

Attitudes Toward Free Speech in Six Countries
in the mid 1980s: Australia, Austria, Great
Britain, Italy, The United States, and
West Germany

James A. Davis
NORC
Harvard University

GSS Cross-National Report No. 9

January, 1988
Revised January, 1989

This research was done for the General Social Survey project directed by James A. Davis and Tom W. Smith. The project is funded by the National Science Foundation, Grant No. SES-8747227. Michael Braun, Toby Huff, Joseph F. Fletcher, Mildred Schwartz,

Jesper Sorenson, Tom W. Smith, and Karl U. Mayer helped me enormously on the revision.

Publication Notes: a revised version of this paper was published in European Journal of Sociology, 6 (May, 1990), 1-14.

Abstract

I compare attitudes to Free Speech among adults in Australia, Austria, Britain, Italy, the United States, and West Germany, using 11 items from the ISSP85 data set to test three alternative hypotheses: (1) that the nations don't differ much, (2) they differ consistently so some are more tolerant than others and (3) they differ inconsistently so that nations relatively tolerant on one issue are relatively intolerant on others. The data strongly support Hypothesis (3). On the way, I show that support for the abstract principle of Free Speech predicts tolerance consistently across items and countries.

Introduction

Political theorists (and political candidates) maintain that Free Speech - allowing the public expression of even repugnant ideas - is a corner stone of Western democracy (e.g., Sullivan, et. al., 1982 Chapter One). "Everyone" favors free speech in the abstract and "everyone" agrees "the line must be drawn somewhere". Where-to-draw-the-line vexes judges and legal scholars (for an authoritative review of the American situation see Kalven, 1988), but it has provided social scientists with rich data.

Since Samuel A. Stouffer's 1954 U.S. survey (Stouffer, 1955), line-drawing questions (e.g. "Suppose an admitted Communist wanted to make a speech in your community. Should he be allowed to speak or not?") have become a staple of social research. Thus, the 1988 annotated bibliography of research reports using the U.S. General Social Survey [Note 1: The General Social Survey (GSS) is an annual sampling of U.S. adults carried out by the national Opinion

Research Center, University of Chicago since 1972. Most questions in the GSS are repeated year after year to catch trends. See Davis and Smith, 1987, for a full description.] (Smith and Crovitz, 1988)

has 170 citations for this very question, out of a total of 1624 references. Since 1955 we have learned a good deal about where Americans draw the line and a bit about why.

On the whole, Americans draw the line well inside the perimeters defined by democratic theorists. The U.S. General Social Surveys repeatedly show thirty to forty percent opposition even on such mild issues as communist books in public libraries or public speeches by "somebody who is against all churches and religion". It appears that Americans are not as tolerant as you and I think they should be. But opinions in other nations might be a possibly fairer and certainly interesting standard of judgment.

When one turns to cross-national studies of attitudes to free speech, the pickings are thin. Muller, Pesonen and Jukam (1980), analyzing data from Barnes, et. al. (1979), concluded that Germans and Austrians are less tolerant of "Marches" than Americans, Britons, and Italians, but their measure is seriously flawed (see their note 2, p. 287). Weil (1982, p. 979) compared German poll data with the American General Social Survey and found Germans more tolerant than Americans regarding public meetings for Communists, Atheists, and Neo-Nazis. Barnum and Sullivan (1987) found Americans and Britons essentially similar on a variety of tolerance items keyed to the respondent's "least liked group". Davis (1986), using scraps from the data to be discussed here, concluded that Americans and Britons are very similar except for issues involving racists. Luckily, new data (ISSP85) allow us to treat this comparative problem in much richer detail, both in terms of items and in terms of nations.

ISSP is a confederation of national "general social surveys". It currently comprises the six nations to discussed here (Austria, Australia, Great Britain, Italy, [West] Germany, and the USA) plus Holland, Hungary, Israel, Ireland, and Norway. Each year a drafting committee produces a fifteen minute questionnaire which each member

appends to its next national survey. Modules fielded so far include the Role of Government (1985), Social Networks and Support Systems (1986), Inequality (1987) and Work Orientations (1988). The questionnaires are drafted in English, and translated, if necessary, by the national group. Members agree to place their data in the public domain via the Cologne Data Archive. All specifics reported here are from the Cologne tape and codebook (Zentralarchiv, 1987). For other descriptions of ISSP see Smith (1987) or Davis and Smith (1988).

As will be explained soon, the 1985 module not only covers six nations, it includes a battery of free speech items which allows us to examine national differences and similarities in some detail. What might we find? We can frame the analysis around three possibilities:

First, we might find only small differences. After all, if we consider the spectrum of modern nations, from Albania to Zimbabwe, these six look very much alike in terms of economic level and established democracy - which political scientists define as occasional, nonviolent turnover in power after elections. It would not be astounding to discover only trivial differences in free speech attitudes among our six nations.

Second, we might find consistent differences with some nations highly tolerant on most items, some nations intolerant on most, and some nations consistently in the middle. Putting the same idea another way, this hypothesis implies similar rankings of the nations on each tolerance question. Beginning with the classic Civic Culture (Almond and Verba, 1963), social scientists have claimed that even modern, industrial democracies differ consistently in their political cultures, some citizen cultures being supportive of "democracy", others less so. The Civic Culture doesn't treat Free Speech per se, but the hypothesis seems plausible. After all, three of our nations have multi-century traditions of democracy and individual rights, while three of them experienced totalitarian regimes of unparalleled harshness within the memory of many respondents. (Whether such experiences make people more tolerant or less tolerant is not clear a priori.) Popular stereotypes - which are not always mistaken - support this line of thinking. We all know the USA is the "land of the free", that Britain enshrines civil liberties (when government secrets

are

not involved), that Australians are "laid back", that Italians are notoriously anarchic and tolerant, that Germans are highly authoritarian, and that somehow Austrians manage to be simultaneously relaxed and authoritarian. From which, I guess, one would predict that every other country would be more tolerant than Germany. This prediction, as we shall see, is pretty far off the mark.

Third, we might find inconsistent differences. Although I am unaware of any social science theories that would lead directly to this idea, it is logically possible for nations to differ strongly on tolerance issues with contradictory rank orders on different topics, the countries highly tolerant on one item turning up as highly intolerant on others. This notion is actually somewhat consistent with Civic Culture as it suggests that each nation has unique configuration of political values.

Consistent with the distinction between line-drawing and acceptance of general principles, I will first look at a number line-drawing questions and then at a measure of "principles".

Allow "Who(m)" to "Do What"?

Despite the 60s cliché that "the medium is the message" studies of free speech attitudes routinely distinguish between the substance (who is speaking?) and the form of expression (allow them to do what?) While there is probably more prejudice against "international terrorists" than against "tax reformers", respondents are likely to be more tolerant of international terrorists writing a letter to the editor than tax reformers blowing up a public building. Alternatively, reactions vary with the message even when the form of expression is the same. Respondents would probably be less likely to tolerate public demonstrations by nudists than by vegetarians.

Thus, batteries of free speech items usually vary "who" for a given "do what?" or vary "do what" for a given "who". ISSP85 is no exception. Questions 3 and 4 (See Appendix 1 for exact wordings) give us a nice collection of lines-to-draw.

The questions cover:

Three "who" issues:

- 1) "people or organizations" who "strongly oppose" "a government action" (POLICY

PROTESTERS)

- 2) "people who want to overthrow the government by revolution" (REVOLUTIONARIES)
- 3) "people who believe whites are racially superior to all other races" (RACISTS)

Seven "do what" issues:

- 1) Publishing pamphlets/books (PUBLISH)
- 2) Organizing/Holding public meetings (MEETING)
- 3) Organizing protest marches and demonstrations (MARCHES)
- 4) General strikes (GENERAL STRIKE)
- 5) Teaching school (TEACH)
- 6) Damaging government buildings
- 7) Occupying a government office

Table 1 arranges ten of these items into a logical system.

(Table 1 here)

The items on damaging and occupying government buildings are excluded because of their extremely low and uniform levels of endorsement. For damaging buildings the highest percentage "allow" is 3 (USA), for occupation of buildings it is 12 (Italy). There are holes in Table 1 because certain combinations were not asked. Nevertheless, if we compare questions in a given column we can look at the effect of "who" holding constant "do", while row comparisons tell us about "do" holding constant "who".

Table 1b gives the averages (unweighted mean across the six nations) for the percent "allow". The largest is 86% for Policy Protester/Meetings. This is about as high as attitude consensus goes in national surveys. After a 77% for Policy Protester/Publish, the figures drop off perceptibly, with five items clustered near 50 per cent and Revolutionary or Racist teachers at the bottom with 17

per cent each.

We note further that the percentages tend to increase as we move up columns and to the right across rows - with two exceptions to be scrutinized later.

Returning to national differences, Table 2 gives the simplest reading. It reports for each nation its average "allow" over the ten items in Table 1.

(Table 2 here)

The differences are extraordinarily small. Germany, the "most libertarian", averages 52.5, while Italy, the least libertarian, averages 49.2. The distance from the top to the bottom in table 2 is a puny 3.3 points.

Table 2 suggests strong support for the "small difference" hypothesis. Averaged over a variety of issues, there are only trivial national differences in support of free speech. On the average these nations seem very much the same in their levels of tolerance. This is our first major finding:

But Table 1c raises some questions. The entry in each cell is N^* , the sample size required for "statistical significance at the .05 level". [Note 2: For Chi Square, $N^* = (\text{Criterion Value})(N)/\text{Chi Square}$. For example, with a Chi Square of 20.00, N of 5,000, and 5 d.f. criterion (.05) of 11.0705, $N^* = (11.0705)(5,000)/20.0 = 2,767.6$.] The issue is whether the differences in the data (e.g. national differences in "Allow" for Policy Protester, Publish) exceed the variation routinely expected from random sample to random sample. Sample size comes into the picture because a given discrepancy between data and random expectations is more likely to be "statistically significant" when the number of cases is large. (If 6 out of 10 coins came up heads, you would not be suspicious; if 6,000 of 10,000 coins came up heads you would be suspicious indeed!) With very large samples, even very small differences stand out against chance expectations, but with small samples only the largest discrepancies clearly beat chance. Turning it around, if a very large sample is required to make a given difference "statistically significant", the difference itself is not very impressive, but if the difference would be significant in a very small sample we should take it seriously. From which this rule: the smaller the value of N^* , the more impressive the result.

Returning to Table 1c, we see cell entries that range from 145 (Policy Protester/General Strike) to 1302 (Revolutionary/Publish). Are they large or small? Three yardsticks are available. First is N, the total number of cases. If N^* is smaller than N it is "statistically significant" by definition. Here N, the total of the six national samples, is about 6,500, varying a bit from item to item because "no answers" are excluded. Since each entry in Table 1c is well below 6500, each of the differences is statistically significant (at the .05 level assuming "simple random sampling"). A second number, $N\#=4,336$ appears at the bottom of the table. It is simply $2/3$ of N and is the conventional adjustment for "design effects", technical properties of most survey samples which make the textbook formulas using N a bit too optimistic. (These design factors, however, allow one to collect so many more cases for a given budget they more than compensate for the "inflation" of a given cases' value.) A third number might be the arbitrary value, 1000. It is totally arbitrary but my experience has been that when N^* is larger than 1000 the actual difference is seldom interesting, even though it might be statistically reliable due to a large sample. [Note 3: 1,000 is also the value of N^* that would make a given difference just significant in a sample where $N=1500$ and $N\#=1000$, e.g. a typical U.S. General Social Survey.]

What then does Table 1c tell us?

a) All the differences are statistically reliable, using either the raw value ($N=6500$) or the conservative adjusted value ($N\#=4336$). There is non-random variation among the six nations on each of these ten free speech questions.

b) Nine of the ten values of N^* are less than 1,000 and the exception is just 1302. Thus, on nine of the ten items, national differences are not only statistically reliable, they are large enough to be interesting.

But don't we have a paradox here? Table 2 says the six nations don't differ much, Table 1c says they differ on every item. Hypothesis 2, contradictory differences, could resolve the conflict. If the countries differ strongly on each single item but the nations most tolerant of "this" are least tolerant of "that",

their average tolerances could end up just about the same.

Careful scrutiny of national differences on each item is clearly in order, but it will be useful to treat them in batches. For the first batch we use the six items in the two right hand columns of Table 1. Although they are six separate questions, we may think of them as four variables: 1) Nation 2) "Who" (Protesters, Revolutionaries, Racists) 3) "Do what?" (Meeting, Publish) and 4) Response (Allow, Not Allow). I led the computer to believe I had a 60 celled cross-tabulation (5 nations by 3 whos by 2 does by 2 responses) and asked it to apply the technique "iterative proportional fitting" (Goodman, 1978). [Note 4: Note to the technical reader: I did not actually run any cross-tabulations. Rather I entered the 30 pairs of Allow, Not Allow percentages as if each (Nation by Who by Whom) cell had 100 cases. The program proceeded as if it had 3,000 cases but I interpreted the results as if N were 3,876, the sum of the smallest marginal N's (excluding no answer) for each nation. This had the effect of equalizing nation N's, so significance probabilities should not be treated literally. In the analysis I fitted the model:

(Nation,Who,What) (Nation,Allow) (Who,Allow) (What,Allow) and tested (a) two variable effects in terms of addition to Chi Square when they are deleted and (b) three variable interactions in terms of reduction in Chi Square when they are added.] Instead of explaining the technique in the abstract, let me interpret Table 3.

(Table 3 here)

The entries in Table 3 are values of N^* , ala Table 1c. The smaller the number, the more impressive the statistical effect (More exactly, the smaller the value of N^* , the greater the discrepancy between the actual data and a computer model of the data with the effect "ironed flat"). The "Two Variable" results are akin to those in Table 1c except that here variables have been controlled, e.g. the 68 for "Who" says there are big differences in Tolerance ("Allow") among Racists, Revolutionaries and Protesters, controlling for Nation and the "Do" items.

When more than two variables are involved the calculations also allow us to assess "interactions" - tendencies for the size of an association to vary across categories of a third variable. All three-variable interactions are significant and one is below the

1000 mark. Interaction effects play a central role in testing our three broad hypotheses: strong interaction effects for Nation and Allow tend to support the "contradictory differences" hypothesis. If the association between Nation and Tolerance ("Allow") varies with "Who" or "Do", national rankings will tend to be inconsistent.

The broad brush picture is quite clear: Tolerance varies enormously with "who", significantly with Nation, and hardly at all with "Do" (when we compare two mild forms of expression, publications and meetings), but the nontrivial interaction effects add important shadings.

Six generalizations and three percentage tables may clarify the numbers.

(Tables 4, 5, and 6 here)

Who

1) Tolerance of Policy Protesters is consistently greater than tolerance of Revolutionaries or Racists. This holds in each country (Table 6a), is accentuated in Britain, Italy and Australia (Table 6b), and holds for both Meetings and Publications (Table 4).

2) Except in the United States, Revolutionaries' speeches and meetings are more tolerable than those of Racists (Table 6)

Do

3) Tolerance of Meetings versus Publications varies with "Who". For Protesters, respondents are more tolerant of Meetings than Publications, for Racists and Revolutionaries, it goes the other way (Table 4). My guess: respondents fear that Revolutionaries' and Racists' meetings are likely to lead to violence.

4) Tolerance of Meetings versus Publications varies with Nation. Britons, Italians, and Australians are more tolerant of Publications (by Protesters, Revolutionaries, and Racists) than Meetings; the opposite holds for Germans and Austrians.

Nations

5) National differences in Tolerance depend on what the dissidents "Do". For Meetings, Germans and Austrians are most

tolerant, Italians least. For Publications, Britons are most tolerant, Italians least (Table 5).

6) National differences in Tolerance depend on "Who" is writing or speaking. For Policy Protesters, Australians and Britons are the most tolerant, Americans and Austrians the least; for Revolutionaries Germans and Austrians are the most, Americans, Australians and Italians the least; for Racists Americans are the most tolerant, Italians the least (Table 6a).

Conclusions 5 and 6 give strong support to the hypothesis of inconsistent differences. The differences among the nations are clearly nonrandom but the six countries shift places in the tolerance rank order wildly from item to item.

There is one shred of support for the small difference hypothesis in the right hand column of Table 6a where we see high levels of tolerance (73% to 89%) for Policy Protesters' Publications and Meetings. (We also see significant national variation, but it is around a high mean.) Since Protesters are the most tolerated "Who" and Meetings/Publications the most tolerated "Do", I think it is fair to draw these conclusions:

For classic, minimal threat situations, citizens in all six nations show overwhelming support for free speech.

..But in each country a minority of 10 to 20 percent asserts intolerance even for these "basic rights".

..And once one moves toward "stronger" content or forms of expression, tolerance declines sharply and unique national patterns emerge.

The second statistical analysis confirms this proposition with even greater force. Table 7 and Table 8 treat "Marches and Demonstrations" and "General Strikes" - when carried out by the relatively tolerable Policy Protesters.

(Table 7 here)

Table 7 has very small values of N* and one of the most impressive interactions (N*=179) I have seen. Table 8 shows why.

(Table 8 here)

Table 8a gives the "Allow" percentage by Nation for the two expressions and Table 8b compares them with the (unweighted) average of the six nations. The pattern actually is rather simple. Compared with the other nations in the sample:

Italians are highly tolerant of Marches and General Strikes.

The English speaking countries (Australia, Britain, and the USA) are highly tolerant of Marches but highly intolerant of General Strikes.

The German speaking countries (Germany and Austria) are mildly tolerant of Strikes but highly intolerant of Marches.

The neat sorting by language suggests these differences could arise from translation problems, but it is quite possible they reflect the political cultures in the six nations and thus are part of the mounting evidence for the inconsistent difference hypothesis. Certainly the Italian tolerance of strikes matches the occasional visitor's impression. What is more problematic is the extraordinarily low figures for Marches in Germany and Austria. Appendix 1 raises a problem since the schedule in Germany has a word change - but the Austrian schedule does not and these results are consistent with Barnes et. al. (1979), which, alas, in turn, has a wording problem itself. Knowledgeable colleagues tell me the result "feels" right but they differ on whether respondents are answering in the light of the Nazi era (when the Marchers were the quite the opposite of Policy Protesters) or the 1960s-1970s left-oriented demonstrations.

The third statistical analysis involves Racist and Revolutionary teachers in secondary schools. They receive little support in any country.

(Table 9 here)

The statistical pattern is simple for a change: Nations vary significantly on their tolerance, but there is no reliable difference between Racist and Revolutionary teachers and no reliable interaction (i.e. the national differences in "Allow" are the same for Racists as for Revolutionaries.) Table 10 shows the figures.

(Table 10 here)

All the percentages are low, with a range from 12 per cent in Australia to 22 in the USA.

Principles

So far, what we have seen looks like an international unpopularity contest where the judges disagree. The question of Free Speech as an abstract principle has not arisen. In fact, some social scientists feel abstract principles have little to do with it. They maintain that reactions to draw-the-line questions come mostly from citizens' attitudes and beliefs about the repugnance of the Who/Do in question (See Sullivan, et. al., 1982). Our results so far are hardly inconsistent with this rather cynical hypothesis.

But cynicism can be overdone. Repeated American studies of the effect of educational attainment on Tolerance suggest that schooling promotes tolerance across the board (regardless of "Who"), presumably because the better educated have learned abstract principles of tolerance (Bobo and Licari, 1989). There is a nonobvious corollary here: in totalitarian societies it may well be that schooling inculcates intolerance (Weil, 1985).

ISSP85 includes only one relevant question on principles, but it seems to be a good one - posing the individual v. state dilemma without using the exact words that turn up in the "Who/Do" items:

Q2. "In general would you say that people should obey the law without exception, or are there exceptional occasions on which people should follow their consciences even if it means breaking the law?"

1. Obey the law without exception
2. Follow conscience on occasions"

Strictly speaking, the item treats civil disobedience rather than free speech but it is exactly at the point where free speech collides with law and order that thoughtful respondents are placed in a true dilemma.

Table 11 shows the answers for respondents in five of the six

nations (the question was not asked in Austria).

(Table 11 here)

Each nation shows majority support for the libertarian alternative but the range is from 57% (USA) to 88% (Germany). The value of N^* , 250, is well under $N\#$ (4028) and impressive - by definition.

Table 11a suggests three groupings; Germany - highly libertarian, Australia - quite libertarian, and Britain, Italy, and the USA - "barely" libertarian. Standard statistical tests confirm the impression, showing the German and Australian percentages are each reliably different from every other nation, while the differences among the Britain/Italy/USA cluster could easily be products of sampling variation.

In sum, the five nations differ nontrivially on the principles of free speech.

While the "Follow Conscience" item is logically appropriate, it is so general and abstract that one wonders whether it should be taken at face value, particularly since the item was asked in three languages. Thus, Smith (1988) says "...it is nearly pointless to compare any two questions that employ abstract concepts and subjective response categories." Nevertheless, we gain some reassurance when we introduce Q15c into the tabulation. It is about schools and asks "How important is it that schools teach (topic) to 15 year olds? Essential - must be taught, Very important, Fairly important, Not very important, Not needed - should not be taught?" Among the topics (e.g. "job training", "reading, writing, mathematics", "concern for minorities and the poor") is "respect for authority". If the "Follow Conscience" item is tapping what we hope it taps, respondents who give high priority to respect for authority should be less likely to answer "Follow Conscience". Tables 12 and 13 test that assumption.

(Table 12 here)

(Table 13 here)

"Teach respect" is strongly associated with Obey/Follow Conscience with an N^* of 236 net of Nation. Furthermore, the very high value of N^* for the interaction, $N^*=20,535$, tells us the association is much the same in each country. If, say, the German result for Obey/Follow Conscience is due to some quirk in the translation, one would expect the association between Teach Respect for Authority and Obey/Follow Conscience to be different in Germany. But it isn't. Table 13 shows the effect only ranges from 11 to 14 points across the five nations.

So far we have established that:

- 1) The five nations vary nontrivially on our principle question.
- 2) The order Germany > Australia > Britain, Italy, USA is statistically reliable (and hardly predictable from national stereotypes).
- 3) Within each nation the principle question is definitely correlated with an item on teaching respect for authority in schools. The evenness of this association across nations (no interaction) gives indirect support to the belief these national difference are not an artifact of translation quirks (as, of course, does the difference between Australia and the other two English speaking samples).

We have looked at line-drawing and we have looked at abstract principles. Let us now look at both simultaneously. To do so, I introduced Obey/Follow Conscience into each of the Nation by Who/Do by Allow tabulations discussed previously. Table 14 summarizes the results.

(Table 14 here)

The cell entries in table 14 are N^* values of differences in "Allow" for the two predictor variables, Nation and Obey/Follow, tabulated alone, tabulated simultaneously, and for their three variable interaction. The 63 cells in table 14 really have just two stories to tell.

- 1) With one exception (Racist Teacher), Principles make a independent, strong and consistent difference in Tolerance.

The fourth and fifth columns from the left in table 14 display N* for Obey/Follow and Allow before (Raw) and after (Net) controlling for Nation. Except for Teacher the values are all between 202 and 349.

The far right hand column shows N*s for the interaction (Nation, Principle, Allow). All but two are clearly insignificant (N* is larger than N) while two, General Strikes and Racist Teachers are borderline. Inspection of the data suggests that a) Marches are less related to Principle in Italy (N*=1853) than in the other nations (N*s from 83 to 294) and b) The association between principle and Racist Teacher is highly variable with N*s of 263 (USA), 505 (Germany), 8294 (Britain) 8740 (Australia) and 15,000 (Italy). On the whole though, the Principle hypothesis not only "works", it works strongly and uniformly across the five nations.

Cynics to the contrary notwithstanding, across the Who/Do issues and across nations, citizens who accept the general principle of free speech are distinctly more likely to be tolerant on specific issues.

- 2) The national differences in line drawing are not due to differential acceptance of principle.

Columns 1 and 2 of table 14 display N* for Nation and Allow before (Raw) and after (Net) controlling for the Principle question. Reading up and down the Net column, N* ranges from 96 (Marches) to 1624 (Publish), all statistically significant and all but one below the 1000 mark. Thus, strong national differences remain after the principle item has been controlled. Furthermore, Principle doesn't seem to contribute much, as shown in column three (Dif.). If a goodly portion of a national difference is because of Principle (if citizens of X country are more tolerant of Z because they accept the principles of free speech not merely because they have a different attitude to Z), the Dif entries should be large and positive. (If Principle plays an important part in the national differences, when it is controlled, the

associations should weaken and the value of N^* should rise.) In actuality four of the entries are negative, the largest is only +234 and in no case would one interpret the raw and net associations differently. One gets pretty much the same national differences before and after controlling for principles.

Citizens' acceptance of the abstract principles of democracy makes a difference in their tolerance - and that difference is impressively consistent across countries and Who/Do issues, although it doesn't explain the national differences on specific issues. Principles appear to be no more and no less powerful than the various line-drawing issues.

Summary

We have compared adult cross sections in six nations (Australia, Austria, Britain, Italy, the United States, and West Germany) on attitudes to free speech using ten "where to draw the line" items and a single question on abstract principles. Where do we stand now on the three hypotheses - 1) small differences, (2) consistent differences, and 3) inconsistent differences?

The verdict is clear. Granted majority support in all these nations on what might be called elementary rights - allowing persons protesting government policies to hold meetings and publish their protests (but there is nontrivial variation even here) - once the question shifts to more controversial issues, consensus breaks down and doesn't return until one gets to "far out" expressions such as damaging buildings or indoctrinating school children.

[Note

5: The "Teacher" question has an unfortunate ambiguity since it does not say the teacher espouses Racist or Revolutionary ideas in the class room (although I'd guess most respondents assume this to be the case). Historically, the item dates back to the American McCarthy period when dissident teachers were being sacked for their beliefs, whether or not they were expressed in the classroom. It is perhaps a tribute to progress in American tolerance that the item is now ambiguous.]

And it is equally clear that the differences are inconsistent.

Table 15 sums them up. Its cell entries are the differences between

a nation's percentage and the six nation average - for the ten items in Table 1 and Obey/Follow Conscience. Since + means more

tolerant and - means less tolerant, the story is told by reading up and down the columns.

(Table 15 here)

Each column has several plus signs and several minus signs. This is the heart of the analysis since it is a numerical way of saying no country is consistently tolerant or consistently intolerant, every country is relatively tolerant on some matters, relatively intolerant on others. The extremes for each nation underline the point.

- 1) Australians are +12.7 on Marches, -12.7 on General Strikes.
- 2) Britons are +13.6 on Marches, -6.1 on Obey/Follow Conscience.
- 3) Americans are +13.0 on Racist meetings, -14.9 on General Strikes.
- 4) Germans are +23.1 on Obey/Follow Conscience, -25.4 on Marches.
- 5) Austrians are +10.0 on Revolutionaries' Meetings, -23.6 on Marches.
- 6) Italians are +23.7 on General Strikes, -14.8 on Meetings for Racists or Revolutionaries.

Correlation coefficients give another perspective on the same numbers. If national patterns are literally unique, when we correlate nations (proceeding as if the nations are variables and the 11 rows in Table 15 are cases) all the correlations should be negative (each nations tending to be plus where the others are minus and minus where the others are plus). Table 16 reports such correlations.

(Table 16 here)

Starting with the upper right diagonal, we do, indeed see a lot of - signs. Nine of the 15 correlations are negative. But two, Britain/Australia and Germany/Austria are strikingly positive, +.84 and +.90. Scrutiny of table 15 (and of all the prior analysis) suggests that the Marches item may be having an undue influence

here as it produces the sharpest differences among the nations. Therefore, the lower left diagonal of Table 16 displays nation/nation correlations after Marches was deleted from the data.

There 12 of the 15 correlations are negative and the German/Austrian coefficient drops from .90 to a less astounding .65. One could push and pull a bit to say that Table 16 does indeed support the extreme hypothesis of unique national political climates - a rather interesting result since contemporary cross national research tends to conclude industrial nations are more like each other than anyone thought. Perhaps, though, it would be fairer to say that Table 16 certainly dooms lingering hopes for the "consistent difference" notions and suggests four clusters among the six nations:

- (1) Australia and Britain: relatively sympathetic to Protesters unless they strike.
- (2) The United States: relatively tolerant of Racists.
- (3) Germany and Austria: relatively tolerant of Revolutionary Meetings and extremely unhappy about Marches.
- (4) Italians: relatively tolerant of General Strikes, relatively intolerant of Revolutionary and Racist Meetings.

While four clusters among six nations does not quite meet the dictionary definition of "unique" The data, raw in Table 15 and cooked in Table 16, give the main result: although all six of these nations have advanced economies and stable democratic politics, their political cultures vary strikingly in ways that preclude awarding the laurel of tolerance or the stain of intolerance to any one of them.

Figures and Tables To Accompany "Attitudes Toward Civil Liberties
In Six Countries in the Mid 1980s"

Table 1.

Questions 3 and 4 Rearranged

a) Items

"Do What "

"Who"	Teach	General Strike	Marches	Meeting	Publish
Policy Protester		Q3f.	Q3c.	Q3a	Q3b
Revolutionary	Q4a.II			Q4a.I	Q4a.III
Racist	Q4b.II			Q4b.I	Q4b.III

b) Average (unweighted across six countries) Per Cent "Allow"

	Teach	General Strike	Marches	Meeting	Publish
Policy Protester		35%	56%	86%	77%
Revolutionary	17%			58%	63%
Racist	17%			44%	51%

c) Bivariate Association With Nation

(N* = sample size required for significance)

	Teach	General Strike	Marches	Meeting	Publish
Policy Protester		145s	900s	505s	297s
Revolutionary	545s			208s	1302s
Racist	888s			331s	711s

For each N is approximately 6500, (an adjusted for clustering = N# = .67N approximately 4336. See text for discussion.

Table 2.

Average Percentage "Allow" (over the 10 items in Table 1)
by Nation

Nation	Average
Germany	52.5%
Britain	51.3%
USA	50.2%
Austria	49.9%
Australia	49.4%
Italy	49.2%

Table 3.

Statistical Analysis of Questions 3a, 3b, 4a.I,
4a.III, 4b.I and 4b.III

Association With "Allow"	N*
Two variables	
"Who": Racist, Revolutionary, Protester	68s
Nation	1,193s
"Do": Meeting, Publication	15,032s
Three variable (interactions)	
"Who" & "Do"	891s
Nation & "Who"	1,141s
Nation & "Do"	2,811s
Four variable interaction	23,707no

(N#=3876, N=5814)

Table 4.

"Who" & "What" Interaction

(Per Cent "Allow" - Averaged Across Nations)

"Who"	"What"		Difference
	Meetings	Publications	
Protesters	86%	77%	-9
Revolutionaries	58%	63%	+5
Racists	44%	51%	+7
Average	62%	64%	-2

Table 5.
Nation & "What" Interaction

(Per Cent "Allow" - Averaged Across "Who" questions)

Nation	"What"		
	Meetings	Publications	Difference
Britain	61%	69%	+8
Italy	51%	59%	+8
Australia	60%	66%	+6
USA	63%	61%	-2
Germany	72%	67%	-5
Austria	67%	62%	-5
Average	62%	64%	

Table 6.
Nation by "Who" Interaction

6a.

(Percent "Allow" - Averaged Across "What" Questions)

Nation	Racist	Revolutionary	Protester
USA	58%	55%	73%
Austria	50%	67%	76%
Germany	51%	76%	82%
Britain	46%	61%	87%
Italy	35%	49%	80%
Australia	44%	56%	89%
Average	47%	61%	81%

6b.

(Percent "Allow" versus No Interaction Model)

Nation	Racist	Revolutionary	Protester
USA	+12	-4	-7
Austria	+2	+5	-7
Germany	-3	+8	-6
Britain	-3	-1	+4
Italy	-4	-3	+7
Australia	-4	-5	+8

Table 7.

Statistical Analysis of Questions 3f and 3c

Association with "Allow"	N*
Two Variables	
Nation	290s
"Do": Marches, General Strike	83s
Three Variable interaction	179s
(N#=4592, N=6888)	

Table 8.

Nation by "What" by "Allow" Interaction
8a. (Percent "Allow")

Nation	Marches	General Strikes
Italy	69%	59%
Britain	70%	29%
Australia	69%	22%
USA	66%	20%
Austria	32%	38%
Germany	31%	42%
Average	56%	35%

	8b. Versus Average Per Cent Marches	General Strikes
Italy	+13	+24
Britain	+14	-6
Australia	+13	-13
USA	+10	-15
Austria	-24	+3
Germany	-25	+7

Table 9.

Statistical Analysis of Questions 4a.II and 4b.II

Association with "Allow"	N*
Two Variables	
Nation	1,034s
Who: Revolutionaries, Racists	153,656no
Three Variable Interaction	8,200no
(N#=4438, N=6657)	

Table 10.

(Percent "Allow" Teacher - Averaged Across "Who" items)

Nation	Percentage
USA	22%
Austria	21%
Italy	18%
Germany	17%
Britain	13%
Australia	12%
Average	17%

Table 11.

"Obey" v. "Follow Conscience" (Q2) by Nation

Nation	% "Follow Conscience"	(N)
Germany	88%	(1012)
Australia	68%	(1454)
Britain	61%	(1464)
Italy	60%	(1487)
USA	57%	(622)
Average	67%	

(N=6031 >N#=4026 >N*=202s)

Table 12.

Statistical Analysis of Questions 2 and 15c

Association with "Follow Conscience"	N*
Two variables	
Nation	206s
Teach Respect	236s
Three variable interaction	20,535no
(N=5411, N#=3609)	

Table 13.

"Follow Conscience" by Nation and "Respect Authority"
(Per Cent "Follow Conscience")
Importance of Teaching Respect for Authority

Nation	"Essential"	All Other	Diff.
Germany	79%	90%	11
Australia	62%	76%	14
Britain	54%	66%	12
Italy	51%	64%	13
USA	51%	63%	12

Table 14.

Statistical Analysis of Nation by "Obey/Follow" by "Who/What"
Items

N*

Topic Interaction	Nation			Obey/Follow			N*
	Raw	Net	Dif.	Raw	Net	Diff.	
Meetings	461s	604s	+143	219s	303s	+84	333,588no
Publish	1390s	1624s	+234	231s	245s	+14	82,021no
Protest	587s	581s	-6	359s	349s	-10	110,439no
Revol.	284s	380s	+96	143s	208s	+65	110,437no
Racist	458s	495s	+37	187s	202s	+15	109,962no
Marches	114s	96s	-18	635s	178s	-457	2,008s
Strikes	100s	98s	-2	329s	286s	-43	5,755no
Revteach	968s	981s	+13	1310s	1376s	+66	38,595no

Racteach 954s 946s - 8 31560no 16994no -14566 3,638?

Ns vary from 5231 to 5965, N# vary from 3487 to 3977

Table 15.

Summary of Differences (Country Percentage Minus Mean)

ITEM	Australia	Britain	USA	Germany	Austria	Italy	Mean
Protest							
Meeting	+5.7	+3.6	-7.7	+5.0	-1.4	-5.4	85.6%
Publish	+10.5	+8.6	-9.2	-3.7	-9.6	+3.5	77.0%
March	+12.7	+13.6	+10.2	-25.4	-23.6	+12.4	56.1%
Strike	-12.7	-6.1	-14.9	+6.9	+3.0	+23.7	35.2%
Revolutionary							
Meeting	-7.1	-3.9	-3.4	+18.9	+10.0	-14.8	57.8%
Publish	-2.1	+4.5	-7.2	+11.1	+2.4	-8.6	63.4%
Teach	-4.5	-5.2	+3.2	+1.8	+2.2	+2.2	17.4%
Racist							
Meeting	-4.7	-4.3	+13.0	+5.7	+4.9	-14.8	43.8%
Publish	-2.3	+1.8	+7.9	+2.2	+1.0	-10.4	51.0%
Teach	-6.1	-4.0	+6.2	-1.6	+6.1	-0.6	17.0%
Conscience v. Obey							
	+1.9	+6.1	-9.8	+23.1	na	-6.2	66.7%

Table 16.

Correlations Between the Numbers in Table 15

	Australia	Britain	USA	Germany	Austria	Italy
Australia		.84	.08	-.54	-.86	.05
Britain	.74		.13	-.71	-.88	.17
USA	-.20	-.19		-.50	-.15	-.30
Germany	-.18	-.41	-.34		.90	-.49
Austria	-.82	-.78	.36	.65		-.47
Italy	-.24	-.14	-.54	-.32	-.29	

Correlations below the diagonal omit "Marches".

Appendix 1: English Wording of "Who/Do What" Questions

Q3. There are many ways people or organizations can protest against a government action they strongly oppose. Please show which you think should be allowed and which should not be allowed by ticking a box on each line.

Q3a. Organizing public meetings to protest against the government

Q3b. Publishing pamphlets to protest against the government

Q3c. Organizing protest marches and demonstrations. (The German version adds "which interfere with traffic")

Q3d. Occupying a government office and stopping work there for several days

Q3e. Seriously damaging government buildings

Q3f. Organizing a nationwide strike of all workers against the government

Q4. There are some people whose views are considered extreme by the majority. First, consider people who want to overthrow the government by revolution. Do you think such people should be allowed to...

Q4a.I Hold public meetings to express their views

Q4a.II Teach 15 year olds in school (The Italian version is 18 years)

Q4a.III Publish books expressing their views

Second, consider people who believe that whites are racially superior to all other races. Do you think such people should be allowed to....

Q4b.I Hold public meetings to express their views

Q4b.II Teach 15 year olds in school

Q4b.III Publish books expressing their views

(For all 12 questions, the alternatives were "Definitely allowed, Probably Allowed, probably not allowed, Definitely not allowed." For all analyses reported here the items were dichotomies as Allowed v. Not allowed.)

Appendix 2: Canadian and Russian Studies

Since the 1985 ISSP surveys, similar measures of Free Speech attitudes have become available for two populations, Canada and residents of Moscow, USSR. Neither used exactly the same wordings as the ISSP items, but each is of interest.

A. Canada

Sniderman, Fletcher, Russell, and Tetlock (1988) report on a general population (18 and older living in a household) telephone survey (N=2,084) of the ten provinces of Canada, carried out by the Institute for Social Research at York University, Toronto, in the Spring and Summer of 1987, with completion rates of 64% and 62% for the French and English versions. The item most comparable to the ISSP questions is:

"Do you think members of extreme political groups should be allowed to hold public rallies in our cities, or should not be allowed to do so?" After eliminating "don't knows" (for comparability with the analysis in this paper), we get:

Group	Per Cent "Allow"	N
English speakers	62%	(1471)
French speakers	56%	(477)

The language difference is of borderline significance (N=1948 > N* = 1468 > N# = 1299) and the pooled "all Canada" percentage would be 60%.

The closest approximation in the ISSP85 set would be items 4a.II and 4b.II, Meetings for Revolutionaries and Racists. Table 4 gives average "allow" percentages of 58 and 44, which suggest that Canada is in "the same ball park" as the ISSP countries

B. Moscow

Keller (1988) reports on a telephone survey (N=939) of residents of Moscow, sponsored by the New York Times and CBS and carried out (May 7-15, 1988) by the Institute for Sociological Research of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Keller reports a completion rate of 90% for a population where 84% of the residences have telephones.

The article gives the following item, tabulated by Age (again, I have repercentaged excluding na's):

"It is acceptable for people with grievances to hold street demonstrations"

18-29	40-44	45-64	65+	Total
47%	45%	38%	15%	39%

This question is probably most comparable to our Q3c which had an average of 56% "Allow" (Table 1c). However, this item showed strong national differences (Table 8). Taken at face value the figures suggest the Moscow result is about the same as the German and Austrian but well below the English speaking trio or Italy. The reader should, however, remember, of the ten ISSP items analyzed, Q3c happens to be the one where Germans and Austrians show unusually low levels of tolerance.

References

- Almond, Gabriel A. and Sidney Verba (1963)
The Civic Culture. Princeton University Press.
- Barnes, Samuel H., Max Kasse, Klaus R. Allerbacck, Barbara G. Farah, Felix Heunks, Ronald Inglehart, M. Kent Jennings, Hans D. Klingemann, Alan Marsh, and Leopold Rosenmeyer (1979)
Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies. Beverly Hills CA: Sage publications.
- Barnum, David G. and John L. Sullivan (1987)
"Attitudinal Tolerance and Political Freedom in Britain"

paper presented at the 1987 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September.

Bobo, Lawrence and Frederick C. Licari (1989)

"Education and Political tolerance: Testing the Effects of Cognitive Sophistication and Target Group Affect." Public Opinion Quarterly. (in press).

Davis, James A. (1986)

"British and American Attitudes: similarities and contrasts." in Roger Jowell, Sharon Witherspoon and Lindsay Brook, eds., British Social Attitudes: The 1986 Report. London. Gower

Davis, James A. and Tom W. Smith (1988)

General Social Surveys, 1987-1988: Cumulative Codebook. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center.

Goodman, leo A. (1978)

Analyzing Qualitative/Categorical Data: Log-Linear Models and Latent Structure Analysis. Cambridge MA. Abt Books.

Kalven, Harry (1988)

A Worthy Tradition. Harper & Row.

Keller, Bill (1988)

"Muscovites, In Poll, Are Split on What Their Future Holds" New York Times, May 27. pp. 1 and A9.

Muller, Edward N., Pertti Pesonen, and Thomas O. Jukam (1980)

"Support for the Freedom of Assembly in Western Democracies." European Journal of Political Research. 8:265-288.

Sullivan, John L., James Piereson, and George E. Marcus (1982)

Political Tolerance and American Democracy. Chicago. University of Chicago Press.

Smith, Tom W. (1987)

"The Polls: The Welfare States in Cross-National Perspective." Public Opinion Quarterly. 51:404-421.

----- (1988)

"The Ups and Downs of Cross-National Survey research." GSS Cross-National Report No. 8. Chicago. NORC

----- and Sara P. Crovitz (1988)

Annotated Bibliography of Papers Using the General Social Surveys. 7th edition. Ann Arbor MI. ICPSR.

Sniderman, Paul M., Joseph F. Fletcher, Peter H. Russell, and Philip E. Tetlock (1988)

"Liberty, Authority, and Community: Civil liberties and the Canadian Political Culture." paper delivered at the Annual Meetings of the Canadian Political Science Association and the Canadian Law and Society Association; University of Windsor, June 9.

Stouffer, Samuel A. (1955)

Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties. New York. Doubleday

Weil, Frederick D. (1982)

"Tolerance of Free Speech in the United States and West Germany, 1970-1979: an analysis of public opinion survey data." Social Forces. 60:973-993.

----- (1985)

"The Variable Effects of Education on Liberal Attitudes: A Comparative-Historical Analysis of Anti-Semitism Using Public Opinion Data." American Sociological Review. 50: 458-474.

Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung (1987)

International Social Survey Programme: Role of Government - 1985. Codebook Za-No. 1490. Cologne.