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Social Class and Political Behavior During a Period of Economic Stagnation: Apathy and Radicalism in the Netherlands, 1985

Leo B. Van Snippenburg and Peer Scheepers

Increased apathy (i.e., retreat from politics), instead of massive political protest among the classes that were hit most severely by the recent economic stagnation and ensuing retrenchment policies, is a neglected phenomenon in Dutch social research. In this article we theorize on this phenomenon. We formulate a model to explain political apathy among lower-class people in the Netherlands during the mid-80s. We also speculate on and formulate an explanatory model on the motives of those who, during this period, were still inclined toward political behavior, notably toward radical political activities. The models are tested with data gathered in the Netherlands in 1985. The results of the analyses indicate that being a member of a deprived class increases the likelihood of being more anomie. In turn, anomie brings about political apathy. On the other hand, education decreases political apathy. The analyses further suggest that persons who give priority to so-called postmaterialistic values are more prone to radical political behavior than others. This effect appears to be stronger to the extent that they have less confidence in policies.

KEY WORDS: social class; authoritarianism; anomie; apathy; postmaterialism; radicalism.

INTRODUCTION

Time and again during the mid-80s leftist politicians and journalists predicted that the harsh retrenchment policies of the Dutch government, and the increasing inequality in income at that time, would eventually lead to a social revolt of the groups that had been struck most severely: the un- and semiskilled

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workers. Despite these forecasts, a massive social protest failed to appear. On the contrary, the “have-little” classes instead turned away from politics (Engbersen and Van der Veen, 1987; Scheepers, 1986a, 1986b) and lapsed into apathy. However, some scattered signs of radical political activity continued throughout the 80s, indicating dissatisfaction with the policy of the center right coalition that had governed the Netherlands almost continually since 1977. But these radical activities involved citizens who were far from being of specific lower-class origin.

In this article, we will first discuss some models formulated to explain the lack of political activity among the lower-income groups under these conditions of (relative) deprivation. We will integrate these models into a more complex model that addresses particularly intrapsychic processes as relevant for the explanation of political apathy (i.e., retreat from regular political activities). A review of literature indicated that this is a neglected theme in social research in the Netherlands. Subsequently, we will also pay attention to the attitudes and motives of those who, despite the politically apathetic spirit during the 80s, were still prone to engage in political behavior, notably in radical activities.

**POLITICAL APATHY**

Those who predicted massive social protest as a consequence of the widening gap between higher- and lower-income groups (in the Netherlands since 1982, see De Kam and Pommer, 1987), at least implicitly referred to the thesis of “Verelendung” that originated from Marx’s work (Marx and Engels, 1985/1848). This thesis states that under (relatively) deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, the have-nots will turn to social protest and revolt. This thesis was later severely criticized. Critics emphasized that history has shown that revolt seldom emerges under circumstances of relative or absolute social deprivation. Instead, a form of collective apathy often manifests itself within deprived groups (Jahoda et al., 1960/1933). This simple so-called materialistic model is represented in the upper part of Fig. 1.

Serious doubts regarding the Verelendungs-thesis were formulated in studies of social scientists of the so-called “Frankfurter Schule.” These doubts actually stimulated their research on the backgrounds of the authoritarian personality (Fromm, 1936, 1983/1929; Adorno et al., 1982/1950). They observed that during the economic depression of the late 20s and early 30s, the workers and have-nots in Germany did not revolt. They rather remained outside the political scenery. Parts of the middle class, on the other hand, actively engaged in politics, as did the cultural and economic elites (Kater, 1983). In light of these facts, the Frankfurt School criticized the Marxian notion concerning the direct effects of Verelendung on political radicalism. They introduced an auxiliary hypothesis by
Materialistic model

social class \rightarrow \text{political apathy}

Frankfurt model

social class \rightarrow \text{authoritarianism} \rightarrow \text{political apathy}

Integrated model

education \rightarrow \text{social class} \rightarrow \text{authoritarianism} \rightarrow \text{political apathy}

status-anxiety \rightarrow \text{social class} \rightarrow \text{authoritarianism} \rightarrow \text{political apathy}

so economic \rightarrow \text{frustration} \rightarrow \text{authoritarianism} \rightarrow \text{political apathy}

anomie \rightarrow \text{authoritarianism} \rightarrow \text{political apathy}

Fig. 1. Three models to explain political apathy.

Putting the personality as an intermediate variable between the social being and social consciousness, between class and ideology (Marx 1977/1859). In their view, belonging to a deprived group does not lead to active political behavior. It rather promotes the development of an authoritarian personality. Such a personality remains in awe of, and subordinate to, those in authority. It conforms rigidly to conventional norms, and has an aggressive attitude toward trespassers of these norms. A further characteristic is a cynical outlook on human affairs (Adorno et al., 1982/1950; Bonss, 1983; Fromm, 1983/1929). Such a personality is not expected to stand up to authorities. Instead, it submits itself to authorities and remains aloof from the political field (Von Freyhold, 1971). A model that can be derived from this Frankfurt thesis is represented in the middle part of Fig. 1.

Taking into account the historical situation at the time of the formulation of the authoritarianism thesis, we can hypothesize that this thesis may also hold for
the recent period of economic stagnation. The circumstances were similar in several respects: as during the 30s, the lower classes again had to bear an uneven share of the burden of the recession, and had to face the harshest consequences of retrenchment policies.

Felling et al. (1986), in their view on social reality of the 80s, add some elements to the authoritarianism thesis. They acknowledge that modern societies are "achieving societies" in which achievement motivation and related traditional bourgeois values have high priority. People derive prestige and self-esteem from the realization of these values. But the chances of successfully realizing these value are unequally distributed in society, and if people do not succeed in raising their position on the societal ladder, feelings of status-anxiety and socioeconomic frustration arise. These feelings, which are assumed to be inversely associated with social class, are followed by two kinds of psychic reactions. First, they bring about a repression of spontaneous impulses, which subsequently may lead to authoritarianism (this notion is derived from Fromm, 1936). Second, they generate dissonance-reduction processes (this notion is derived from Festinger, 1957). Dissonance-reduction processes are psychical anticipations to the (threatening) discrepancy between aspirations and actual achievements. As a consequence, a mental state of anomie is likely to arise. Its characteristics are feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness and social isolation. Authoritarianism and anomie refer to social resignation, and a lack of willingness to stand up against authorities, that may eventually lead to political apathy. Summarizing, Felling et al. propose a model in which subjective experiences (status-anxiety and socioeconomic frustration) that are associated with one's objective class position bring about a state of mind, characterized by authoritarianism and anomie, that is responsible for abstention from political activities. Felling et al. thus deny a direct effect of class on authoritarianism and anomie. They state that it is socioeconomic frustration and status-anxiety that mediate the relation between social class and authoritarianism and anomie. It is in this respect that their model differs from the aforementioned model of the Frankfurt School.

These theoretical notions all contain factors that are assumed to increase the level of political apathy. A decrease in political apathy may be derived from another perspective, offered by Gabennesch (1972). He theorized that education provides people with an awareness of cultural diversity and a breadth of perspective. This might decrease authoritarianism and anomie. Furthermore, education is specifically expected to have a negative effect on political apathy because people who have attained higher educational levels are cognitively more familiar with means and possibilities to influence political affairs.

Taking as points of departure the described models, that is, the successively formulated materialistic model derived from the critics of the Verelendungs-thesis, the authoritarianism model of the Frankfurters, and the elaborations on it of Felling et al. and Gabennesch, we can design an integrated model to explain
political apathy in the Netherlands during the 80s. This integrated model is represented in the bottom part of Fig. 1. In our Data Analysis, we will describe efforts to test this integrated model empirically. But first we will try to formulate a theoretical answer to the question of what the motives were of those who, in the 80s, were still prone to engage in social protest and radical political behavior.

RADICAL POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

As we stated above, socioeconomic deprivation, as experienced by the lowest classes during the recent economic stagnation, did not lead to protest. Nevertheless, there were some outbursts of radical political activity in the 80s. But this did not occur among the lower classes. The following question arises: What were the motives of those who, during the socioeconomic malaise, acted in a radical way? Here the “theory of rising expectations” may offer some clues. In its original formulation this theory was stated by De Tocqueville, and was later elaborated by, among others, Brinton and Davies (see Wertheim, 1971). It is, in a sense, an inversion of the Verelendungs-thesis (Thurlings, 1977). According to the theory of rising expectations, it is not deprivation, but the obstruction of favorable prospects and rising expectations that encourage social protest and radical political behavior. People experiencing such frustrations become morally indignant, sometimes socially envious, and they easily turn to political protest and radicalism as a consequence. Bell (1973) calls this phenomenon the “Tocqueville effect.” Van Snippenburg (1987) elaborates on this theme in his conceptualization of conditions that in the 60s led to the rise of massive protests among young adults and feminists in the Western European countries. Youngsters as well as women of that time experienced discrepancies between their greatly increased expectations and the harsh reality regarding occupational chances and possibilities for participating in political decision-making.

Although few people harbored great expectations during the first half of the 80s, especially regarding the socioeconomic sphere, there were some who did not become pessimistic and remained even optimistic with respect to some non-material issues. At the beginning of this decade there seemed to be no reason to fear, for example, a stagnation in the steady progress towards a more democratic political culture, towards environmental care and towards more permissive attitudes. Some people continued to consider these issues as most important. They were especially to be found among well-educated and relatively young people (Inglehart, 1977; Thomassen et al., 1983; Van Deth, 1984). Despite the economic malaise, these groups retained relatively good career prospects; hence they did not have to worry too much about economic and physical needs. They gave more priority to so-called postmaterialistic goals like free speech, political participation, and a less impersonal society.
Although economic stagnation in itself need not be inhibitory for fulfillment of postmaterialistic goals, it soon became clear that this fulfillment was gradually slowed down or postponed. Politicians and various authorities had other worries. Retrenchment, and sometimes even restoration took over, and technocracy became the new political strategy. As the 80s wore on, postmaterialists were bound to become frustrated regarding the progress of the issues they considered important. We may suppose that their background [well-educated, middle-class origin, favorable prospects; see, among others, Thomassen et al. (1983) and Elsinga (1985) with regard to the situation in the Netherlands] prevented a lot of them from turning to political apathy too readily. They remained politically active. But it is not likely that they restricted themselves to conventional political means like voting, attending meetings of political parties, and discussing politics with friends (Elsinga, 1985; Inglehart, 1977). They gradually became more disappointed with the political decision-makers. They may rather have engaged in radical activities as well, like unofficial strikes, obstruction of roads, occupation of buildings. Hence, we hypothesize that postmaterialists in the 80s were still inclined to radical political activity. We expect this inclination to have been greater among those who had less confidence in politics, notably in established political practices and structures. This in fact leads to the following so-called interactive hypothesis: People who gave more priority to postmaterialistic values were more inclined to engage in radical political behavior during the recent economic stagnation, especially when they had little confidence in conventional politics. The path-diagram in Fig. 2 is a formal representation of this hypothesis. In our Data Analysis we will test this hypothesis, but we will first give a description of the operationalizations of concepts we mentioned in this and in the previous section.

**DATA AND METHODS**

**Sample**

In 1985, a two-stage random sample of Dutch citizens \((N = 1799)\) was drawn. First, the Netherlands was divided into four regional zones: North, East,
South, and West. Within these zones, municipalities were sampled proportionate to national distributions regarding the degree of urbanization. Second, respondents were selected randomly out of these municipalities.

The distributions of sample respondents with respect to sex, age, marital status, as well as the combination of these characteristics, appeared to be an optimal approximation of known national distributions (Felling et al., 1987, pp. 9–10). We therefore may consider this sample to be representative of the Dutch population.

Measurement Scales

Political apathy was measured using items that refer to abstention from political participation. Respondents were asked whether they had voted at the last national election, were a member of a political party, were active for a political party, had discussed politics, had tried to convince friends to vote for their favored party, had cooperated with members of the community to solve local problems, had attended political meetings, or had contacted political officials. Respondents who never performed these political activities were considered to be politically apathetic. We constructed a scale out of these items by means of probabilistic scalogram analysis (Mokken, 1970). Its scalability (H) is 0.49 and its reliability (rho) amounts to 0.75. In Appendix 1 we present detailed information on the scale. The scale is a slightly modified reversion of the one-dimensional scale introduced by Barnes et al. (1979) to measure participation in conventional political activities. The Barnes et al. scale was used in the Netherlands by Thomassen et al. (1983) and Elsinga (1985). Instead of taking account of participation, we, in our scale, address nonparticipation.

Operationalizations of authoritarianism and anomie were derived from Felling et al. (1987). The selected items cover the nine subsyndromes of authoritarianism as they were conceptualized by Adorno et al. (1982/1950; see Appendix 2); respectively, the five elements of anomie as defined by Srole (1956). See appendix 3. Scales were constructed via principal-factor analysis (PA2 from SPSSx: Nie 1983). Reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) amount to 0.78 for authoritarianism, and 0.76 for anomie.

Class was operationalized in accordance with the so-called EGP-classification of occupations as designed by Erikson et al. and Portocarero (1983) for international comparative research. It was applied to Dutch occupations (as coded by the Dutch Bureau for Statistics, C.B.S.) by Ganzeboom et al. (1987). This classification contains 10 nominal classes. This nominal level of measurement was accounted for in our analysis (see next section).

Education was measured by asking what educational level was completed by the respondents. This classification contains seven interval categories, ranging from having completed only primary school to having attained a university degree.
The operationalization of status-anxiety was also derived from Felling et al. (1987). It refers to a subjectively felt uncertainty regarding both one’s future economic position as well as one’s future social prestige. The items with which this concept was measured were converted into a scale by probabilistic scalogram analysis (see Appendix 4). Its reliability (rho) is 0.76. Its scalability (H) amounts to 0.39.

The operationalization of socioeconomic frustration also stems from Felling et al. (1987). It was measured with two items that referred to the actual financial circumstances, and possible dissatisfaction with these (see Appendix 4). Although the reliability of this scale is rather low (Cronbach’s alpha is 0.51), we decided to use it because we do not have other data at our disposal.

The operationalization of political radicalism was derived from Barnes and Kaase (1979). It consists of items on the topic of participation in unconventional political activities like signature-actions, demonstrations, boycotts, unofficial strikes, obstruction of roads, damaging property, occupation of buildings, and the use of personal violence. The items were converted into a scale via probabilistic scalogram analysis. This scale is substantially equivalent to that of Barnes et al. (1979). The reliability (rho) of the scale is 0.81 and its scalability (H) is 0.54.

Postmaterialism was measured by means of the items and procedure described in Inglehart (1977, 1979). Postmaterialistic items refer to the striving for a society in which ideas are more important than money, that is less impersonal, in which people have a say in the decisions of the government, in which the freedom of speech is protected, and in which cities are beautified. Six items referring to materialistic goals were also included in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to select from these 12 items the 5 that they considered to be most important. The eventual score of the respondents on postmaterialism equals the number of selected postmaterialistic items, ranging from 0 up to 5.

Political distrust was measured by items that were originally formulated by Heunks (1983) to measure political trust. The items refer to a lack of trust in, and dissatisfaction with, the established political structures and government. We constructed the scale by means of principal-factor analysis. Its reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) is 0.74.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

We performed path-analysis by means of regression equations (ordinary least squares solution) in order to test the effects predicted in our conceptual models (see Figs. 1 and 2). To decide whether effects were substantive, we used the criterion of statistical significance. If a t value exceeded 1.96 in absolute value ($p = 0.05; N > 120$; two-tailed test) we considered the relation to be significant.
We will first consider the integrated model, represented in the bottom part of Fig. 1. Relations of the other models on political apathy [materialistic and Frankfurt model, as well as elaborations on it of Felling et al. (1987) and Gabennesch (1972); see Political Apathy] are included in it. So our analysis actually addresses simultaneously the relations of all described explanatory models on political apathy. It does even more, since it also tests possible direct relations between the exogenous and the other variables that were supposed to be absent in the three original models (e.g., the direct relation between social class and anomie).

The following equations represent all relevant relations. The regression coefficients \( b_{1,i} \) represent the strength of the direct effects of independent on dependent variables, that is, the effects controlled for other independent variables in the respective equations.

\[
X_5 = a + b_{5,1}X_1 + b_{5,2}X_2 + b_{5,3}X_3 + b_{5,4}X_4 + e_5
\]
\[
X_6 = a + b_{6,1}X_1 + b_{6,2}X_2 + b_{6,3}X_3 + b_{6,4}X_4 + e_6
\]
\[
X_7 = a + b_{7,1}X_1 + b_{7,2}X_2 + b_{7,3}X_3 + b_{7,4}X_4 + b_{7,5}X_5 + b_{7,6}X_6 + e_7,
\]

where:
- \( a \) = constant
- \( X_1 \) = class
- \( X_2 \) = status-anxiety
- \( X_3 \) = socioeconomic frustration
- \( X_4 \) = education
- \( X_5 \) = authoritarianism
- \( X_6 \) = anomie
- \( X_7 \) = political apathy
- \( e_i \) = residual (\( i = 5,6,7 \))

Next, we will test the interactive model on political radicalism (see Radical Political Behavior). The following equation represents this interactive model (see Friedrich, 1982, for more details about this kind of interactive modeling).

\[
X_{10} = a + b_{10.8}X_8 + b_{10.9}X_9 + b_{10.8*9}X_8X_9 + e_{10}
\]

where:
- \( a \) = constant
- \( X_8 \) = political distrust
- \( X_9 \) = post-materialism
- \( X_8X_9 \) = multiplicative term for the interaction between political distrust and post-materialism
- \( X_{10} \) = radicalism
- \( e_{10} \) = residual

The multiplicative term represents statistically the interaction between political
distrust and post-materialism. This can be shown by rewriting the equation above as follows (see Friedrich, 1982):

\[ X_{10} = a + b_{10.8} X_8 + (b_{10.9} + b_{10.8 \times 9} X_8) X_9 + e_{10} \]

One can see in the right section of this rewritten equation that the effect of \( X_9 \) on \( X_{10} \), as expressed in \((b_{10.9} + b_{10.8 \times 9} X_8)\), varies with the value of \( X_8 \). It thus represents the interactive model, focussing on political radicalism, we specified above. This model predicts that the effect of postmaterialism (\( X_9 \)) on political radicalism (\( X_{10} \)) varies, depending on the degree of political distrust (\( X_8 \)). [In some respects, these two interactive equations may not seem wholly adequate in representing the diagram in Figure 2 (e.g., in representing the direct effect of \( X_8 \) on \( X_{10} \)). However, one should keep in mind that the diagram is just a schematic and the equations are algebraic representations of an interactive process: in this case, the joint effect of two variables on a third. For those who want more information about this way of statistical modeling, we refer to the outstanding article by Friedrich (1982).]

If the regression coefficient of the multiplicative term \((b_{10.8 \times 9})\) is significant, according to the criteria specified above, we will decide that there is substantive interaction between political distrust and post-materialism regarding their effects on political radicalism. [Friedrich (1982), who has contributed a great deal to the interpretation of interactive terms in regression analysis, states that it is worthwhile to assess the presence of interaction between variables even if the unstandardized coefficient of the interactive term is not significant.]

**RESULTS**

**Political Apathy**

The regression coefficients of the equations of the apathy model (see preceding section) are presented in Table I. The first column contains the symbols of the independent variables. Because class is considered to be of nominal measurement level, it is broken down into dummy variables which are also listed in this first column. The next three columns contain unstandardized regression coefficients (the equations concerned are indicated by the symbol of the dependent variable at the top of each column). These coefficients (b’s) are expressions of the estimated magnitude of the direct effects of the independent variables on the dependent ones, controlling for the other independent variables in the respective equations. The coefficients of the dummy variables represent how much the predicted mean of the concerned category (class) deviates from the predicted mean of the reference category. We chose class I (higher-grade professionals, administrators and officials; managers in large industrial establishments; large proprietors) as the reference category in our analysis.
Table I. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients of the Apathy Model (N = 1464)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>X5</th>
<th>X6</th>
<th>X7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X2</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>10.45*</td>
<td>-0.56*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X3</td>
<td>6.12*</td>
<td>9.71*</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X4</td>
<td>-17.78*</td>
<td>-13.36</td>
<td>-1.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X5</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X6</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>-15.77</td>
<td>-0.61</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>-12.04</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>6.71*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td>73.17*</td>
<td>16.02</td>
<td>-2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D5</td>
<td>30.57</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>-3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D6</td>
<td>35.09*</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D7</td>
<td>-13.52</td>
<td>18.12</td>
<td>6.82*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D8</td>
<td>14.67</td>
<td>45.33*</td>
<td>7.48*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D9</td>
<td>-16.71</td>
<td>-2.96</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

where:

- X3 = status-anxiety
- X3 = socioeconomic frustration
- X4 = education
- X5 = authoritarianism
- X6 = anomie
- X7 = political apathy

and where D1 to D9 are dummy variables for the categories of the nominal variable “social class”:

- D1 = lower-grade professionals, managers in small-business and industrial establishments, supervisors of non-manual employees, higher-grade technicians
- D2 = routine white-collar employees, other rank-and-file service workers
- D3 = small proprietors with employees
- D4 = small proprietors without employees
- D5 = farmers and smallholders, self-employed fishermen
- D6 = lower-grade technicians, supervisors of manual workers
- D7 = skilled manual workers
- D8 = semi- and unskilled manual workers
- D9 = agricultural workers

* = p < 0.05, N > 120, two-tailed test.

In Table II we present the standardized regression coefficients of the apathy model. The first column contains the independent variables. The next three columns contain the standardized regression coefficients of independent variables that affect the concerned dependent variable. These standardized coefficients can be interpreted as the influence within the research population of an independent variable relative to the influence of the other independent variables included in the model. We paid special attention to the computation of the standardized coefficient that represents the relative joint effect of the dummy-variables, into which social class was broken down, on the dependent variables.
Table II. Standardized Regression Coefficients of the Apathy Model (N = 1464)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>X5</th>
<th>X6</th>
<th>X7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X1</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>-0.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X3</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X4</td>
<td>-0.31*</td>
<td>-0.23*</td>
<td>-0.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

where:
X1 = class
X2 = status-anxiety
X3 = socioeconomic frustration
X4 = education
X5 = authoritarianism
X6 = anomie
X7 = political apathy

* = p < 0.05, N > 120, two-tailed test.

[After dummyfication of the original variable, each regression equation contains as many singular variables as the number of categories of the original variable minus one that serves as a reference category. First, the unstandardized regression coefficients for separate dummy-variables are estimated. Second, these coefficients are linearly combined into a new variable: A = b₁dummy₁ + b₂dummy₂ + . . . bₖdummyₖ. This new variable (A) substitutes the dummy-variables exactly and is inserted in a new regression equation. After estimation of this equation, an unstandardized coefficient results which by definition takes on a value of '+ 1.' After standardization of this coefficient, a regression coefficient results that indicates the relative direct effect of the joint dummy-variables into which the original variable was broken down. The sign of this coefficient has no meaning at all. Estimates of other variables in the equation remain identical before and after this procedure, as is the amount of explained variance. The adjusted explained variance increases somewhat after this procedure because one variable has taken over the role of a number of (dummy-) variables. This procedure is analogous to the one proposed by Jagodzinski and Weede (1981) for regression equations containing exponentials of original variables. A more extensive methodological description of this procedure is contained in an article by Eisinga et al. (1990). The last row contains the proportion of explained variance (R²) of respective equations. [The explained variances of the respective dependent variables range from about 17 to about 24% (see Tables II and IV). These percentages may be classified as modest to fairly good when we relate them to]
percentages found in other similar research in the Netherlands. For instance, Elsinga (1985) only reached 5 to 16% in his multivariate models on various types of political behavior. As a matter of fact, we did not intend to give an encompassing explanation of the dependent variables. We simply wished to analyze the relevance of intrapsychic states for political apathy (status-anxiety, socioeconomic frustration, authoritarianism, anomie) that result from being a member of a deprived class in the eighties. The percentages of explained variance appeared to be large enough to reach substantive conclusions, as will become apparent in the remainder of this article.

Next, we eliminated the nonsignificant predictors from the apathy model and estimated the coefficients of this restricted model. The unstandardized regression coefficients of this model are presented in Table III.

Standardized coefficients are presented in Table IV. We used the same procedure as described in note 3 to estimate the relative joint effect of the dummy-variables of class in this model.

Figure 3 is a graphic representation of these results. Confronting these results with the expectations formulated in the theoretical model in our second section, we can conclude that the thesis, put forward by the critics of the "Verelendungs" thesis—that belonging to a deprived class has a direct effect on political apathy (enhances political apathy)—is corroborated by the results, at least as far as these concern the Netherlands during the eighties (see Table III: unstandardized regression coefficients of the dummy-variables of social class as related to apathy). Deprived classes during the recent period of economic stagnation were the classes with less say in matters concerning labor and means of production (manual workers and routine non-manual workers). Member of these classes were significantly more apathetic than members of the reference category (higher-grade professionals, administrators, and officials; managers in large industrial establishments; large proprietors). The same holds to a lesser extent for lower-grade professionals, small proprietors without employees and lower-grade technicians, but these differences are not significant. Self-employed people with employees and farmers were less apathetic than our reference category. Noteworthy is that the direct joint impact of class on political apathy is significant and relatively strong (table IV: $b_{7.1} = .18$). In Fig. 1 we utilized the sign '-' in connection with the effect of the nominal variable social class on political apathy, authoritarianism, and anomie respectively, in order to indicate that what are generally considered to be the lower classes (e.g., semi- and unskilled manual workers) were expected to have higher scores on political apathy, authoritarianism and anomie in the eighties than the classes generally considered higher. However, the Beta-estimates in Tables III and IV, and in Figure 3 do not show this negative sign in connection with the effects of social class on the respective dependent variables, since, as may have become clear as discussed earlier, a sign in these cases has no meaning at all.
Table III. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients of the Restricted Apathy Model (N = 1464)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>X5</th>
<th>X6</th>
<th>X7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X3</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.45*</td>
<td>9.71*</td>
<td>-1.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X4</td>
<td></td>
<td>-18.03*</td>
<td>-13.36*</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X6</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.04*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td></td>
<td>-15.08</td>
<td>-0.61</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td></td>
<td>-11.21</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>6.68*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td></td>
<td>74.48*</td>
<td>16.02</td>
<td>-2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D5</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.79</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>-3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D6</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.93*</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D7</td>
<td></td>
<td>-12.91</td>
<td>18.12</td>
<td>6.54*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D8</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.13</td>
<td>45.33*</td>
<td>7.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D9</td>
<td></td>
<td>-15.84</td>
<td>-2.96</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = $p < 0.05$, $N > 120$, two-tailed test.

From the Frankfurt School theory, we derived the thesis that belonging to a deprived class predisposes one to an authoritarian personality that, in turn, brings about retreat from conventional politics, i.e., political apathy. Regarding the first part of this thesis (see the unstandardized coefficients of the dummy-variables of class as related to authoritarianism in Table III), it appears that lower-grade technicians are significantly more authoritarian than our reference category. However, this does not apply to the categories that perform manual labor. Instead, self-employed people with employees surpassed all other classes concerning authoritarianism. This means that the first part of the Frankfurt thesis, as applied to social classes in the Netherlands during the recent economic crisis, is
Table IV. Standardized Regression Coefficients of the Restricted Apathy Model (N = 1464)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>X5</th>
<th>X6</th>
<th>X7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X1</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>-0.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X3</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X4</td>
<td>-0.31*</td>
<td>-0.23*</td>
<td>-0.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.24*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² = 0.19 0.24 0.17

where:
X1 = class
X2 = status-anxiety
X3 = socioeconomic frustration
X4 = education
X5 = authoritarianism
X6 = anomie
X7 = political apathy

*= p < 0.05, N > 120, two-tailed test.

falsified by the results of the empirical analysis. The relative joint effect of class on authoritarianism is relatively strong (Table IV: b5.1 = 0.18).

For the second part of the Frankfurt thesis, we examine in Table IV the coefficient that indicates the relationship between authoritarianism and political apathy (b7.5). This coefficient is significant and does actually have a positive sign, though its magnitude is relatively minor (0.06). We conclude that the Frankfurt model is partially refuted by the results of our analyses.

Part of the model of Felling et al., namely, the prediction that there are no
direct significant effects of class on authoritarianism, anomie and apathy, is refuted: the coefficients concerned in Table IV, indicating the relative impact of class on authoritarianism \((b_{5,1})\), anomie \((b_{6,1})\) and apathy \((b_{7,1})\) are significant and relatively high. Conversely, their thesis that authoritarianism and anomie are brought about by feelings of status-anxiety and socioeconomic frustration, is largely corroborated by the results of the empirical analysis. With the exception of the coefficient of status-anxiety on authoritarianism \((b_{5,2})\), all coefficients of relevant effects in Table IV \((b_{5,3}, b_{6,2} \text{ and } b_{6,3})\) are significant and have the expected sign. The expectation that authoritarianism and anomie have an impact on political apathy is also corroborated, as is indicated by \(b_{7,5} \text{ and } b_{7,6}\) in Table IV. The estimate of the direct effects of socioeconomic frustration on political apathy is nonsignificant \((b_{7,3}\) in Table IV\), which is also in line with the formulated theoretical expectations in our second section. But this does not apply to the effect of status-anxiety on political apathy \((b_{7,2}\) in Table IV\). This coefficient implies that the more one experiences status-anxiety, the less one is inclined to political apathy.

The predictions we deduced from theoretical notions of Gabennesch are generally supported by our analysis. Education has a negative effect on authoritarianism and anomie, and, what is more important, it also decreases political apathy.

**POLITICAL RADICALISM**

The estimated unstandardized coefficients of the regression equation on political radicalism are as follows:

\[
X_{10} = 0.1492 + 0.0017X_8 + 0.0668X_9 + 0.0009X_8X_9
\]

where:

- \(a\) = constant
- \(X_8\) = political distrust
- \(X_9\) = post-materialism
- \(X_8X_9\) = multiplicative term for the interaction between political distrust and post-materialism
- \(X_{10}\) = political radicalism

The proportion explained variance of this model is 0.21. The coefficient belonging to the multiplicative term is significant according to the criterion specified above. This implies that our hypothesis on the interactive impact of post-materialism and political distrust on political radicalism (see above) is empirically corroborated. It can be shown that an interpretation of the coefficients of the singular terms \((b_{10,8} \text{ and } b_{10,9})\) separate from the coefficient of the product-term,
Table V. Effects of Postmaterialism on Political Radicalism at Various Levels of Political Distrust

\[ N = 1524 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Political Distrust</th>
<th>Effects of Postmaterialism on Political Radicalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very low:</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low:</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate:</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High:</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high:</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

makes no sense (Friedrich, 1982, p. 806). The estimates of the coefficients of singular and multiplicative terms have to be interpreted jointly. According to procedures suggested by Friedrich, and in line with our interactive conceptual notions, we computed the effect of post-materialism on political radicalism at various levels of political distrust. This was done by means of a specially designed computer program, called “Interact” (Denters and Van Puijenbroek 1987). The results are presented in Table V. The first column contains five specified levels of political distrust. In the second column are the conditional unstandardized regression coefficients that indicate the strength of the effect of post-materialism on radicalism at the five specified levels of political distrust.

We ascertain that the effect-parameter of post-materialism on political radicalism increases with the degree of political distrust. This empirical result is entirely consistent with our expectation.

**DISCUSSION**

The empirical results indicate that the three causal models we specified earlier have their merits and flaws. The analysis of the integrated model shows that they broadly complement each other in explaining political apathy among lower classes in the 80s. Political apathy is relatively well predicted by anomie and authoritarianism, although the direct effect of the former variable is by far greater than the effect of the latter. This finding supports the theoretical notions put forward by the Frankfurt School and by Felling et al. Both anomie and authoritarianism result to some extent from feelings of status-anxiety and socioeconomic frustration. This is in accordance with notions of Felling et al. A more salient direct effect on anomie and authoritarianism as well as on political apathy stems from social class. Thus, no argument can be found in the results to
reject, as Felling et al. did, the materialist hypothesis of a direct link between social class, on the one hand, and attitudes (authoritarianism, anomie) and political behavior (apathy), on the other hand. The results show furthermore that education decreases political apathy, authoritarianism, and anomie. This is what we expected on the grounds of conceptual notions derived from Gabennesch.

With respect to radical political behavior, the interactive hypothesis we formulated in our third section above is corroborated by the results of the analysis. Those who gave higher priority to postmaterialistic values were more prone to radical political activities than others. This connection was stronger to the extent that they had less confidence in politics.

A general conclusion may be that the economic stagnation and the retrenchment measures of the Dutch government had far-reaching consequences for the subjective experience of socio-economic, and political life, as well as for the political behavior of Dutch citizens. Those who experienced (relative) deprivation were inclined to turn their backs on politics. Those who were better off, but became frustrated as a consequence of the delayed fulfillment of post-materialistic expectations, were inclined to take up radical political means in order to influence governmental decision-making.

APPENDIX 1: POLITICAL APATHY ITEMS AND PROBABILISTIC SCALOGRAM ANALYSIS (N = 1732)

The difficulty is the proportion of the sample that agreed with the item. The H(I)-coefficient indicates the statistical association of the item with the other items in the scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The respondent</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>H(I)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Never reads about politics.</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Did not vote at the last national election.</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Never discusses politics.</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Never gets in touch with politicians.</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Never tries to solve local problems.</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Never tries to convince friends to vote for his favored party.</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Never visits political meetings.</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Is not a member of a political party.</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Never is active for a political party.</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX 2: AUTHORITARIANISM ITEMS AND PERCENTAGES, AND FACTOR ANALYSIS ($N = 1520$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>$h^2$</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 People can be divided in two distinct classes: the weak and the strong.</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Familiarity breeds contempt.</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Young people sometimes get rebellious ideas, but as they grow up, they ought to get over them and settle down.</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Most of our social problems would be solved if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked and feeble-minded people.</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 What this country needs most, more than laws and political programs, is a few courageous, fearless, devoted leaders in whom the people can put their faith in.</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 A person who has bad manners, habits and breeding can hardly expect to get along with decent people.</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Nowadays more and more people are prying into matters that should remain personal and private.</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Sex crimes, such as rape and attacks on children, deserve more than mere imprisonment: such criminals ought to be whipped publicly, or worse.</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 If people would talk less and work harder, everybody would be better off.</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explained variance $= 32.5\%$
APPENDIX 3: ANOMIE ITEMS, PERCENTAGES AND FACTORANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequencies (%)</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>$h^2$</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 There is little use in writing to public officials because often they aren’t really interested in the problems of the average man.</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 In spite of what people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better.</td>
<td></td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 It’s hardly fair to bring children into the world with the way things look for the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 These days a person doesn’t really know whom he can count on.</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Criticizing the government is useless, because the government just sticks to the policies it thinks proper.</td>
<td></td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

explained variance 40.6%

APPENDIX 4: STATUS-ANXIETY AND SOCIOECONOMIC FRUSTRATION

The items below were used to measure status-anxiety (N = 1763). We present the percentage of the people who agreed with the questions (difficulty) and the association of the item with other items in the scale (Hi).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Hi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Are you ever afraid that your momentary situation will get worse in the near future?</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Do you think that you won’t be able to afford yourself as much luxury as you have now, in the near future?</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Do you think you will have to curtail your housekeeping money in the near future?</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Are you ever worried about the possibility that people of lower status will come to live in your street?</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Are you ever worried about the possibility that the status of your neighbourhood will decline?</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are you ever worried about the possibility that you will have to change your contemporary lifestyle? 0.36 0.30

The items below were combined to measure socioeconomic frustration (N = 1776). Behind the answers are the percentual frequencies of the people who gave the concerned answer. The association between both items is 0.24 (Cramer’s V).

Please compare your contemporary situation with the situation of five years ago. In what way has the income before taxes of the household you belong to, changed?

- (strongly) decreased 38.1
- stayed the same 25.8
- (strongly) increased 36.1

Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your present income?

- (very) dissatisfied 17.1
- neutral 20.0
- (very) satisfied 62.8

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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