The Freedom-Loving Egoist and Other Imaginary Creatures: Testing Crucial Claims Regarding Freedom Values

Brief Overview:
By factor analyzing individual level data from WVS 2005, I show that valuing freedom is a separate dimension from both egoism and humanism. This contradicts both Inglehart’s *humanistic reading* of self-expression values, and Flanagan’s *egoistic reading* of the overlapping dimension of libertarianism.

Abstract:
How are we to interpret the value shift in post-industrial societies towards a belief in individual freedom, and how important is this belief? Whereas previous research has argued for either a *humanistic* or an *egoistic* interpretation of the spreading commitment to individual freedom, this paper reveals that both sides are wrong. The main reason for this is their failure to operationalize the crucial concept of freedom values. This paper tests the main claims in the debate on the new freedom values by using better measures from the latest World Values Survey available (2005). The principal component analyses it presents clearly indicate that freeriding, hedonism, humanism, and freedom values are all separate dimensions. Moreover, freedom values cluster in two factors: negative and positive freedom. Finally, this paper also shows that not even in Sweden or the US, two of the purportedly most freedom-oriented countries in the world, do we find as many strong believers in these two freedoms as previous scholars have lead us to assume.
Introduction

This paper argues that the value of individual freedom, a crucial concept in contemporary work on mass values, remains empirically unexplored. The aim of this paper is to rectify this oversight.

Since the 1970’s, social scientists and cross-cultural psychologists have provided ample evidence of a shift in mass values, moving away from traditional and collective ideals towards values stressing the importance of individual freedom (Bell, 1973, 1976; Scott C Flanagan & Lee, 2003; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Schwartz, 2004; Triandis, Bontempo, & Villareal, 1988). Nonetheless, the desirability of these freedom values continues to divide social scientists into two camps. On the one hand there are those who present a humanistic interpretation of freedom values, arguing that such values go hand in hand with tolerance and healthy political activism, reinforcing democratic value and procedures (Dalton, 2008; Florida, 2002; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Kitschelt, 1994). One the other hand, there is a long tradition of social scientists from de Tocqueville and onwards who forward an egoistic interpretation of freedom values. According to their version, valuing individual freedom entails the justification of self-indulgence at the expense of others and thus the dissolution of moral and social bonds between citizens (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996; de Tocqueville, 1998; Scott C Flanagan & Lee, 2003; Lasch, 1978; Putnam, 2000).

This debate has been perceived as a dispute between different normative outlooks; or, as Inglehart calls it, between two competing “readings” of largely overlapping results (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005, p.292). However, such a view implies that most empirical arguments have already been settled, and that remaining controversies must be attributed to different perspectives on whether individual freedom is inherently desirable or not.

This paper argues the opposite: the debate on freedom values and how to interpret them relies on empirical claims that should and can be investigated. This has simply not been done yet, but it is feasible and will be the primary task of this paper, using data from World Values Survey 2005. Are persons who strongly support individual freedom also humanists? Or are they rather self-indulgent egoists? And is it true, as both sides hold, that the majority of people in advanced industrial democracies, especially in younger generations, embraces ideals of individual freedom?

Despite the crucial role attributed to values of individual freedom in the debate on mass values, these are seldom measured empirically. In what follows, I show that even the two most empirically oriented scholars of value studies, Inglehart and Flanagan, although they repeatedly stress the centrality of individual freedom values nevertheless fail to include adequate measures of this critical concept. I therefore propose a better operationalization, fol-
lowed by an individual level principal component analysis. The results show that both sides in the debate are essentially mistaken. I also find that there is an unexpected but interesting empirical distinction between valuing negative and positive freedom. Finally, I use my dimensions to explore the extent to which freedom values are in fact strongly supported by the average person today. I here contrast the world averages with those of USA and Sweden, the two purportedly most freedom-oriented countries in the world. My results indicate that, even for these two countries, the allegedly massive support for freedom values is greatly overstated. Thus, the failure to measure individual freedom values has not only hampered our interpretation of the phenomenon. Ironically, it has also lead to a serious exaggeration of the support for freedom in mass values today.

The Debate on Freedom

Why do scholars offer so different predictions for the democratic future in countries where individual freedom appears to become a dominant ideal? Why is there an egoist-humanist debate to begin with? Some of the controversy is of course ideological by nature. Many on the egoist side of the debate embrace a conservative or republican ideal of engaged citizenship that clashes normatively with the classic liberal ideal of independent individuals (Bellah et al., 1996; de Tocqueville, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Also, to some extent it seems that Inglehart on the humanist side truly believes that the human potential for choice is innate and inherently valuable, for both individuals and society (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). However, in what follows, I shall leave the normative claims aside and focus on the empirical ones, beginning with the egoist side.

Consider what Flanagan says in his work on libertarians:

\[
\text{the standard definition of libertarian is one who believes in freedom of thought and action. The movement we are describing is one that is liberating the individual from the moral and social constraints on the free expression of his will (Scott C Flanagan & Lee, 2003)}
\]

This quote shows the essence of the egoist side of the debate: the idea that valuing freedom of thought and action necessarily implies the lack of respect for moral and social constraints. Thus, while the core of libertarianism is the belief in “freedom of thought and action”, for Flanagan this belief is not so much an ideal as it is the only guideline accepted by contemporary disenchanted libertarians:

\[
\text{Libertarians stress self-indulgence, pleasure seeking, maximum personal development and self-realization, using work as a means to other ends, weak}
\]
group loyalties, and putting one’s own interests ahead of others (Scott C Flanagan & Lee, 2003).

The above quote gives an illustrative example of the common practice of lumping together what might rightly be called freedom values on the one hand with other, theoretically distinct phenomena on the other hand. Here, the freedom values mentioned are personal development and self-realization; in other places Flanagan and Lee refer to non-conformism, self-actualization, self-assertion, autonomy, independence, and self-determination. The other attitudes that are intermixed with freedom values in the quote are all harmful for society: self-indulgence, pleasure-seeking, lack of work ethic, lack of solidarity and pure egoism. Given this perspective, it is no wonder that so many scholars fear that strong beliefs in the value of individual freedom will in the end threaten democracy itself, since they hold that freedom believers are also un-compromising free-riders with no self-discipline.

However, believing strongly in individual freedom does not necessarily entail, as Flanagan and Lee assume, that one feels liberated from “social and moral constraints”. Consider for example the philosopher Immanuel Kant who worshipped individual freedom. He also forwarded an extremely demanding morality and rigorous self-discipline, not despite of but because of his commitment to freedom. Thus, the link between freedom values and egoism that the egoist argument relies on is not logical, but empirical.

Also note that several of the concepts Flanagan and Lee mention are not only far from freedom values, but also far from each other. At least in theory, it is one thing to stress “self-indulgence” and “pleasure seeking”, and quite another to have “weak group loyalties, and putting one’s own interests ahead of others”. I therefore suggest that the egoist argument in fact relies on the two following claims regarding the empirical relationship between the concepts of freedom values, freeriding and hedonism:

1. **The Freerider Claim**: Persons who value individual freedom of thought and action also justify free-riding, i.e. they lack solidarity with anything larger than themselves

2. **The Hedonist Claim**: Persons who value individual freedom of thought and action are also hedonists, i.e. they value the pursuit of pleasure and leisure over self-discipline and work

On the other side of the debate, we find Inglehart who proposes a humanist interpretation of the emerging focus on individual freedom. Inglehart believes that we are witnessing the rise of
a humanistic culture of tolerance and trust, where people place a relatively high value on individual freedom and self-expression and have activist political orientations (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005)

Thus, the fact that people value human autonomy, emancipation and freedom, words Inglehart uses repeatedly, implies that they also tolerate alternative life-styles, support individual rights, and engage in healthy elite-challenging political activism. In response to Flanagan’s pessimism, he argues that we have not at all gotten rid of moral principles altogether, we have simply adopted new ones:

Moral principles are increasingly focused on human emancipation and against violations of personal autonomy. This humanistic trend tends to maximize human well-being, placing elites under increasingly powerful pressures to be responsive to the people (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005, p.293).

Similarly, Kitschelt has argued that people who believe in liberty (he calls them libertarians just like Flanagan) are particularly permissive towards alternative life-styles and enthusiastic about participatory democracy. This, he believes, is logical because the demand for “greater individual autonomy” entails great respect for the freedom of others and a steady belief in the possibility to change one’s life by getting involved (Kitschelt, 1992, 1994).

However, Inglehart and Kitschelt’s humanist interpretation of freedom values is no more of a logical necessity than the egoist interpretation. It is theoretically possible for people to value their own personal freedom of, say, self-expression and autonomy, and yet not care much for the freedom of other people. Perhaps such a position is philosophically inconsistent, but then human beings have often been found to be precisely that: inconsistent. In sum, then, the humanist argument does not, as Inglehart seems to think, rely on a logical necessity, but on an empirical assumption regarding the empirical relationship between freedom values and humanism:

3. The Humanist Claim: Persons who value individual freedom of thought and action are also humanists, i.e. they strongly support tolerance and individual rights

Finally, the whole debate on whether to interpret freedom values egoistically or humanistically is of course only relevant in the light of a fourth, widely accepted claim, namely that the value of individual freedom has become one of, if not the most powerful beliefs in postindustrial societies. This is held to be especially true among younger persons (Putnam speaks for example of

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1 I realize this may not be the most theoretically accurate definition of humanism, but this is how Inglehart uses it, and I think it better to follow him than to make up a whole new concept, since this is not primarily a conceptual but an empirical analysis.
the X’ers born after 1965; Putnam, 2000). This is the starting point not only for major social scientists ((Bauman, 2002; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2008; Scott C Flanagan & Lee, 2003; Giddens, 1994; Habermas, 1992; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005) but also for numerous scholars of social psychology (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Rokeach, 1960; Schwartz, 2004; Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995; Triandis et al., 1988). Although this debate is of course wide enough to deserve to be dealt with in a book, not to mention a whole paper, I find it too important not to address it in relation to the egoist-humanist debate. In sum, then, there is a fourth claim that will also be addressed in this paper, albeit briefly:

4. The Dominance of Freedom Values: In post-industrial societies, there is a dominant belief in the value of individual freedom, especially among persons younger than 30 years

This paper tests the four claims I have listed. Note that all claims build on the assumption that there is a category of people who value individual freedom of thought and action (freedom values for short). In the following section, I demonstrate that neither Flanagan nor Inglehart has proven the existence of such a group of people.

Not Measuring Freedom Values

Why, then, would we assume that the claims from above have not already been sufficiently tested? Is not the existence of Inglehart’s self-expression values and Flanagan’s libertarianism proof enough? In the following, I argue that their dimensions do not prove the existence of a dimension of freedom values, nor of a category of people who value them.

First note that the stated aim of both Inglehart and Flanagan has, from the very beginning, been to find dimensions of polarization. Inglehart’s self-expression values are one end of a bi-polar dimension he calls survival-self-expression values; Flanagan’s libertarianism is one end of a bi-polar dimension he calls authoritarianism-libertarianism. Hence, the items that have interested them have all along been items on which people clustered on either end a pole (Scott C. Flanagan, 1982; Scott C Flanagan & Lee, 2003; Inglehart, 1977; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

However, having found dimensions that manage to divide people into two opposing groups does not imply one has found a theoretically relevant dimension that underlies most people’s views on a number of interrelated issues; say, for example, the value of individual autonomy, the importance of freedom of speech and tolerance of homosexuals. The task of examining whether there exists such a dimension as freedom values is much more
nuanced than the task of finding one dimension that achieves as much polarization as possible. It involves performing a dimensional analysis on a limited number of variables, rather than those several hundreds of variables Flanagan and Inglehart have analyzed simultaneously in order to find the major dividing lines.

Secondly, Inglehart relies on the national level means in his dimensional analysis. Indeed, he admits that the survival vs. self-expression values dimension makes much less sense for particular individuals. Yet, he often departs from his aim to speak of coherent cultures and instead discusses what people with self-expression values do and think, as if he had proven the existence of such a category of people (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005, p.143-145). But openly claiming to have done so would, based on his analysis, amount to a classic ecological fallacy.

Thirdly, it is a recurrent problem for the field of cross-cultural value studies that empirical findings precede and overshadow theory. The measurement of the theoretical concepts is simply not satisfactory, and results found by induction are often backed up by theoretical over-simplifications. Consider for example Inglehart’s self-expression values index.

Self-expression values
- the liberty aspirations index (the importance of freedom of speech and having more say in society and work place)
- the justifiability of homosexuality
- self-reported life satisfaction
- general trust
- whether or not the respondent has signed or would sign a petition

Given that Inglehart consistently speaks of self-expression values, it is rather odd that of the variables included, only liberty aspirations and tolerance of homosexuality might rightly be called values. These two are the only items that express normative commitments to what is right or preferable; and for homosexual tolerance it is even questionable whether it measures the value of tolerance or simply the openness towards homosexuality, which is hardly a value and certainly not a value regarding freedom. Most importantly, the values here are hardly the best measures of support for individual autonomy, emancipation, self-expression and self-realization, terms Inglehart uses repeatedly (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005, p.143). How do we know that people with self-expression values extol self-realization and choice?

In contrast to Inglehart, Flanagan and Lee’s operationalizations of libertarianism revolve around freedom values (Scott C Flanagan & Lee, 2003). Libertarians, for them, are those who stress the importance of:
Libertarian values

Sub-dimension 1
• freedom of speech
• more say in government, job, community
• teaching children independence
• jobs where one can use initiative

Sub-dimension 2
• that there can be no absolutely clear guidelines on good and evil
• teaching children imagination
• new ideas

Sub-dimension 3
• complete sexual freedom
• parents having their own life
• self-indulgence at the expense of others (an index including the justifiability of keeping found money, adultery, lying in one’s own interest etc.)

Here, we find several issues that relate more directly to freedom values than Inglehart’s items: initiative, independence, sexual freedom, having one’s own life even when one is a parent, imagination and new ideas. However, one still wonders how the authors can tell that libertarians do not only believe in these things but also have “a shifting, unanchored perception of themselves and reality” and believe that “all truth is relative”. Is the rejection of absolutism and the embracing of new ideas necessarily the same as justifying egoism and relativism? Also, how do we know that libertarians are “pleasure seeking” and use work “as a means to other ends”? As far as I can see, there are no adequate measures of these concepts in the list above. Hence, whether persons who believe in freedom values are also morally depraved hedonists is a question we still need to answer empirically.

Measuring Freedom Values

The up-shot of the above is that we still need to operationalize some of the most crucial concepts in the debate on freedom, such as autonomy, non-conformism, freeriding and hedonism. In the following analyses, I therefore chose to include only those variables from Inglehart’s and Flanagan’s indices that have to do with freedom values directly and that were included in the last available wave of WVS (independence and imagination). I further included their three politically oriented items as measures of humanism (protect freedom of speech, decision involvement and homosexuality justified).

In addition, I included three measures of freeriding (tax cheating, benefit cheating and ticket cheating on public transport). I believe these are superior to Flanagan’s self-indulgence items since they clearly tap the common claim that freedom-believers also lack a willingness to sacrifice their own personal
preferences for the sake of the common good. I also included three measures of hedonism (the importance of leisure, adventurousness and spoiling oneself, here called self-indulgence). The latter are better than asking, as Flanagan and Lee do, about sexual freedom, since we here manage to separate freedom and pleasure analytically. Thus, the empirical possibility that they are interlinked can be investigated.

Most importantly, in the following analyses, I use five new variables from World Values Survey 2005 that are clearly concerned with freedom values. These items measure the extent to which a respondent agrees or disagrees with the following statements:

- **Authenticity**: I seek to be myself rather than to follow others
- **Creativity**: It is important to this person to think up new ideas and be creative; to do things one’s own way (this item clearly captures new ideas in relation to freedom better than Flanagan and Lee’s variable “new ideas are better than old ideas”)
- **Autonomy**: I decide my goals in life by myself
- **Non-traditionalism**: Tradition is important, to follow the customs handed down by one’s religion or family (the coding was reversed here, so that answering “not at all” was the highest possible non-traditional answer)
- **Non-conformism**: It is important to always behave properly, to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong (the coding was reversed here too, so that answering “not at all” was the highest possible non-conformist answer)  

In the following, we will see that with these theoretically as opposed to inductively chosen variables, it becomes possible to test and refute several of the claims from the debate on the nature of mass values.

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2 See appendix for more details.
Testing the Freerider, Humanist and Hedonist Claims

In the following, I test the Freerider and Humanist claims by exploring the individual level dimensionality of the variables from above. Table 1 presents the loading matrix for a principal component analysis on the pooled level sample from the 2005 wave of WVS. By looking at these results, it becomes apparent that the individual level dimensionality is much more complex than previous research on the value shift towards freedom values has often assumed.

Table 1. World Values Surveys 2005, pooled sample, N=45,144. Principal Component Analysis, varimax rotation. Factors in order of explained variance. Extraction criterion: Eigenvalues > 1. Factor loadings below 0.3 were suppressed in order to facilitate interpretation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ticket cheating</td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax cheating</td>
<td>0.835</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit cheating</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>0.760</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>0.749</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-traditionalism</td>
<td>0.713</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-conformism</td>
<td>0.711</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>0.490</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision involvement</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect free speech</td>
<td>0.604</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuality justified</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>0.533</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>0.327</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explained variance 18% 13% 12% 8%

3 WVS 2005 includes 99 countries: Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Peru, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Trinidad Tobago, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Vietnam, Zambia, Colombia, France, Hong Kong, Iran, Iraq, Netherland, New Zealand, Russia, United Kingdom.
The results clearly contradict the *Freerider claim*. Since tax cheating, benefit cheating and ticket cheating do not load together with independence, tolerance of homosexuality or non-traditionalism, these are clearly not, as the *Freerider claim* states, part of the same value package on the individual level. Persons who condone cheating on society more than others are not also more insistent on independence, non-traditionalism or tolerance than others. Hence, knowing that certain persons accept self-indulgence at other people’s expense does in no way warrant Flanagan and Lee’s conclusion that they do so because they value freedom. Freeriders are not always freedom lovers and vice versa.

The results also challenge the *Humanist claim* that freedom supporters should be expected to value political liberties and tolerance. When examining both non-political and political freedom ideals, as opposed to only the latter type as Inglehart does, we see that one may very well value freedom personally but not politically, otherwise Factors 2, 3 and 4 would all be one factor, or at least display more overlap.

However, Factors 3 and 4 do show some overlap. Together with the clearly political issues on Factor 4, we find the importance of imagination. Also, although the justifiability of homosexuality loads highest on Factor 4, it loads almost as highly together with non-traditionalism, non-conformism and independence on Factor 3. It is noteworthy that the same analysis on an advanced industrial democracy such as Sweden or USA shows that the only high factor loading for homosexual tolerance is on Factor 4, together with the other political items. This suggests that tolerance of homosexuality may indeed have to do with valuing individual freedom in traditional cultures, but that it has become a matter of political attitudes rather than freedom values in advanced industrial democracies, even in such comparatively religious countries as the U.S.5

What, then, about the hedonist claim that valuing freedom tends to converge with valuing pleasure over duties and leisure over work? Table 2 shows the loading matrix for a second principal component analysis, again using the pooled sample from WVS 2005.

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4 Available on request from the author.
5 This may be a measurement problem for future research to take into account: justifying homosexuality may not be an adequate measure of tolerance for certain countries.
Table 2. World Values Survey 2005. Pooled sample, N=50,517. Principal Component Analysis, varimax rotation. Factors in order of explained variance. Extraction criterion: Eigenvalues > 1. Factor loadings below 0.3 were suppressed in order to facilitate interpretation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor 1</th>
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<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ticket cheating</td>
<td>0.851</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit cheating</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax cheating</td>
<td>0.839</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurousness</td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-indulgence</td>
<td>0.657</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>0.638</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>0.356</td>
<td>0.348</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-traditionalism</td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-conformism</td>
<td>0.730</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>0.463</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explained variance</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that the Hedonist claim is if not entirely mistaken then at least highly questionable. However, neither is it clear that we can reject it completely. On the one hand, some of the hedonism and freedom variables do overlap. Creativity (the item that includes new ideas and doing things one’s own way) no longer loads highly together with the other freedom values but here appears to be more strongly related to valuing adventure, leisure and self-indulgence. Also, leisure loads almost as highly on Factor 3 as on Factor 2, i.e. both together with the other hedonism variables and with non-traditionalism, non-conformism and independence. On the other hand, it still seems possible to distinguish between hedonism and freedom values as two different dimensions. Factor 2 forms a clear hedonism factor, whereas the freedom values group themselves in Factor 3 and 4 in a pattern that resembles that from Table 1. Also, there seems to be no relation between believing in autonomy and authenticity and valuing hedonism, contrary to Flanagan’s collapsing of self-actualization and pleasure seeking.

Over-all, the data contradict rather than support the Freerider, Humanist and Hedonist claims. The first appears to be clearly mistaken, since both
Tables demonstrate the existence of a freeriding factor separate from freedom values (and indeed, as Table 2 shows, separate from hedonism).

The Humanist claim is somewhat less contradicted, since valuing non-traditionalism, non-conformism, independence and imagination overlaps with justifying homosexuality; and valuing freedom of speech and decision involvement overlaps with valuing imagination. However, the fact that there are two clearly non-political freedom factors in Table 1, implies that the Humanist claim is far from right. Especially for cases such as Sweden and the USA, freedom lovers are not necessarily humanists and vice versa. Hence, when Inglehart speaks of a category of people who value autonomy both when it comes to their own personal lives and politics, he does not only stretch his interpretation too far from what his data can show. In fact, he also misrepresents reality, especially for those countries in which he claims that self-expression values are most widespread.

The Hedonist Claim is, if not entirely mistaken, then exaggerated. Only a few freedom and hedonism issues overlap. Yet, of the three claims we have considered until now, this appears to be the least erroneous one.6

Two Factors of Freedom

Both Table 1 and Table 2 reveal an unexpected finding: the existence of two factors of freedom values rather than one. Non-traditionalism, non-conformism and independence appear to belong together and form one factor; and so do autonomy, authenticity and creativity. A confirmatory factor analysis supported this division, and further showed that these two factors are negatively correlated.7 In other words, there are two dimensions of freedom and it is likely that the more a respondent values one of them, the less he or she cares for the other. In the following, I suggest the two freedom factors bear striking similarities to Isaiah Berlin’s concepts of positive and negative liberty; or, in more popular terms, the ideal types of Lisa Simpson and Pippi Longstocking.

Positive liberty is the philosophical term for being a free and self-governing person. Since it focuses more on a person’s relation to themselves than with others, it is commonly seen as a less conflict-oriented and more inner-focused freedom than its negative counterpart. Yet, it is clearly about

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6 Part of the dimensionality may reflect the proximity between some items in the questionnaire. This may lead respondents to answer several items similarly for no substantial reason, a common problem when factor analyzing survey data. Still, far from all of my results could be explained away as measurement artifacts. For example, homosexuality justified belongs to the same question battery as tax cheating, benefit cheating and ticket cheating. These items clearly load on different factors. Similarly, creativity does not load together with non-traditionalism and non-conformism, although the questions were asked consecutively.

7 For the details on the confirmatory factor analysis, see the appendix.
freedom, i.e. having internal freedom of thought and freely choosing one’s own preferences. Berlin noticeably categorizes authenticity and autonomy as positive ideals of freedom. He also includes the freedom to think for oneself, an important aspect of what I here call creativity (Berlin, 1997). Thus, I think it is quite plausible to regard autonomy (deciding one’s own goals in life), authenticity (seeking to be oneself rather than follow others) and creativity (thinking up new ideas and doing things one’s own way) as different versions of positive freedom.

Negative liberty is not the ideal of being a self-governing, freely thinking person, but rather of being able to act freely, unrestrained by others. According to Berlin, it is a more anti-authoritarian and rebellious ideal than positive freedom (Berlin, 1997). Arguably, it is also the most common understanding of freedom. Non-traditionalism (it is not at all important to follow customs and tradition handed down by one’s religion or family) and non-conformism (it is not at all important to always behave properly, to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong) are clear examples of negative freedom. These are also the two heaviest loading items under Factor 3 from the two tables above. What, then, about the third item that loads on this factor: independence? Theoretically, one might of course value independence either in the positive or negative sense. However, given that the ‘negative’ understanding of independence is probably the most intuitive for the man in the street, it is rather likely that when he answers the question of whether or not independence is a desirable quality to teach a child, he is thinking of independence in the ‘negative’ sense.

The distinction between positive and negative freedom also exists in popular culture. The former is embodied in the popular cartoon character Lisa Simpson. According to the creators of “The Simpsons”, Lisa epitomizes “idealism and stubbornness” at the same time. She is not the classic rebel, but a precocious nerd and a teacher’s pet, who refuses to compromise her ideas and thus often gets isolated from her peers. Whereas her brother Bart simply rebels against any authority, Lisa struggles for the freedom of having her own original tastes and hold opinions that are unaffected by the mediocre majority of Springfield. Creativity, authenticity and autonomy are very suitable concepts for describing Lisa Simpson; so we may call the factor they load on together not only the positive freedom but also the Lisa Simpson factor.

Negative liberty, on the other hand, is personified by the children’s book protagonist Pippi Longstocking. Pippi constantly disobeys the grown-ups who try to master her, and due to her superhuman strength, she always succeeds in getting her will. Both her critics and defenders seem to agree that the core of Pippi’s ideal is to be free to follow one’s impulses instead of having to conform to what others, especially authorities of different kinds, tell you to do. The kind of freedom she represents is mostly oriented towards doing, as opposed to thinking, what she wants. She is a person who is free to
do what she wants; to take the law into her own hands and punish evildoers, to change her surroundings, get on in life and simply get things done. In this, Pippi Longstocking is a modern version of the free settler, the courageous cowboy, Rambo, Superman, or even Huckleberry Finn – heroes whose true heart wins over deformed conscience and who thus epitomize the ideal of negative freedom. Non-conformism, non-traditionalism and independence are concepts that seem to capture the essence of Pippi Longstocking – so we may call the factor on which these items load not only the negative freedom factor, but also the Pippi Longstocking factor.

In summary, the existence of the two freedom factors we have witnessed appears to support Berlin’s famous distinction between positive and negative liberty. These do not only appear to be different ideals in theory and the history of ideas, but also in people’s minds. Interestingly enough, these factors appear to be negatively related to each other. Valuing freedom of the negative kind does not lead people to also value freedom of the positive kind; to the contrary, the two types of freedom ideals tend to be mutually exclusive. This finding is also sustained in political theory, where it is often assumed (but never empirically shown) that the ideals of negative and positive freedom tend to come into conflict with one another (Berlin, 1990; Constant, 1988; Sandel, 1982; Taylor, 1986).

But the distinction between positive and negative freedom values is not only of theoretical interest. Since it is common to attribute different kinds of social changes to what is sweepingly referred to as the demand for more individual freedom, the fact that there turns out to be two such possible demands certainly complicates the picture. A commitment to positive freedom may have potentially different effects from a commitment to negative freedom, especially considering the fact that the two ideals often collide. Also, the difference between negative and positive freedom must be taken into account now that we move on to exploring the dominance of freedom values in the world. Is positive or negative liberty most salient?

Freedom Values, Dominant or Not?

Thus far, we have examined the egoist-humanist debate by testing the Free-rider, Hedonist and Humanist Claims. We now turn to consider the one argument that both sides in this debate agree on: that a strong belief in individual freedom is becoming widely diffused on the post-industrial world, and in fact is the new norm for persons under the age of 30.

Many believe that this is especially true in the United States. Indeed, ever since de Tocqueville’s cultural analysis of Americans in the 1840’s, they have been described as the most freedom-oriented people in the world. In

8 For a discussion, see for example (Binding, 2007).
Putnam famously argued that at the turn of the 21st Century, this was still a dominant trend, especially among young Americans (Arieli, 1964; Bellah et al., 1996; Brody & Sniderman, 1977; Markus, 2001; McClosky & Zaller, 1984; Putnam, 2000). Recently, however, the American commitment to freedom has come to be challenged by a rather different, social-democratic country in the northern Europe. Inglehart now famously claims that Sweden, and not the US, is the new homeland of freedom values. Nowhere else is there such an emphasis on self-expression values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Rothstein, 2004).

In the light of the above discussion, I shall now consider the numbers of strong freedom believers in the US and Sweden, comparing them to the world averages. If we are to find strong support for individual freedom of thought and action anywhere, it is probably in these countries.

To this purpose, I created two categories: strong believers in positive freedom and strong believers in negative freedom; Lisa Simpsons as opposed to Pippi Longstockings, so to speak. The coding attempts to counterbalance the expected bias created by the fact that negative freedom relies on two ‘disagreement’ questions (since it is probably more unlikely for a respondent to disagree than to agree on something). The sample was further divided into two age groups: those younger and older than 30 at the time of World Values Survey 2005. This corresponds with Putnam’s stress on the so-called X’ers, born in 1965 and later.

As Table 3 displays, there seem to exist rather many strong believers in the Lisa Simpson-like positive freedom. This is especially true for the younger generations in Sweden and the world at large, where approximately 23.5% and 20.8% respectively feel keenly about positive liberty. The largest age group difference (both within Sweden and the world) is also to be found here, and not in negative freedom (see Table 4).

The US, however, proves to be an interesting exception. There are strikingly few Americans in both age groups who believe strongly in the value of positive freedom, not only compared to Sweden but also compared to the world on average. It is also of interest that the value gap between respondents over and below 30 years is almost non-existent in the USA. Indeed, among young Americans there seem to be slightly fewer persons who value positive freedom (9.4%) than among the old (10.0%).

9 Note that when analyzing Sweden and the US separately, creativity re-appeared together with authenticity and autonomy, as it does in Table 1. This suggests that the dimensions of negative and positive freedom are particularly coherent in these cases. These results are available on request from the author. See appendix.
The American results are puzzling. Internal freedom of thought, cultivating one’s authenticity, autonomy and uniqueness are values that we might expect Americans to embrace. After all, this is the home country of Lisa Simpson, the embodiment of positive freedom.

Perhaps the reason for this is that Americans focus to a greater extent on negative freedom? Self-assertion, self-reliance and anti-conformism, i.e. the freedom to exert your own will and act freely have often been considered typically American values. Many are the accounts of rugged individualism, the entrepreneurial spirit and frontier individualism (Bellah et al., 1996).

Indeed, as can be seen from Table 4, the U.S. has more supporters of negative freedom, especially among the young (4.5%), than the world on average. However, the American numbers are still relatively low, especially considering that this group is less than half the size of the number of young Americans who believe in positive freedom (9.5%). All in all, negative freedom is not a widely diffused ideal. Not even in Sweden, the homeland of Pippi Longstocking, do more than 8.5% of the population strongly believe in the importance of non-conformism, non-traditionalism and independence.\(^\text{10}\)

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\(^\text{10}\) These results may partly depend on the fact that the typical negative freedom values conflict with religiosity, which is considered much stronger in the US than in Sweden. However, the fact that the generational gaps are almost negligible can hardly be attributed to this problem.
Rather unexpectedly, Sweden overshadows the US in its comparatively large amount of strong believers in negative freedom. This is interesting, since negative freedom may clash with many values that are considered typically Swedish: conformism, pragmatism, preserving harmony and conflict avoidance (Berggren & Trägårdh, 2006; Schwartz, 2004).

Another unexpected result is that in none of the samples do the numbers differ much across the two age groups. This runs counter to the numerous accounts of the young anti-authoritarian generation who demands the freedom to live as one pleases, regardless of customs, family or generally accepted moral guidelines. In real life, these ideals are not much more common among younger people than among older, and in neither group is the amount of strong believers in negative freedom even as high as 9%.

Some of these results may depend on the fact that the typical negative freedom values conflict with religiosity, which is much stronger in the US and the world in general than in Sweden. However, the fact that the generational gaps are almost negligible can hardly be attributed to this measurement problem.

In sum, then, positive freedom appears to be much more strongly supported than negative freedom. This runs counter to the idea that there is an overwhelming trend towards more conflict-oriented self-assertion, non-conformism and individualistic rebellion against tradition today (Bennett, 1998; Scott C Flanagan & Lee, 2003; Putnam, 2000). Not even in the USA, or Sweden, does more than a tenth of the population strongly support these values. In fact, their strong supporters only make up around 4% of the American population. However, we do see some interesting age gaps in the world and Sweden regarding positive freedom; it appears true that this is a vastly more dominant ideal among the X’ers than among their elders. Thus, my finding support a trend towards what Bellah has called expressive indivi-
dualism, involving the values authenticity, autonomy and creativity (Bellah et al., 1996).

Nevertheless, the most important finding from the tables above is that neither type of freedom values are as strongly supported as previous research often presupposes. Not even the ideal of positive freedom manages to mobilize more than a fifth of the population among the young in the world, and the same goes for Sweden, according to Inglehart the leading country in self-expression values.

Conclusions

This paper has investigated the truth behind some recurring claims concerning the value shift in the post-industrial world. The claims were taken from the debate on how to interpret the emerging support for freedom in mass values, here represented by Flanagan’s egoist interpretation and Inglehart’s humanist interpretation.

My tests indicate that all the four claims I investigated are highly questionable. Data from WVS 2005 contradicts the Freerider claim; persons who value freedom do not also lack solidarity with anything larger than themselves. They are no more prone to freeriding on others in society than people in general. The data also shows that the Hedonist and Humanist claims are questionable; persons who value freedom do not also pursue pleasure over duties, nor are they more likely to support political freedom than others. Thus, both the egoistic and humanistic interpretation of freedom values are essentially mistaken – they collapse freedom values with other, theoretically and empirically, distinct phenomena.

Instead, freedom values turn out to group themselves empirically along two dimensions: one closer to the ideal type of Lisa Simpson and another to that of Pippi Longstocking. In other words, valuing a softer, inner-oriented freedom of being authentic, autonomous and creative is one dimension; whereas the ideal of non-conformism, non-traditionalism and independence is another. This suggests that Berlin’s classic distinction between negative and positive freedom may indeed serve as a constructive tool for analyzing mass values today.

Finally, my results allow us to question the fourth claim, concerning the dominance of freedom values. It is true, as is often suggested, that there is a significant age gap in support for freedom, but only when it comes to positive freedom. Negative freedom is strongly supported by unexpectedly few in all age groups. These results are true even for the allegedly most individualistic and freedom-oriented countries in the world, the US and Sweden. This issue certainly warrants further investigation, since I have here only considered the number of strong supporters and not, for example, the numbers of people strongly opposed to these ideals, or mildly in favor of them.
Nevertheless, my results still suggest that one of the most common notions regarding mass values today is greatly exaggerated: the value of individual freedom is still not one of the most dominant beliefs in the mass public. Especially interesting is that so few Americans strongly believe in the value of negative or positive freedom, and that their generational gap is close to negligible for both kinds of freedom. This contradicts the claims of Putnam, Bellah and others, who worry that the younger generations of American freedom lovers will risk the future of American democracy. Putnam’s fears regarding all the self-centered, inwardly focused X’ers insistent on autonomy appear overblown, at the very least.

The findings I present here show that, especially in the US, persons who extol negative freedom only amount to a tenth of the population; and the famous age gap between young freedom-lovers and older traditionalists appears to be negligible (Scott C Flanagan & Lee, 2003; Putnam, 2000). However, neither can we go along assuming, as Inglehart and Kitschelt do, that stressing the value of individual freedom necessarily leads to altruism and humanism. The freedom-loving egoist who condones both hedonism and freeriding is an imaginary creature; and so is the freedom-loving humanist who demands freedom not only for himself but also for others.
Appendix

Confirmatory factor analysis of freedom values

In order to investigate the robustness of negative and positive freedom, I performed a confirmatory factor analysis on the six items from these factors. Figure 1 shows the results from a one-factor model (the idea that there is only one dimension of freedom values, i.e. one freedom ideal), and Figure 2 those of a two-factor model (the idea that there are two dimensions of freedom values, i.e. two freedom ideals). The parameter estimates show the results for the pooled sample (N=55,157). The analysis was performed on the polychoric correlation matrix, since it is questionable whether all of the variables can be regarded as continuous.

The first model indicates that creativity loads heaviest on the freedom factor, indicating that it is the best operationalization of freedom. Creativity is followed by autonomy and authenticity. However, oddly enough, the model also indicates that non-conformism and non-traditionalism are negatively related to the underlying freedom factor; and that independence (the classic measure of freedom used in many studies) has no statistically significant relationship at all to the underlying factor. The model fit statistics, although all of them apart from the BIC will per definition show a bad fit because of the high N, tell us that this is far from a good model. Nonetheless, we can compare the two models. Doing so, we see that the two-factor model shows a considerably better fit to the data, as can be seen from the considerably lower BIC statistic, and the acceptable RMSEA of 0.05. Most importantly, we here see that the one-factor model in Figure 1 is not only a bad representation of the real relationships, it also tricks the observer into thinking that non-conformism, non-traditionalism and independence have little to do with each other and with freedom. On the contrary, they have much to do with each other and with freedom - but as a group they are negatively related to autonomy, authenticity and creativity.
**Figure 1**

![Diagram of Freedom Values model](image)

- **N** = 55157
- $\chi^2 = 10445$
- df = 9
- BIC = 10346
- RMSEA = 0.14

**Figure 2**

![Diagram of Positive Freedom model](image)

- **N** = 55157
- $\chi^2 = 1188$
- df = 8
- BIC = 1101
- RMSEA = 0.05

$\rho_{\xi_1\xi_2} = -0.27$
Variables

Ticket cheating
Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card:
Avoiding a fare on public transport
Scale 1-10

Tax cheating
Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card:
Cheating on taxes if you have a chance
Scale 1-10

Benefit cheating
Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card:
Claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled
Scale 1-10

Autonomy
People pursue different goals in life. For each of the following, can you tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with it:
I decide my goals in life by myself
Scale 1-4

Authenticity
People pursue different goals in life. For each of the following, can you tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with it:
I seek to be myself rather than to follow others
Scale 1-4

Creativity
Using this card, would you please indicate for each description whether a person is very much like you, like you, somewhat like you, not like you, or not at all like you:
It is important to this person to think up new ideas and be creative; to do things one’s own way
Scale 1-6

Non-traditionalism
Using this card, would you please indicate for each description whether a person is very much like you, like you, somewhat like you, not like you, or not at all like you:
Tradition is important to this person; to follow the customs handed down by one’s religion or family
Scale 1-6

Non-conformism
Using this card, would you please indicate for each description whether a person is very much like you, like you, somewhat like you, not like you, or not at all like you:
It is important to this person to always behave properly, to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong
Scale 1-6

Independence
Here is a list of qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important? Please choose up to five (out of then possible):
Independence
Scale 0-1
Decision involvement
People sometimes talk about what the aims of this country should be for the next ten years. On this card are listed some of the goals which different persons would give top priority. Would you please say which one these you, yourself, consider the most important:

Seeing that people have more say about how things are done at their jobs and in their communities
Scale 0-1

Protect free speech
If you had to choose, which one of the things on this card would you say is most important:

Protecting freedom of speech
Scale 0-1

Homosexuality justified
Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card:

Homosexuality
Scale 1-10

Imagination
Here is a list of qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important? Please choose up to five (out of then possible):

Imagination
Scale: 1-2

Adventurousness
Using this card, would you please indicate for each description whether a person is very much like you, like you, somewhat like you, not like you, or not at all like you:

Adventures and risks are important to this person; to have an exciting life
Scale 1-6

Self-indulgence
Using this card, would you please indicate for each description whether a person is very much like you, like you, somewhat like you, not like you, or not at all like you:

It is important to this person to have a good time; to ‘spoil’ oneself
Scale 1-6

Leisure
For each of the following, indicate how important it is in your life. Would you say it is very important, rather important, not very important, or not at all important:

Leisure time
Scale 1-4

The coding of strong supporters of freedom (Table 3 and 4)
Strong supporters of positive freedom feel they are either “very much like” (6) or “like” (5) a person for whom “it is important to think up new ideas and be creative” (creativity)
“strongly agree” (4) with the statement that “I seek to be myself rather than follow others” (authenticity)
“strongly agree” (4) that “I decide my goals in life by myself” (autonomy)

Strong supporters of negative freedom are respondents who
“agree” (1) that “independence is an important child quality” (independence)
feel either “not at all like” (6) or “not like” (5) a person for whom “it is important to always behave properly” (non-conformism)
feel either “not at all like” (6) or “not like” (5) a person for whom “it is important to follow the customs handed down by one’s religion or family” (non-traditionalism)


