamental characteristics of „our fast changing" modern society. It seems youth's particular task to find their way of coping with these turbulent phenomena. Definitions of the actual content of crises, turmoil, instability, and change, or suggestions about the direction in which these events develop are not very conspicuous. In many cases it seems sufficient to claim that today or „after the Second World War" society is changing faster and faster. Exceptionally chaotic and permanently turbulent futures are portrayed. Futures in which one will require an unprecedented high receptiveness for change and flexibility. Young people not only are thought to experience crisis, instability, and change more intensively than adult age groups do, they also seem fortunate in having the abilities to deal with these phenomena. Most youth studies, all and all, share similar guiding questions: how do young people make sense of the new environment, do they accept its values and norms, or might it be so that in this process of making sense they express behaviors and orientations that might herald social revival and lasting cultural transformations?

This article is not inspired by a bewilderment about the way young people today cope within „accelerating culture". It is much more inspired by two equally bewildering as well as contrasting perspectives in youth sociology. In one perspective youth is likely to obey and adapt to prevailing norms and rules. To counterbalance the inadequate socialization provided by their parents, young people affiliate in peer groups, develop their own youth culture, and learn the tools necessary for adulthood in a separate social environment. This accommodation disposition is fostered by supporters of <u>functionalist youth sociology</u>. Another point of view is that youth is accredited to nurture a vivid tendency to challenge the dominant norms and basic values of society. Young people in this perspective develop particular values, norms, and styles expressing their resistance, whether or not illusionary, to adaptation and accommodation to the prevailing culture. This resistance disposition is particularly advocated by adherents of <u>neo-marxist youth sociology</u>.

Although the issues and questions both „grand theories" raise are still in the very nucleus of contemporary youth studies, the fierce debate between functionalist and neo-marxist youth sociology has never been evaluated empirically. So far the debate has been a predominantly theoretical one. A first step in contributing empirically to the debate is to explore the extent to which young people do indeed have particular outlooks, specific values, and distinctive attitudes. This type of exploration should, moreover, focus on the principal issue of accommodation or resistance. Compliance and opposition relate to the political issues of conservatism and progressiveness. The conservatism-progressiveness dichotomy is a central controversy in the political domain.

Empirically, young people's position in the political domain will have to be assessed in comparison to the one of adults. But this comparison does not

suffice. The two contrasting theories addressing the question of accommodation and resistance suggest that it is necessary to discern young people who identify with the culture of contemporaries and separate themselves from the adult world. Comparisons of young people with adults have to take account of young people who expose these age cultural differentiations. In youth studies these young people are labeled youth centrists and their counterparts adult centrists. Studies on the value distinctiveness of young people and adults should, in short, include youth centrism. This article, building on the study „Political values and youth centrism" (Vinken, 1997), is the first to do so.[2] This article discusses some of the core results of this study, but before doing so the concept of youth centrism and its position in youth theories will be presented below.

2. The concept of youth centrism

Similar to the Mannheimian perspective on „generation units" one may observe that the social „vehicle" of youth subcultures might very well be a concrete social group of contemporaries, but that youth subcultures as such are not confined to this particular social group (cf. Diepstraten/Ester/Vinken 1998). The core elements of youth cultures are behavioral routines and interpretation schemes with which young people make distinctions between themselves and other age groups, routines and schemes that have a „recruiting power" beyond the concrete social group. Youth centrism is the concept that taps these type of routines and schemes related to the domain of age cultures.

The history of youth centrism can be traced back to the mid-sixties. In these years Michael Schofield revealed an alarming shortage of adequate knowledge and a welter of comments and opinions on youth's alleged incidence of promiscuity. Schofield started an empirical analysis of sexual behavior of young people. In the course of this research he soon touched upon the power of the peer group. He argued that an increasing number of young people „will have the power to pursue their particular ends without regard for adult society or its traditions" (Schofield 1965, 11). Considering the earlier physical maturation of youth, Schofield warns that the endeavor for these particular ends leads to early sexual desire and thus to early sexual risk. Schofield subsequently searched for indicators for the conformity to either peer group or adult standards. One of the important dimensions he found was labeled „teenage ethnocentrism" which reveals the extent to which teenagers are in favor of their own group and opposed to others (Schofield 1965, 204). Teenage ethnocentrists reject the adult world (ibid., 217). They associate a clear-cut hedonistic self-centeredness with strong antagonism towards everything outside their teenage world. In this respect they regard the own peer group as a favorable ingroup and regard all other groups as adversary outgroups. Adults and adult institutions are looked upon unfavorably. Not only do youth ethnocentrists strongly dislike adult interference in their affairs or look negatively upon adult

advice, Schofield (1965: 204-205) found that they also hold intolerant views towards other outgroups, such as foreigners and homosexuals.

Research on the differentiations young people make between young and adult age groups was strongly elevated by a series of German youth studies from the 1980s omwards (Fischer 1985; Georg 1992; Watts/Zinnecker 1988; Watts et al. 1989; Zinnecker 1982, 1985). In these studies the concept of youth centrism was introduced. Youth centrism refers to age-related ingroup-outgroup distinctions young people make: the young constitute the positively valued ingroup and adults are the negatively perceived outgroup. The ingroup and outgroup categorizations made by young people are seen as highly consequential for the way young people interact with peers and adults, perceive society, and address issues in the domain of political culture.

Youth centrism in these studies is related to the issue of separation and individuation. It incorporates the tendency to separate adults from oneself and from contemporaries, and it also stands for attempts to determine one's own behaviors, one's own values, attitudes, and lifestyles. Outside (i.e. adult) control is not appreciated in this process. Youth centrists put a strong emphasis on peer culture and strongly reprove adult culture.

Overlooking the theoretical and empirical legacy of the concept of youth centrism it seems that youth centrism applies to a minority of youth only. In Germany, about 18% of youth younger than 24 years of age adheres to youth centrism. In the Netherlands, where youth centrism is introduced in youth studies from the mid-1980s onwards (cf. Maassen/Meeus 1993; Meeus 1986; Meeus/ Vinken 1993; Raaijmakers/Meeus/Vollebergh 1990), generational antagonism measured with youth centrism seems to apply to 20% of all youth. This 20% is not solely youth centered, but combines youth centrism with hedonistic and anarchistic attitudes.

The relationship of youth centrism with the peer group is not indisputable. For all young people, support from peers in the domain of leisure is evidently stronger than support from parents. In the domains of school and work this is the other way around. Youth centrists, so the Dutch studies in particular show, do not experience more support from peers than do adult centrists. Youth centrists are likely, on the other hand, to be more involved in loosely organized youth groups in which symmetrical reciprocity as a code for personal interactions is dominant. Their involvement in adult-led youth groups, which are basically characterized by asymmetrical relationships, is low.

Youth centrism seems related to problems associated with growing up, such as mastering developmental tasks and constructing a meaningful future as an adult. The failure to fulfil tasks, such as finishing school, attaining work, and living up to other institutionalized expectations, seems to generate harsh ingroup-outgroup differentiations. It is likely that especially for the lower educated the attainment of antagonistic age cultural perceptions is related to

incapacities to come to terms with expectations, roles, and positions. For the higher educated young people, who have more opportunities to successfully accomplish their expectations, roles and positions, youth centered attitudes are likely to be related to the rejection of future roles and positions. The lengthening of the youth phase for the higher educated also leads to a situation in which biographical uncertainties prevail. There are some indications that uncertainty triggers youth centered attitudes. In reference to the main question of this study, these results indicate that it is important to examine the relationship of both education and youth centrism with political values. More importantly, it is with introducing youth centrism that the core element of the contradictory theories of functionalism and neo-marxism is touched upon. Youth centrists, and adult centrists as their counterparts, can both be regarded as the groups of young people to which functionalists and neo-marxists attribute either compliant or oppositional orientations. These young people are the ones who take their socialization in their own hands, dislike outside interference, either from parents or other adult representatives of social institutions, and want to be free to develop and express their own culture. The question is whether this culture is compliant or oppositional, or to be more specific, whether it is conservative or progressive in political terms.

3. Questioning youth theories

In functionalist youth theory, Parsons (1942, 1965) and his adherents (Berger 1972; Coleman 1961; Eisenstadt 1956, 1965) argue that young people discard the codes, values and norms of the „outdated" institution of the nuclear family. The family culture, which in functionalist theory does not seem to be class-specific, does not prepare young people properly and adequately for the demands of society. Complying with the existing demands, values, and norms, formulated „within the larger non-kinship institutions of society", is the pivotal prerequisite for young people living in modernized societies, according to functionalists. In neo-marxist youth sociology, by contrast, young people resist the demands, codes, and values that govern society, but in doing so dwell on their „parent culture", use „authentic" expressions that correspond closely with the class-related culture of the family. In its consequences the cultural strategies of youth, both in a functionalist and neo-marxist perspective, ultimately lead to integration in society. The result once these young people are adults is the same in both perspectives: societal integration. More interesting is that in order to integrate, young people, according to one perspective, must be compliant with, and according to the other perspective, must be oppositional to the values and norms that govern society as such.

But what are the governing values and norms? Looking at available evidence from major Dutch political value studies it can be demonstrated that contemporary Dutch society is characterized by both economic conservatism and cultural progressiveness, postmateralism, and moderate right-wing political

orientations.[3] There are also arguments that Dutch people's political interest is on the rise, and that people's votes are allocated more to center/right-wing political parties. Conformity and compliance with these developments, which especially youth culturally involved young people according to functionalism are apt to express, lead to the expectation that the distinctiveness of youth centrists, other young people, and adults are modest. Functionalists, however, also claim that young people in their youthful idealism are inclined to overstate the existing demands, codes, values, and norms in society. This leads to the hypothesis that youth centrists do follow the overall trends in political culture, but might also take up more extreme positions than other groups in society do, albeit in the same direction. In summary:

<u>Functionalist theory expects youth centrists to be as economically conservative, right-wing, culturally progressive, and postmaterialist as adult age groups are, or to support these political values and attitudes more extremely than adult age groups do.</u>

As stated above, in neo-marxist youth sociology (see especially Clarke et al. 1976; and also Cohen 1983; Hebdige 1976; Willis 1977, 1978) young people, especially those of working-class background, are considered to reject and resist the existing demands, codes, and values that are dominant in society at large. Neo-marxists particularly theorize about the rebellious propensities of working-class young people identifying with youth subcultures. They are less clear, on a theoretical level, about the inclinations of middle-class youth affiliating in counter-cultural movements. The subcultural world of young people is accredited to correlate closely with the culture of the class from which they originate. The ideals, values, and cultural expressions of young people are „authentic" in the sense that they draw heavily on the ideals, values, and expressions that underlie the culture of their class of origin.

The culture of the middle-class, the class from which these young people originate, is according to marxists the very model of the hegemonical culture, the culture dominant in bourgeois capitalist societies. In neo-marxist theories many examples are provided, mainly descending from the tumultuous 1960s, that middle-class youngsters also sharply criticize and rebel against the dominant culture. A critical and oppositional attitude is, however, not inherent to middle-class young people per se. Working-class youngsters engaged in

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[3] The political values mentioned here are the core values in a multitude of Dutch and international studies, such as Social and Cultural Developments in the Netherlands (SOCON), Cultural Change (CV), and the World Values Study (WVS). Basic publications for conservatism and the left-right dichotomy are „Civic and Non-Civic Netherlands" (Felling/Peters/Schreuder 1983; in Dutch), „Social and Political Attitudes in Dutch Society" (Dekker/Ester 1993), „The Culture of the Welfare State" (Ester/ Halman 1994; in Dutch), „Ideology in Dutch Society" (Middendorp 1991), and „The Individualizing Society" (Ester/Halman/De Moor 1993). For postmatrialism see Inglehart (1997, 1990, 1997). These studie are reviewed (and re-analyzed) in „Political Values and Youth Centrism" (Vinken 1997, 37-65).

working-class youth subcultures are believed to rear the forte of resistance against hegemonical culture, simply because their culture, as well as the one of the class they belong to, conflicts with dominant culture. One can anticipate that youth centrists, especially of working-class origin, display resistance against dominant culture, and thus do not sympathize with the existing politico-cultural configurations in society, that is (in the Dutch case) with economic conservatism, right-wing political preferences, cultural progressiveness or postmaterialism. In summary:

Neo-marxist theory expects particularly working-class youth centrists to be more economically progressive, left-wing, culturally conservative, and materialistic than adult age groups are.

It is true that in its consequences the cultural strategies of youth, both in a functionalist and neo-marxist perspective, finally lead to integration in the „systemic whole“. Once these young people are adults, the result is the same in both perspectives: integration in society. More interesting is that in order to integrate, young people according to one perspective must be compliant with, and according to the other perspective, must be oppositional to the prevailing values and norms in society. As indicated, it is attempted to empirically test both competing hypotheses.

4. Politics and youth centrism in the life course

In the large-scale cross-sectional value study Social and Cultural Developments in the Netherlands (SOCON 1990; n=1200) it is found that about 32% of the Dutch young people aged 18 to 30 years can be classified as being youth centered in 1990. Male and lower educated young people are overrepresented in this group. This result equals findings from earlier studies on youth centrism (Meeus 1986; Maassen/Meeus, 1993; Watts et al. 1989; Zinnecker 1982). The political value profile of youth centrists is particularly marked in the domain of cultural conservatism. Youth centrists are significantly more conservative and traditional than are adult centrists, especially as regards their outlook on the role of women in society and civil liberties that people may exert (see Table 1).

In terms of economic conservatism no differences between youth centrists and adult centrists are observed. Youth centrism as such is also unrelated to postmaterialism, political interest, party preference or left-right political orientations. Youth centrists with higher education, however, favor postmaterialist value priorities less than adult centrists with higher education do, and older youth centrists place themselves more to the left on the left-right dimension than older adult centrists do.

Table 1. Youth centrism and political orientations

ß	yc	age	sex	edu	rec	prc	R^2	N
economic conservatism	-.08	-.03	<u>-.22</u>	.10	-12	.11	.08	340
status equalization	-.07	-.03	<u>-.19</u>	.08	-.11	.11	.06	341
state intervention	-.05	-.10	<u>-.13</u>	.03	-.08	<u>.13</u>	.03	340
trade unions	-.07	.08	<u>-.21</u>	<u>.15</u>	-.11	.01	.08	341
cultural conservatism	<u>.14</u>	<u>-.16</u>	-.09	<u>-.19</u>	.11	<u>.25</u>	.15	323
views of women	<u>.18</u>	<u>-.14</u>	<u>-.20</u>	<u>-.21</u>	.10	<u>.21</u>	.19	323
civil liberties	<u>.12</u>	-.09	.00	-.11	.06	<u>.23</u>	.07	341
life interventions	.04	-.10	-.01	-.08	.07	.09	.01	341
postmaterialism	-.04	.01	-.08	<u>.12</u>	-.12	-.11	.04	340
political interest	-.05	.11	<u>-.25</u>	<u>.32</u>	<u>-.13</u>	<u>-.15</u>	.23	337
party preference	.01	-.15	-.11	<u>.18</u>	-.01	<u>.25</u>	.07	267
left-right self-placement	-.01	<u>-.19</u>	-.04	.06	-.02	<u>.20</u>	.03	330

<u>Note</u>: In the regression equations (listwise deletion of missing values) the following variables are included: yc: latent classes of youth centrism with categories adult centrists (1) and youth centrists (2); age: ranging from 18 to 30 years; sex: male, female; edu: educational level ranging from lower through higher level of education; rec: relational commitment with 3 categories from weak to strong; prc: professional commitment with 3 categories from weak to strong; underlined=ß significant at 5% level; R^2=explained variance (adjusted).

The small-scale <u>Utrecht Tilburg Youth Centrism Panel</u> 1986-1994 (UTYCP 1986-1994; n=145) shows that youth centrism does appear to become less important as young people grow older. In 1994 the level of youth centrism has declined within the group of youngsters who were either extremely youth centered (52%) or adult centered (48%) in 1986. A large fraction, nearly 40%, of individuals who once were extremely youth centered, have withdrawn from this attitude, and have, after eight years, become adult centered. Almost all, that is 95%, of the once extremely adult centered young people have persisted in this attitude eight years later.

The concept of youth centrism has a dissimilar meaning as young people grow older. Youth centrists still think negatively about most adults and the adult world, but especially come to think more moderately about the capability of adults to understand their problems, and about the extent to which parents are interfering with their business. German studies on youth centrism (Watts et al. 1989, 90) suggest that at a young age youth centrists express with this attitude their desire to participate in adult privileges, pleasures, and freedoms. At an older age youth centrism is the expression of their hesitation to involve in conventional forms of adulthood. They think negatively about adults and their world, but no longer expect particular adults to grant them particular privileges. Their actual freedom to follow their own needs, pursue their own pleasures, is most probably significantly increased as they grow older.

The shift from youth centrism in 1986 to adult centrism in 1994, comparing the youth centrists in both 1986 and 1994 (N=48) and those changing to adult

centrism in 1994 (N=30), is influenced by the educational level and relational commitment young people in 1986 have (see table 2).

Table 2. Logistic regression estimates explaining the transition in youth centrism (N=78)

	Chi^2	df	p
all variables in model	17.35	12	.1370
if age (old) * edu86 (high) removed	17.34	11	.0981
if age (old) * rec86 (partner) removed	17.34	10	.0672
if age (old) * sex (female) removed	17.23	9	.0453
if sex (female) * edu86 (high) removed	16.68	8	.0336
if sex (female) * rec86 (partner) removed	14.91	7	.0371
if sex (female) removed	13.41	6	.0370
if age (old) removed	11.76	5	.0382
if transition edu (1)* removed	10.35	4	.0349
if rec86 (partner) removed	9.00	3	.0292
if finally transition rec (1)** removed	7.62	2	.0222

variables in final model	B	Wald	df	p	Exp(B)
edu86 (high)	1.501	6.678	1	.0098	4.488
edu86 (high) * rec86 (partner)	-1.408	3.879	1	.0489	.2448
constant	-.882	6.609	1	.0101	

Note: Stepwise removal of variables as long as the fit of the model improves (significance of improvement of Chi^2 at 5% level). B=effect on the logit and Exp(B)=effect on the odds; *=transition in educational level 1986-1994 (1 transition from low to high, 0 else); **=transition in relational commitment (1 transition from single to not single, 0 else)

Especially the higher educated and single youth centrists of 1986 make the shift to adult centrism in 1994. The lower educated youth centrists, and the non-single and higher educated youth centrists have a high probability to still endorse youth centrism eight years later. The higher educated singles are probably the ones who still have an open future, who have the best prospects of taking the ensuing part of their youth phase in their own hands. They probably also have the best opportunities to familiarize with new and different views on particular issues and groups in society. Withdrawing from youth centrism means withdrawing from rigid views on peers, adults, and the contrast between the youthful and adult world.

The timing of groups of life events, for instance experiencing the transition from school to work early in youth or having early experiences with intimate relationships, does not contribute to the explanation of this shift in youth centrism. Nor does the order of these life events, or the number of status passages young people experience. Youth sociologists observe young people enjoying prolonged periods of youthfulness and choosing their own individual path to adulthood. Put in youth sociological terms: they observe substantially increased moratoria, particularly as concerns education and relationships (e.g. Behnken/Zinnecker 1992; Zinnecker 1991), as well as a transition from a traditionally fixed biography to a so-called choice biography (e.g. Du Bois-Reymond/Peters/Ravesloot 1994; Fuchs 1983). One might argue that the

„biographical deconstructions" attenuate rigid oppositional views on youthful and adult age cultures, cultures that themselves loose their translucence as „youth" and „adulthood" can be less clearly defined life phases. Looking at variations in the timing, order and number of events, however, it is found that neither the old nor modern biographies are related to shifts in youth centrism. It turns out, in other words, that biographical changes do not add to the explanation of persistence in or withdrawal from antagonistic views of the adult world.

Some shifts in political orientations are related to the changing perspectives young people have on youth centrism (see table 3). Stable youth centrists (young people who endorse youth centrism in both 1986 and 1994), in comparison to stable adult centrists and young people who have shifted from youth centrism in 1986 to adult centrism in 1994, are more prone to change to economic progressiveness in 1994 after having expressed economic conservatism in 1986. They are also less inclined to shift to economic conservatism in 1994 after having supported economic progressiveness in 1986. Concerning values about the roles of women, an important constituent part of cultural conservatism, stable youth centrist are most likely to change from a progressive or libertarian to a conservative or authoritarian point of view. Young people withdrawing from youth centrism and attaining adult centered attitudes at the end of their youth phase, being aged 24 years on average, are most apt to shift from authoritarian to libertarian views on life interventions (such as abortion and euthanasia), another part of cultural conservatism. With some reluctance one can also argue that they are also more apt to change from a general culturally conservative to a culturally progressive outlook. Stable youth centrists as well as stable adult centrists hardly change their views on life interventions or on cultural conservatism in general.

Overlooking the results of youth centered young people in 1990 and young people shifting in terms of youth centrism between 1986 and 1994, one can argue that youth centrists can hardly be regarded as the protagonists of the progressive, left-wing, anarchistic and rebellious young people in the Netherlands. Young people supporting antagonistic views on adults and the adult world are inclined to exhibit a culturally <u>conservative</u> value profile. Young people supporting harsh age culture differentiations, separating their own age group from adults and the adult world, are culturally more conservative, more traditional in their views on women, and more conservative as regards civil liberties than adult centered young people are. Looking at changes in youth centrism reveals that especially those who remain youth centered during a major part of their youth phase are likely to shift from libertarian to authoritarian views on the role of women. Stability in youth centrism enhances the support of conservative or authoritarian views on women and left-wing and progressive views in the socio-economic realm. Those who withdraw from youth centrism and come to endorse adult centered attitudes change to progressive views on life interventions and resemble stable adult centered young people in their support for economic conservatism. These

young people follow the overall trend in Dutch society. Those persisting in youth centrism do not: they run against the overall trend.

Table 3. Logistic regression estimates explaining transitions in political orientations

variables in final models		B	Wald	df	p	Exp(B)
economic conservatism	transition yc		8.926	2	.0115	
(cc-cp)	transition yc (1)	1.974	7.958	1	.0048	7.200
	transition yc (2)	-.118	.018	1	.8946	.889
	constant	-1.386	10.762	1	.0010	
status equalization	transition yc		6.469	2	.0394	
(pp-pc)	transition yc (1)	-1.638	5.492	1	.0191	.194
	transition yc (2)	-.151	4.011	1	.0452	.221
	sex (female)	-1.300	4.630	1	.0314	.273
	constant	1.465	5.100	1	.0240	
state intervention	transition yc		9.869	2	.0072	
(cc-cp)	transition yc (1)	2.713	9.281	1	.0023	15.072
	transition yc (2)	1.248	1.596	1	.2064	3.482
	replace family (early)	2.528	5.953	1	.0147	12.531
	constant	-3.022	15.347	1	.0001	
cultural conservatism	transition yc		5.570	2	.0617	8.000
(cc-cp)	transition yc (1)	.069	.011	1	.9178	1.071
	transition yc (2)	2.148	5.218	1	.0223	8.571
	constant	-1.232	8.228	1	.0041	
views of women	transition yc		6.038	2	.0489	
(pp-pc)	transition yc (1)	1.555	5.996	1	.0143	4.737
	transition yc (2)	1.029	2.181	1	.1397	2.799
	constant	-1.722	12.589	1	.0004	
life interventions	transition yc		6.587	2	.0371	
(cc-cp)	transition yc (1)	.642	.939	1	.3323	1.900
	transition yc (2)	2.943	6.478	1	.0109	18.974
	constant	-.999	5.100	1	.0239	

<u>Note</u>: The following shifts are reported between brackets: cc-cp=conservative in 1986 and 1994-conservative in 1986 and progressive in 1994, pp-pc=progressive in 1986 and 1994-progressive in 1986 and conservative in 1994; transition yc: 0 adult centrists in 1986 and 1994 (contrast group), 1 youth centered in 1986 and 1994, 2 youth centered in 1986 and adult centered in 1994.

5. Comparing political culture of youth centrists and adults

One must conclude that in general youth centrism by itself has limited power for the explanation of the political value divergence between young people and adults. The political value divergence between young people and adults as such is rather small, and of course introducing youth centrism does not change this.

At first glance youth centrism appears to have, together with other variables, some importance for the explanation of economic conservatism (see table 4).

Particularly relationally committed adults are more conservative than the relationally committed youth centrists are. The latter, however, share their view

on economic conservatism with the adult centered young people (of either level of relational commitment). Sex and educational differences are far more important in the domain of economic conservatism and its constituent parts than are age or youth centrism. Women are less and the higher educated are more conservative or right-wing concerning socio-economic choices. Almost similar results are found as regards cultural conservatism, civil liberties, life interventions, postmaterialism, political interest, party preference, and left-right self-placement. In some cases there appears to be a difference between youth centrists, adult centrists or adults, but when looking closer the introduction of youth centrism does not lead to a better explanation of the distinctions in political values. Mostly explanatory models that include age, sex, and educational differences will suffice in this respect. In these cases most young people as well as the adult age group of 31-40 years old, women, and higher educated people are less traditional and more progressive than their counterparts.

Table 4. Youth centrists, adults and political orientations

ß	ac	ag2	ag3	ag4	sex	edu	rec	prc	R^2	N
economic conservatism	.04	-.02	.03	.08	_-.17_	_.15_	.00	.05	.06	1169
status equalization	.04	-.05	.01	.03	_-.13_	_.11_	-.01	.05	.03	1175
state intervention	.02	-.01	.06	.06	_-.12_	_.09_	-.00	.02	.02	1169
trade unions	.05	.03	.02	_.11_	-.16	_.17_	.02	.05	.06	1175
cultural conservatism	_-.09_	_-.16_	-.08	_.15_	-.02	_-.32_	.04	-.00	.20	1132
views of women	_-.14_	_-.13_	-.09	.09	_-.17_	_-.31_	.06	.00	.20	1132
civil liberties	-.07	_-.18_	-.07	_.11_	_.07_	_-.23_	.02	.03	.12	1175
life interventions	-.01	-.05	-.03	_.12_	.05	_-.19_	-.02	-.04	.07	1175
postmaterialism	-.00	_.13_	.03	-.05	_-.06_	_.27_	_-.12_	-.00	.13	1167
political interest	.04	_.14_	_.14_	_.20_	_-.25_	_.35_	.01	-.02	.21	1162
party preference	.03	-.10	.05	_.14_	_-.07_	.02	.04	.03	.04	975
left-right self-placement	.01	_-.13_	-.03	.08	-.01	-.03	.01	_.09_	.02	1149

Note: In the regression equations (listwise deletion) the next independent variables are included: ac=dummy of adult centered 18-30 year-olds; ag2: dummy of 31-40 year-olds; ag3: dummy of 41-50 year-olds; ag4: dummy of 50+ year-olds; sex: male, female; edu: educational level with 7 categories ranging from lower through higher levels of education; rec: relational commitment with 3 categories from weak to strong; prc: professional commitment with 3 categories from weak to strong; youth centered 18-30 year-olds are the reference category; underlined= ß significant at 5% level; R^2=explained variance (adjusted)

For the explanation of political values there seems to be no real merit in knowing what young people think of the adult world. There is, however, one vivid exception to the rule. Youth centrists hold more traditional views of women than adult centrists and the 31-40 year-olds do. They resemble adults aged 41 years or older in this respect. When explaining the level of traditionalism as regards the role of women in society, it is important to know about young people's level of youth centrism, besides their sex and educational level. Another feature should also be taken into account and that is the level of professional commitment. The higher this level of commitment (that is, the

more they are involved in work relations), the less conservative and the less traditional particularly the 31-40 year-olds and the adults aged 51 years or older are. Variations in the level of professional commitment among youth centrists do not provoke such an effect.

It turns out that, compared to adult centrists and most adult age groups, youth centrists are equally conservative or right-wing in economic matters, but more conservative in the cultural realm. To be more precise: they are particularly traditional in their views of women when compared to adults, and are more conservative as concerns civil liberties when compared to their counterparts, adult centrists, only.

Youth centrist are culturally conservative. Cultural conservatism dwells on the contradiction of libertarianism and authoritarianism (Middendorp 1991; Knutsen 1995). In several Dutch studies it is situated in between inclinations such as authoritarianism, localism, sexism, and also ethnocentrism (see e.g. Eisinga/ Scheepers 1989; Felling/Peters/Scheepers 1986; Scheepers/Eisinga 1991). A wealth of studies shows that the lower strata of society are especially predisposed to authoritarian and anti-democratic attitudes (see also Meloen 1983, 1991, for an overview of the studies on authoritarianism). Dekker and Ester (1987, 1993) found that in the Netherlands the authoritarian complex is not so much related to social class, but much more to educational level. Education, they argue, broadens and diversifies one's world view, yields higher levels of cognitive sophistication, that, all in all, makes support for the rigid, fixed, and narrow perspectives of authoritarian personalities less likely (Dekker/Ester, 1987, 410). Therefore, the higher educated one is, the less one tends to make one's own values absolute, and the more one accepts deviations from one's own norms. Also Vollebergh (1986, 1991) has shown that among young people traditional views of women, sexism, and anti-feminism are closely related to the „authoritarian syndrome". Vollebergh, Iedema, and Meeus (1997), furthermore, have shown that the endorsement of cultural conservative ideas not only predicates on the lower educated, but has also increasingly become a typical quality of males.

Youth centrists are not per se lower-class young people, but they do have lower educational levels and are predominantly male. It is likely that the uncompromising views grasped with cultural conservatism are more typically corresponding with youth centrists' life world than values like economic conservatism dealing with the desirable distribution of freedoms and equalities in the economic world are. It seems a plausible hypothesis that youth centrism is parallel to or perhaps even part of a broader authoritarian complex. Rigid views of adult culture are combined with austere values like cultural conservatism, traditional views of women, and conservatism as regards civil liberties. One can hypothesize that when young people have a low social status and are excluded from key fields of society, when they do not appreciate participation in the adult world, but want to take up a separate and isolated position, they are probably more inclined to make uncompromising ingroup-

outgroup comparisons, support simplified black-and-white views, and think negative of the democratic achievements such as civil rights of particular groups in society. There appears to be less sense in transferring these stereotypes to the economic domain than to the symbolic-cultural domain, the domain which is covered by cultural conservatism, authoritarianism, and the like.

An argument in favor of this hypothesis lies in the history of the youth centrism concept itself. From the very beginning of the concept onwards it is found that lower educated male young people who predominantly perceive adult culture in negative terms, also feel antagonistic towards specific social groups, such as women, homosexuals, and ethnic minorities (Schofield 1965; Zinnecker 1982; Watts et al. 1989). In the Netherlands it turns out that in particular lower educated and boys adhering to youth centrism are authoritarian, ethnocentric, and sexist (Meeus 1986, 105; Maassen/Meeus 1993). In this study, with an elaborate age-comparative perspective, it is found that youth centrists specifically stereotype women harshly.

Concerning most political values and attitudes, one may conclude, youth centrists align with society at large. Especially, in terms of views of women they consistently turn away from the values that are eminent in Dutch society. They probably conform with values that are traditionally located in working-class culture, or that are at least shared by lower educated groups in society. Adding antagonistic age cultural views to lower educated young people amplifies the orthodox views of women traditionally located in the lower educated groups.

6. Conclusions

Considering the results summarized above, functionalists have the best cards of having their ideas confirmed, The empirical reality is, however, not unequivocally rejecting neo-marxist thought.

Young people and youth centrists among them hardly diverge from the political values, attitudes, and preferences that dominate in society and which are supported by adult age groups. They are also economically conservative, postmaterialist, and moderately right-wing in their political preferences. It turns out that their orthodoxy is a near copy of the one of adults aged 41 years or more, and that the 31-40 year-olds have the most explicit progressive, left-wing, and postmaterialist political value profile. The level of political interest among young people is lowest. The constantly lower level of political interest concurs with an imperceptible political value distinctiveness. It is, in other words, not accompanied with a strong position regarding „old" or „new" left-right materialist values such as conservatism or postmaterialism (Gabriel/Van Deth 1995, 410). Being young and/or being youth centered in the Netherlands does not correspond with having well-defined political values. This non-distinctiveness corresponds with the functionalist view: young people align with the political values eminent in society at large.

However, youth centrists do diverge from other young people and adults, and that is in their consistently traditional views of women. In the above mentioned it is hypothesized that these views on women of youth centrists may very well be part of an „authoritarian syndrome" (Adorno et al. 1950). Compared to young people who have shifted from youth centrism to adult centrism, it is also found that persistent youth centrists are more apt to change to economic progressiveness. With the data at hand, though, these political value transitions could not be contrasted with shifts adults might have made in time. The finding that these stable youth centrists also particularly come to adhere to traditional views of women does add to the hypothesis that youth centrism can be identified within the boundaries of the authoritarian complex. Persistent rigid thinking in age cultural terms, separating the adult culture from one's own, triggers an enduring authoritarian choice in the libertarian-authoritarian dimension. This conclusion substantiates the neo-marxist point of view that youth displaying a subcultural interest, especially those of working-class background, oppose the overall cultural trend. This conclusion, of course, holds for only one political value out of a whole range of political values and attitudes. Concerning most others values youth centrists do not diverge from overall culture. They can by no means be regarded as an outright oppositional force defying the overall culture of society. These predominantly lower educated males do seem to ponder on a specifically authoritarian and masculine view of women which is „authentic" for the culture of the social milieus they are liable to stem from. Considering their views on most other political values they seem willing to adapt to the norms, attitudes, and values of society. Much in the same way young people as a whole group, young people who refrain from making harsh age cultural ingroup-outgroup comparisons, and also most adult age groups do.

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