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Political Culture

Christian Welzel

A stable and effective democratic government ... depends upon the orientations that people have to the political process – upon the political culture.

(Almond and Verba, 1963: 498)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the place of the political culture paradigm in comparative politics. It outlines the paradigm's fundamental premises and assumptions and sketches how research in this field has developed. Special emphasis will be placed on where I see the greatest contribution of the political culture approach: understanding the societal fundamentals of democracy and how these are transforming in the process of cultural change. In thinking about the driving forces behind democracy, the most basic assumptions of the political culture approach will be juxtaposed to those of the political economy approach. The chapter closes with some thoughts about the future research agenda of the political culture paradigm.

DEFINITION

Going back to Almond and Verba (1963: 13) the term *political culture* is usually understood 'as the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of a nation.' Thus, political culture is about the psychological dimension of political systems, including all politically relevant beliefs, values, and attitudes. Depending on what is the reference population one can distinguish elite and mass cultures, local, regional and national cultures, as well as the subcultures of specific groups. Usually one would refer the concept to collective units of which people are aware and have some feeling of belongingness.

To what extent actual political behavior is to be included in the notion of political culture is not always perfectly clear. Insofar, however, as certain patterns of behavior become habitualized, they manifest beliefs in the legitimacy of this behavior. In that sense, political habits can be considered as behavioral manifestations of political culture.

Because individuals are the carriers of political orientations, adherents of the political culture approach gather data from surveying individuals. But the unit of interest in political culture studies is a given population (which can be defined by spatial, organizational or identification boundaries), so individual-level data are aggregated to arrive at descriptions of entire populations. Since these descriptions should be representative of the respective population, the political culture approach has an inbuilt tendency to focus on representative population surveys as its major analytical tool.

THE ROOTS OF THE CONCEPT

The most basic assumption of the political culture paradigm suggests that the orientations, beliefs, and values prevailing among a population constitute a crucial determinant of the type of political system by which a given population is governed. This axiom has been formulated more than 2300 years ago by Aristotle (ca. 350 BC/1984) in Book IV of *The Politics*. In this opus Aristotle argued that democracies are typically found in middle-class dominated societies in which an egalitarian worldview is predominant among the citizens.

Here we find the classical formulation of a two-step causal process in which (1) the social structures characterizing a given population make certain beliefs predominant among its members; and then (2) these beliefs make specific types of political systems accepted and considered legitimate. Thus, there is a sequence from social structures to subjective beliefs to the legitimacy of political institutions. This sequence provides an early theory to explain the origins of dictatorship and democracy: hierarchical social structures lead to authoritarian beliefs under which dictatorship becomes the legitimate form of government; horizontal social structures lead to egalitarian beliefs under which democracy becomes the legitimate form of

government (Nolan and Lenski, 1999). In a modern version we find this model outlined in more detail in the work of Huntington (1991: 69).

Aristotle's idea that the citizens' beliefs determine the fate of political systems was plausible in the world of the Greek city states. In the history of the Greek *poleis*, the citizenry itself appeared several times as an agent in engineering political institutions, for instance when democracy movements were formed to chase away rulers considered as illegitimate tyrants (Finer, 1999: Book II). But the idea of civic agency became unrealistic in the eras of Roman imperialism and medieval feudalism, falling into oblivion for centuries. A belief in civic agency returned with a vengeance only when the liberal revolutions of early modern times and the first political mass movements brought the people back in, in mobilizing wider parts of the public for political goals. Thus, some 2000 years after Aristotle, Montesquieu et al. (1748/1989) argued in *De L'Esprit des Lois* that whether a nation is constituted as a tyranny, a monarchy or a republic depends on the prevalence of servile, honest, or egalitarian orientations among the people. Likewise, de Tocqueville (1837/1994) reasoned in *De la Démocratie en Amérique* that the flourishing of democracy in the United States reflects the liberal, egalitarian, and participatory orientations among the American people.

In modern times the most flagrant illustration of the fact that people's orientations influence a regime's chances to survive was the failure of democracy in Weimar Germany. Because this failure had such catastrophic consequences as the Holocaust and World War II, it troubled social scientists, psychologists, and public opinion researchers alike. Much of the research inspired by this break in civilization shared the premise that democracy is fragile when it is a 'democracy without democrats' (Bracher, 1971).

In this vein, Lasswell (1951) claimed that democratic regimes emerge and survive where a majority of the people share orientations that are compatible with the operation

of democracy. In Lasswell's eyes these orientations are rooted in 'freedom from anxiety' which he saw nurturing a general 'belief in human potentialities,' a sense of 'self-esteem' as well as a sense of 'respect for others.' Similarly, when Lipset (1959: 85–9) reasoned why modernization is conducive to democracy he concluded that this is so because modernization changes mass orientations in ways that make them more compatible with the operation of democracy, by increasing people's appreciation of opposition, criticism, and political pluralism.

Most explicit on this topic, Almond and Verba (1963) and Eckstein (1966) introduced the term 'congruence,' claiming that in order to be stable political institutions must correspond to people's legitimacy beliefs. This is all the more true for democratic institutions, for democracies cannot survive on the basis of suppression (at least not without corrupting their own principles). The congruence theorem has since then been the political culture school's most paradigmatic assumption.

THE QUESTION OF CITIZENS' CIVIC COMPETENCE

Almond and Verba's (1963) *Civic Culture* study is the founding piece of work of the political culture paradigm, especially in its cross-national comparative orientation. Comparing two old democracies (UK, US), two at the time young democracies (Italy, Germany), and a developing nation (Mexico), this study aimed to identify the psychological attributes of a culture that is able to sustain democracy. In identifying these attributes, the authors emphasized two concepts: civic competence and civic allegiance.

Like most scholars of democracy Almond and Verba assumed that democracies put higher demands on the citizens than authoritarian forms of government. For democracy requires voluntary participation in the political process, at least in elections to fill positions of power. Even in a purely representative

type of democracy in which mass participation is limited to elections, citizens must be able to understand the electoral process. They must be capable to evaluate what the parties in power have done and what opposition parties are proposing as alternatives, should they make reasonable choices in an election. If these conditions are not met, the electoral process will be irrational and democracy itself will not make sense. Thus, civic competence is a fundamental precondition for a rational democratic process.

Since then the field has explored the citizens' political competence both in cognitive and perceptive terms. To capture cognitive competence scholars issue survey studies asking people about their political understanding and their political knowledge in an attempt to evaluate an electorate's sophistication, and hence its ripeness for democracy (Zaller, 1992). Inspired by an early study of Converse (1964) emphasizing the inconsistency of most voters' political attitudes, other studies followed, demonstrating a fundamental lack of political knowledge and understanding, even among the electorates of the most advanced democracies (McClosky and Brill, 1983). Quite often it was concluded from such studies that one should not project too high expectations into democracy because in general the democratic process overwhelms most people's cognitive capacities. These conclusions then served as a justification of elite-guided, strictly representative versions of democracy. This position rejected any attempt at extending democracy into a more mass-participative version. Indeed, mass apathy was considered a stabilizing feature of democracy (Crozier et al., 1975; Dye and Ziegler, 1970).

The description of modern mass publics as insufficiently competent has not remained unopposed, of course (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). Invoking the theory of informational short-cuts scholars argue that the demands for voter competence are more modest than the critics of insufficient voter sophistication suggest. Politics is a remote area that ranks

low in most people's daily priorities, so people economize the time they invest to obtain the information needed to make reasonable judgments. Instead of studying given policy proposals in all detail, most people pay attention to how the representatives of various social and political groups position themselves to a proposal. From this they draw conclusions on whether or not the proposal is in their own interest, saving the time to study the proposal themselves. What is important then for people to make reasonable choices is to have easy access to a diversity of views on an issue.

The theory of informational shortcuts shifts the burden of reasonable choice from the expertise of the citizens to the quality of the intermediary system. To be capable to make reasonable choices, the citizens do not have themselves to become political experts. What is needed is political pluralism involving a diversity of group representatives who provide informational shortcuts in identifiable ways (Dalton, 2006: 20–31).

Still another approach opposing the criticism of incompetent citizens refers to the phenomenon of cognitive mobilization in postindustrial societies (Dalton, 2004: 20–31). It is argued that rising levels of education, the expansion of intellectual tasks in the growing knowledge sector, and the increasing exposure to informational diversity, have each contributed to expand people's ability to arrive at independent judgments of given matters. People's factual political knowledge might not have significantly increased in postindustrial societies (Wattenberg, 2006), but their skills to acquire information and to process it have certainly increased through cognitive mobilization, enabling people to make independent judgments.

Civic competence has not only an objective cognition component. It also has a subjective perception component. Subjective political competence has been defined by Almond and Verba (1963: Chapter 8) as people's feeling to understand the political process and the belief that they can participate in meaningful ways, and when they do so, that

it helps to change things to the better. Certainly, citizens can heavily misperceive their political competence. But whether misperceived or not, subjective competence is at any rate a consequential political orientation. For people who feel competent and efficacious about what they can contribute are more likely to participate in politics. They have a stronger sense of agency, which generally motivates action (Verba et al., 1995).¹

THE ALLEGIANCE MODEL OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

As much as Almond and Verba's (1963) *Civic Culture* study emphasized civic competence, it also emphasized the importance of civic allegiance. In contrast to competence, allegiance is an entirely affective mode of orientation. A minimum of civic competence is thought to be necessary to make the democratic process rational. A basic dose of civic allegiance to the norms, institutions, and actors of democracy is supposed to be necessary to stabilize democracy as a form of government.

The emphasis on allegiance was strongly inspired by Easton's (1965) concept of political support. Easton thought that – because modern polities involve the broader masses into politics – they need mass support to be stable. This is all the more true for democracies. They allow collective actors to compete for power and this always involves the possibility to vote anti-democratic actors into office, actors who might abandon democracy. To minimize this possibility, mass support for democracy must be so widespread that anti-democratic forces have no real chance to receive sufficient electoral support. In a stable democracy citizen disaffection must be limited to particular policies and specific actors and must not spill over to dissatisfaction with the democratic process and the basic principles of democracy, especially representation. Democracy is designed to digest lacking 'specific' support for concrete

policies and actors but it cannot cope with lacking 'diffuse' support for its basic norms, principles, and institutions (Klingemann, 1999).

More recently a new twist has been given to this theme by Anderson and Tverdova's (2003) work on 'losers' consent.' The authors argue that the requirement of preserving diffuse support applies in particular to the supporters of the losing party in an election. Quite naturally, voters of losing parties show less specific support for incumbent governments. It is important, however, that this lack of specific support does not translate into a lack of diffuse support of the democratic process writ large. Accordingly, a democracy is thought to be more stable not only when diffuse support is high on average but also when the *gap* in diffuse support between the winning and the losing camps of the electorate remains small.

At any rate, among scholars concerned with the concept of political support, the ideal democratic citizen is usually seen as a person who participates in elections but is not active outside the institutional channels of representation. This is so because representation is the constitutive principle of modern democracies. To retain legitimacy this principle needs reliable party-voter alignments. This requires voters to be loyal to representatives once these representatives have been voted into office and bestowed with legitimate decision making power. The allegiant democratic citizen does not disobey or oppose decisions made by democratically elected representatives. They accept the leadership role of their representatives and when they are not in line with their policies, they respond by changing their political alignment, giving the vote to another party. The allegiant democratic citizen is supposed to operate strictly within party-voter alignments. They can change their alignment but not operate in a free floating space outside alignments. In the allegiant model, specific support for particular actors and parties is allowed to erode but it must be compensated by re-alignments to new actors and parties, should the principle of representation continue to work (Jennings and van Deth, 1989; Kaase and Newton, 1995).

As a consequence, the allegiance model is in danger when party-voter alignments decrease in general. Three decades of amounting evidence from cross-national survey data seem to suggest that exactly this is about to happen, throughout postindustrial societies (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000).

PARTY-VOTER DEALIGNMENT

The allegiance model of citizenship came under strain with the emergence of protest politics and new social movements in the late 1960s. Scholars sharing the view that democracy suffers from mass mobilization outside institutionalized channels, saw this development very critically, fearing an overload of government with excessive demands by too highly mobilized publics. It was stated that civic mobilization outside the channels of representative institutions will render governments unable to fulfill inflated demands. This will disappoint the citizens and democratic institutions will fall in disfavor. Thus, a legitimacy crisis and a governability crisis have been predicted as the consequence of increasingly elite-challenging masses (Crozier et al., 1975).

The first comparative empirical study of protest politics came to different conclusions, however (Barnes and Kaase, 1979). Based on surveys among representative samples of the US, Great Britain, Germany, The Netherlands, and other countries the study found that

1. protest participants had higher levels of formal education, better political skills, and felt more efficacious than non-participants;
2. that protest participants emphasized democratic norms more, not less, than non-participants; and
3. that protest participants were in general more engaged and active than non-participants.

Follow-up studies on new social movements in fields of environmental protection, gender equality, human rights, fair trade and equal opportunities confirmed these findings (McAdam et al., 2001). This line of research

helped reshape our understanding of protest behavior and its role in democratic politics.

The predominant view in explanations of elite-challenging mass activities was for a long time influenced by deprivation theories whose object of explanation were in most cases violent mass upheavals (Gurr, 1970). But this is a form of expressing dissent categorically different from the peaceful forms of mass dissent observed in postindustrial societies since the late 1960s. Still, under the impression that some sort of grievance and frustration is motivating protest behavior, the emphasis of revolution theories on deprivation influenced the initial views on the rising protest movements in postindustrial societies. But what is true for the supporters of violent activities – that frustration about social marginalization is a prime motivation – is not true for peaceful forms of dissent in advanced societies. It is not marginalized parts of the population and people most deprived of basic resources that constitute the support basis of elite-challenging activities. Rather it is those who are rich in participatory resources and who have the skills and education enabling them to initiate and join in various campaign activities (Dalton and Kuechler, 1990; Verba et al., 1995).

The transition to postindustrial societies has been linked with rising levels of formal education, more easily accessible information, improved means of communication and mobility, and wider opportunities to connect people across the boundaries of locality, ethnicity, religion or class. These processes have increased the part of the population possessing the participatory resources that are critical for the campaign activities needed to nurture social movements and mass pressures on elites. As paradoxical as it may seem, societies that are most advanced in providing their populations long, secure, and prosperous lives show the highest rates of protest activity. In other words people complain the most in societies in which they have the least to complain by means of their objective living conditions. And within these societies it is mostly those being privileged

rather than deprived in resources who organize and express complaints most effectively and vigorously (Welzel et al., 2005).

This is a paradox only if one believes that protest results from misery. In fact, people do not raise their voice when they are the most deprived. People raise their voice when they have the capability to do so and the critical attitude that motivates the expression of dissent. As argued by Inglehart (1990), the transition from industrial to postindustrial societies increases both factors, enabling as well as motivating citizens to put elites under increasingly effective mass pressures.

THE SELF-EXPRESSION MODEL OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

The rise of postindustrial societies nurtures elite-challenging mass activities in two ways. On one hand it increases the participatory resources that make people capable to initiate and sustain the kinds of activities that put pressure on elites. On the other hand, it nurtures value changes that give rise to the sort of expressive attitude that motivates people to make their voices heard.

This process has first been described in Inglehart's (1977) *Silent Revolution* where he argues that the 'existential security' and 'cognitive mobilization' coming along with postindustrial society nurture post-materialist value priorities. These priorities emphasize people power and freedom of expression.

In his later work Inglehart (1997) embeds rising post-materialist priorities in the wider context of self-expression values, which is a whole syndrome of orientations intertwining five components. As shown in Table 16.1, it comprises

1. *democratic orientations* that aim at giving more power to the people;
2. *liberal orientations* that tolerate diverse and non-conform lifestyle choices, including the practice of homosexuality;

Table 16.1 The concept of self-expression values

<i>DIRECTION of orientation</i>	<i>WVS measurement INSTRUMENT</i>	<i>LOADING on common dimension: aggregate (individual) level</i>	<i>COMMON overarching orientation</i>
<i>Democratic Orientation</i> (i.e., an emphasis on people power)	Priority on giving people more say in 'government decisions,' 'jobs and communities' and 'freedom of speech'.	.890 (.566)	
<i>Liberal Orientation</i> (i.e., tolerance of nonconform lifestyle choices)	Respondent's rating on a 1 to 10 scale indicating the justifiability of 'homosexuality'.	.841 (.575)	
<i>Activist Orientation</i> (i.e., inclination to actively voice one's opinion)	Readiness (coded .15) or actual participation (coded 1.0) in petitions, demonstrations, and boycotts.	.837 (.598)	<i>EMANCIPATIVE Orientation ('self-expression values')</i>
<i>Efficacious Orientation</i> (i.e., belief in having control over one's life)	Rating on 1 to 10 scale indicating one's sense of freedom of choice and control in shaping life.	.596 (.566)	
<i>Trusting Orientation</i> (i.e., belief in others' trustworthiness)	Belief that 'most people can be trusted' instead of that 'once cannot be too careful enough in dealing with other people.'	.627 (.366)	

Data Source: World Values Surveys I–V (1981–2006, www.worldvaluessurvey.org) N (aggregate level) = 237 country-year units, N (individual level) = 320,000 respondents. Loadings on first and only principal component reported.

3. *activist orientations* that make people inclined to make their voices heard in such elite-challenging actions as petitions, boycotts, and demonstrations;
4. *efficacious orientations* that give people the feeling of having control in shaping their lives; and
5. *trusting orientations* that make people believe that others can in general be trusted.²

These five orientations show a large overlap, reflecting an overarching emancipative orientation that emphasizes human self-expression. Appreciating and tolerating human self-expression involves a belief in people's positive potential, for which reason generalized trust is part of the syndrome.

As Flanagan and Lee (2003) show self-expression values take shape and grow stronger with the rise of postindustrial societies. This type of society satisfies most people's fundamental survival needs, such that freedom of expression becomes more important to make people satisfied with their lives. Also the growth of material means, intellectual skills, and social opportunities resulting from postindustrial society makes people more capable to

practice basic freedoms. As a consequence, people strive to actualize these capabilities, for self-actualization makes people feel fulfilled, satisfied, and happy (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 140–1).

Based on prior work by Welzel (2002), Inglehart and Welzel (2005) theorize in a 'human empowerment framework' the close connection that ties self-expression values to socioeconomic development, on one hand, and effective democracy, on the other hand. In this framework (see Figure 16.1), socioeconomic development is thought to empower people on the level of *capabilities*, by widening the means, skills, and opportunities that enable people to pursue self-chosen activities and to practice democratic freedoms. Self-expression values are thought to empower people on the level of *motivations*, by increasing their willingness to pursue self-chosen activities and to practice democratic freedoms. Effective democracy, then, empowers people on the level of *entitlements*, by giving them the rights that allow one to pursue self-chosen activities and practice freedoms.

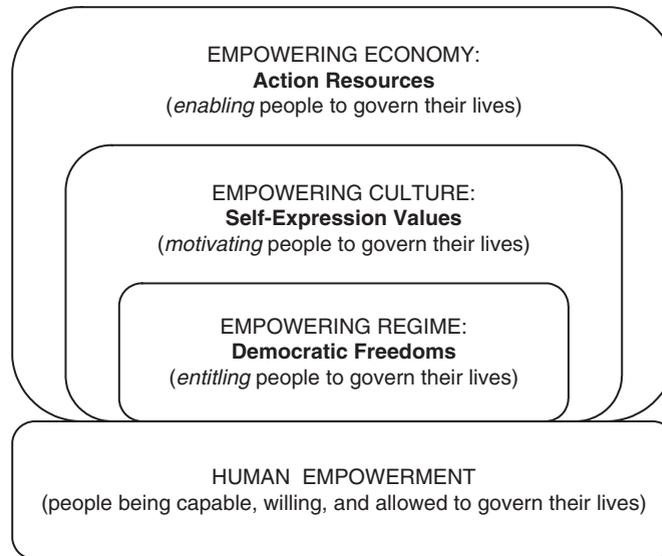


Figure 16.1 The human empowerment framework

The common focus on human empowerment holds these three elements together, such that democracy becomes increasingly effective in response to people's growing willingness to practice freedoms, which in turn arises in response to people's capability to do so.

Rising self-expressive publics follow new citizenship norms, as Dalton (2008) notes in the *Good Citizen*. The allegiance model according to which the good citizen is a follower of elected elites does not attract self-expressive citizens. This is the reason why Putnam (2000) observes in *Bowling Alone* a decline in various sorts of civic activities, including participation in elections and voluntary work in a number of formal associations. Most of these activities are linked with the allegiance model of citizenship in which citizens are supposed to function as followers. But this is only one flip side of the coin. The other side is an increase in activities linked to the new, expressive model of citizenship. Citizens are less attracted by those parts of the democratic process that are designed to legitimize elites. They are more attracted to activities in which they express themselves and challenge elites. This is part of the explanation why Norris (2002) in

Democratic Phoenix finds various forms of self-initiated and elite-challenging activities to be on a long-term rise.

The self-expression model of citizenship has various consequences, some of which are outlined below. These consequences are strikingly evident from the temporally and spatially widest exploration into political culture ever, the World Values Surveys (www.worldvaluessurvey.org).

CRITICALITY AND DISAFFECTION

As outlined in Nevitte's (1996) *Decline of Deference* and Norris's (1999) *Critical Citizens*, the value changes proceeding in the wake of the postindustrial transformation of modern societies make people increasingly critical of institutionalized authority over people. Indeed all societies for which survey data are available in considerable time series show a decline of people's confidence in hierarchically structured mass organizations and in institutions that exert authority over people, as Dalton (2004) illustrates in *Democratic Choices – Democratic Challenges*.

This tendency affects representative institutions directly, for the principle of representation is designed to transfer authority from the people to institutions. Accordingly, rates of confidence in parliaments and identification with political parties are on a constant decline (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). These tendencies seem to be most pronounced in societies in which self-expression values have grown strong.

channels, they are feeling more efficacious about their possibilities to shape their lives by themselves. This rising sense of civic agency seems to be a consequence of the emancipative tendencies coming along with post-industrialization and rising self-expression values. Throughout postindustrial societies, people have come to feel more efficacious, as Figure 16.2 illustrates.

EFFICACIOUS AND ELITE-CHALLENGING PUBLICS

At the same time as people tend to become more dissatisfied about politics in representative

This is important in the context of a society's capacity to initiate and sustain elite-challenging actions, and thus for democratic mass power. It is known from protest mobilization research that dissatisfaction provides an important motivation for the mass actions that challenge elites (Klandermans, 1997). But dissatisfaction is only a necessary but

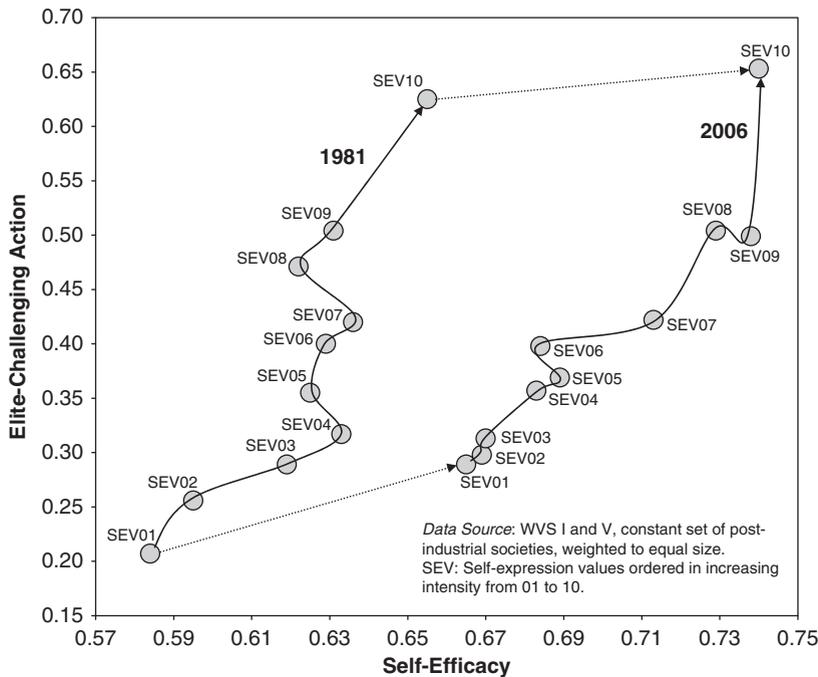


Figure 16.2 Self-expression values related to elite-challenging actions and efficacious orientations

Note: Reduced version of self-expression values measuring the intersection of democratic, liberal, and trusting orientations, as indicated in Table 16.1. Scale is collapsed into an ordinal index with rank 1 representing the weakest and 10 the strongest emphasis on self-expression. *Elite-challenging Activities* measure readiness to participate (coded .10) or actual participation (coded .33) in three elite-challenging actions (petitions, demonstrations, boycotts), yielding a maximum of 1.0. *Self-Efficacy* is the feeling of having control over one's life, transformed into a scale of minimum 0 and maximum 1.0. Countries included at both points in time (weighted to equal sample size): Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany (West), Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the USA.

not sufficient condition to motivate people to elite-challenging actions. When dissatisfaction goes together with low feelings of agency, it results in resignation and passivity. Only when dissatisfaction goes together with strong feelings of agency do people feel encouraged to actively express their dissatisfaction in public. Hence the combination of rising dissatisfaction with a growing sense of agency is a powerful engine in increasing a public's tendency to initiate and sustain elite-challenging activities.

Both people's sense of agency and their participation in elite-challenging activities are part of self-expression values. As Figure 16.2 illustrates for a group of post-industrial societies, both components have been increasing from 1981 to 2006 and at both points in time they are being stronger along a sequence ordering self-expression values from weak to strong over the other three components of this syndrome.

DEMOCRACY: STRONGER DEMAND, BETTER UNDERSTANDING, MORE ACCURATE ASSESSMENT

With rising self-expression values, the democratic idea that power has to rest among the people resonates stronger in a society. This has three consequences. First, it becomes more important for people to live in a democratic society, so the public demand for democracy is increasing. Second, people's understanding of democracy becomes more liberal: people base their definition of democracy more on the freedoms that empower people and less on strong leadership and popular policy outcomes such as order and prosperity. This becomes obvious from Figure 16.3, mapping self-expression values in a space constituted by people's demands for democracy and the liberalness of their understanding of democracy. With stronger self-expression values people's demand for democracy becomes stronger and their definition of it more liberal.

Third, people's assessment of their society's actual level of democracy becomes more accurate, when one uses the expert democracy ratings of Freedom House as a benchmark. In the new round of the World Values Surveys people are asked to rate their country's level of democracy on a scale from 1 ('not at all democratic') to 10 ('fully democratic'). After having equalized scale polarities and ranges, one can compare people's democracy ratings of their own country with the expert ratings of Freedom House. Doing so it turns out that some people over-rate and others under-rate their country's level of democracy, these over-ratings and under-ratings varying greatly in extent. As is obvious from Figure 16.4, stronger self-expression values make people assess their country's level of democracy more accurate: among people underrating democracy, stronger self-expression diminish the extent of underrating; among people over-rating democracy, stronger self-expression values diminish the extent of over-rating.

WIDER CIRCLES OF SOLIDARITY

The most surprising result perhaps is that rising self-expression values do not bring greater selfishness, as Flanagan and Lee (2003) assume. On the contrary, the evidence seems to be clear by now that stronger self-expression values widen the circle of others with whom people build up solidarities (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 285–98).

Self-expression values are weak when pressing socioeconomic conditions force people into group bonding behavior. Bonding behavior means that people ally with members of their in-group while discriminating members of out-groups (Tajfel, 1970). When more permissive socioeconomic conditions give rise to self-expression values, group boundaries become more variegated, porous, and permeable (Simmel, 1908/1984). This diminishes both the forcefulness of intra-group harmony and the fierceness of inter-group conflict, allowing people to overcome group bonding and to

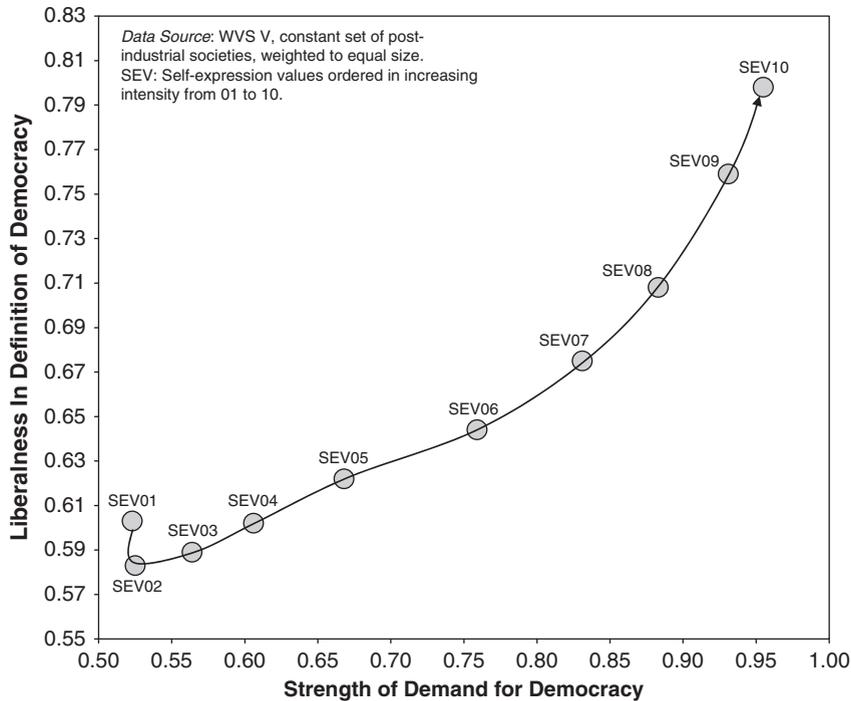


Figure 16.3 Self-expression values related to individual's definition of democracy and their demand for democracy

Note: Self-expression values measure the intersection of democratic, liberal, activist, efficacious and trusting orientations, as indicated in Table 16.1. Scale is collapsed into an ordinal index with rank 1 indicating the weakest and 10 the strongest emphasis on self-expression. *Strength of Demand for Democracy* relates to a question asking people how important it is for them to live in a democratic society (minimum is 0, maximum is 1.0). *Liberalness in Definition of Democracy* reaches a maximum of 1.0 when respondents rate on 10 ("definitional element of democracy") items referring to free elections, civil rights, referenda votes and gender equality and when they rate at the same time on 1 ("not a definitional element of democracy") items referring to military coups, religious rule, a prosperous economy and a punishing state. Same countries included as in Figure 16.1.

engage in group bridging. This process places human solidarity on a different basis. Familiarity, belongingness, and alikeness with others are becoming less important while mutually agreed interests as well as empathy with the situation of others are becoming more important for creating solidarities. Solidarities are becoming more chosen and less enforced.

Evidence supporting these claims is available from the newest round of the World Values Surveys which uses for the first time a value-item battery designed by Schwartz (1995). This battery allows one to distinguish between collectivist and individualistic values, on one hand, and between selfish and unselfish values,

on the other hand.³ Related to these distinctions, it is interesting to note that, in post-industrial societies, stronger self-expression values do not only go together with stronger individualistic values (which is not surprising) but also with stronger unselfish values (Deutsch et al., 2008). Apparently, self-expression values merge individualism and altruism into what one might call humanism.

These findings seem paradoxical if one equates individualism with selfishness, which is indeed a widespread misconception. Scholars often think of collectivism as the basis of human solidarity and of individualism as its destructor (Triandis, 1995). In fact,

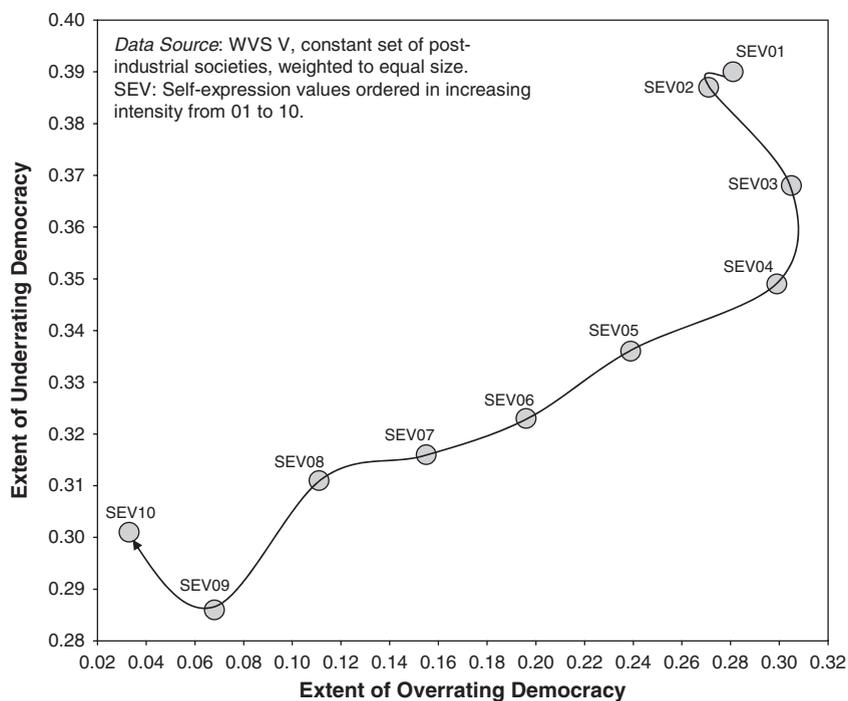


Figure 16.4 Self-expression values related to the over- and under-rating of democracy

Note: Self-expression values measured as indicated in the note of Figure 16.2. Citizens have been asked to rate their country's level of democracy. Citizens' ratings of their country's democracy levels are related to the expert ratings of Freedom House (after having standardized both ratings into the same scale range), such that (a) when a citizen's rating exceeds the expert rating the *Extent of Overrating* has been measured and (b) when the citizen's rating falls short of the expert rating the *Extent of Underrating* has been measured. Same countries included as in Figures 16.2 and 16.3.

however, individualism does not destroy solidarity but places it on a different basis. This was recognized early on by sociologists Durkheim (1893/1988) and Tönnies (1887/1955). They described the individualization trend of modernity as bringing a transition from 'mechanical' solidarity to 'organic' solidarity or from 'community' to 'association.' Both descriptions refer to a transition from externally imposed to internally chosen forms of solidarity. Beck (2002) describes the solidarity effects of individualization in similar terms, speaking of a transition from 'communities of necessity' to 'elective affinities.' Empirical research of interpersonal networks supports the view that modern individualized societies integrate people into more widespread and more diverse solidarity networks (Wellman and Frank, 2001).

Collectivism means that people see others not as autonomous individuals but as group-members in the first place (Triandis, 1995). When group categorization dominates people's views of others, people almost automatically start privileging members of their own group and discriminating members of other groups (Tajfel, 1970). Collectivism in this sense is a form of group-egoism that hinders the creation of solidarities across group boundaries. Individualism, by contrast, means that one does not consider others as members of groups but as autonomous individuals in the first place. This mode of orientation provides a common ground – human individuality – on which one can place all people equally. This is why individualism and altruism go together with stronger self-expression values (Deutsch et al., 2008).

SELF-EXPRESSION VALUES AS A DEMOCRATIZING MOTIVATIONAL FORCE

If one looks at entire societies' aggregate levels of self-expression values, these values appear to be a first-rate indicator of a society's quality of life. On one hand, this is obvious from these values very close association with any indicator of socioeconomic development, as demonstrated by Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 150). As these authors argue, this relationship exists because more comfortable socioeconomic conditions on a mass level tend to give rise to self-expression values.

An equally strong relationship exists between self-expression values and indicators of the quality of a society's institutions. Measures of democracy and of 'good governance,' including rule of law, absence of corruption, and accountable governance, all correlate strongly positively with mass self-expression values (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 151). Here the causal relationship seems to operate in a different direction. Self-expression values are not growing stronger because more democratic and accountable governance nurture these values. Instead, it is stronger self-expression values that motivate elite-challenging mass actions, and these mass actions help to remove authoritarian elites from power and to make democratic elites behave in a more responsive manner (Welzel, 2007: 417–8). Thus, mass self-expression values constitute a decisive motivational force in bringing about democracy where it not yet exists and in strengthening it where it is already in place.

IMPLICIT REGIME DISPOSITIONS AND EXPLICIT REGIME PREFERENCES

Self-expression values resemble the attributes that Lasswell (1951) described as a 'democratic character,' which is composed of a 'sense of security,' a 'belief in human potentials,'

'self-esteem,' and 'respecting others.' The assembly of democratic, liberal, efficacious, activist, and trusting orientations that constitute self-expression values comes indeed close to Lasswell's democratic character.

What gives self-expression values an inherently democratic thrust is the fact that they place authority into the people themselves. This implies a rejection of uncontrolled and unlimited authority over people, making authoritarian systems appear illegitimate. Because of these implications, self-expression values constitute an inherently pro-democratic regime predisposition. The civil and political freedoms defining democracy intuitively resonate with these values.

Because they are anchored in people's values, regime dispositions have strong motivational power, even though these predispositions are only implicit. Regime preferences, by contrast, are explicit but their motivational effects are unsure. In surveys, people express a preference for democracy for many reasons (Bratton and Mattes, 2001; Mishler and Rose, 2001; Bratton et al., 2005; Shin and Wells, 2005). It might be that they feel attracted by the fashionableness of the term or that social desirability guides their responses or that they prefer democracy simply because they associate other desirable things, such as prosperity, peace, and low corruption, with it (Inglehart, 2003). In none of these cases is the motivation to prefer democracy based on an inner valuation of the civil and political freedoms defining democracy. Hence, it is unlikely that these preferences motivate people strongly to struggle for democratic freedoms, be it to defend them when they are challenged or to attain them when they are denied. When, however, people have an inner valuation for freedom, which they do when they emphasize self-expression, then there is a strong motivation to struggle for democratic freedoms. In this case the emergence of effective mass pressures in support of these freedoms is more likely.

Accordingly, Inglehart and Welzel (2005) find that predispositions for democracy implied in self-expression values provide a stronger force in sustaining and attaining democracy than do explicit preferences for democracy.

Self-expression values motivate people to initiate and sustain elite-challenging actions that put effective pressure on power holders, even if the political system is undemocratic and confronts people with the risk of suppression (Welzel, 2007).

From the perspective of this research, the mainstream in political culture research has been too obsessed with measuring explicit regime preferences, rather than implicit regime dispositions based on given values. This is a legacy of the *Civic Culture* study. In this study, Almond and Verba (1963: 10) explicitly dissociated themselves from Lasswell's measures of attitudinal predispositions for democracy because they could not see anything specifically political in orientations such as freedom from anxiety, self-esteem, and openness to other people. What is true is that orientations such as these provide no direct measure of regime preferences. Yet, they constitute predispositions with strong motivational implications because these predispositions are anchored in people's values. When a self-expressive worldview arises, it is hardly imaginable how this view can be compatible with political systems exerting uncontrolled and unlimited authority over people. If this worldview emerges, the legitimacy of authoritarianism erodes and the democratic idea of power to the people resonates more strongly among the masses.

TRUST, CONFIDENCE AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Putnam's (1993) *Making Democracy Work* gave the political culture approach greater attention in comparative politics. In stark contrast to neo-institutional approaches, this study seemed to demonstrate that differences in the design of institutions can be ignored and that to explain a community's political performance civic traditions account for most of the differences. This study brought an emphasis on civic orientations back in.

In contrast to scholars who insist that the definition of social capital has to be limited

to social networks, Putnam's understanding of social capital emphasizes psychological orientations that facilitate human interaction. The orientation supposed to be most effective in this respect is social trust (Gibson, 2001). Trust is understood to overcome collective action dilemmas, for people who trust others do not see themselves playing in prisoner's dilemma games when interacting with people (Uslaner, 2001). Hence, social trust shapes the collective action capacity of a society. It enables the masses to initiate and sustain the actions that put elites under popular pressure and make them responsive.

Social trust certainly increases a society's collective action capacity. But it does not tell us for which ends this capacity will be used because purely by itself trust is not directed towards a particular end, such as democratic freedoms. This is often overlooked in theories of trust or implicitly it is assumed that people anyways strive for liberty and democracy, so the only thing that matters in making this strive effective is social trust. Research in the context of the World Values Surveys, however, shows that trust matters mostly as a component within the broader syndrome of self-expression values. In other words, trust matters for democracy in connection with democratic, liberal, activist and efficacious orientations that let people strive for democratic freedoms. In isolation from orientations that give trust a direction, it does not show a strongly pro-democratic effect, neither in helping to attain democracy nor to sustain it (Welzel, 2007: 405).

Another aspect of trust that has been considered important for democracy is political trust, usually measured as confidence in a set of basic societal institutions, including the national parliament, the civil service and the like (Newton, 2001). Inspired by the allegiance model of democratic citizenship scholars still think that in order to flourish, democracy needs people who have trust in basic institutions. However, evidence that a society's democratic performance depends on how much political trust its citizens express is non-existent. To the contrary,

Welzel (2007: 405) finds that higher political trust affects a society's democratic performance negatively, even controlling for a society's democratic tradition and various other factors.

When social capital is understood to include orientations that motivate people to initiate and sustain collective actions, self-expression values should certainly be included into the notion of social capital. For these values do motivate people to collective actions, especially the elite-challenging actions that have been found to help bringing about and strengthening democracy. In that sense, self-expression values constitute a particularly pro-democratic form of social capital.

ON THE COHERENCE OF SELF-EXPRESSION VALUES

The concept of self-expression values has been criticized on two accounts. On one hand, it has been shown that the democratic, liberal, activist, efficacious, and trusting tendencies representing this concept do not cluster into a coherent syndrome at the individual level within populations. The claim that trusting, liberal, efficacious, democratic and activist orientations merge into a robust generic attitude, called self-expression values, has thus been disqualified as a fallacious inference, drawn from ecological correlations (Muller and Seligson, 1994; Seligson, 2002).

More substantively it has been argued that when these attitudes do not strongly correlate at the individual level within populations, this means that the high scorers in these attitudes fall into different social circles with only a small overlap between them (Teorell and Hadenius, 2006). Thus, the social circle of people that can be mobilized on the basis of a consistent set of self-expression values remains always small. This questions the theoretical status of self-expression values as a motivational basis on which to mobilize wider parts of a public for elite-challenging actions.

As Welzel et al. (2003) outline, this criticism overlooks an important point: the five components constituting self-expression values show weak individual-level correlations only if one looks at each country separately, ignoring the massive between-country differences in these components. As soon, however, as one merges the data from various countries into a pooled dataset, the syndrome of self-expression values appears to be as consistent at the individual level as at the aggregate level. What does this mean?

For instance, Swedes who are more activist in their orientations than the Swedish average are not necessarily more trusting than the Swedish average. More generally, the correlation between trusting and activist orientations (or any other pair of self-expressive orientations) tends to be weak when country-specific averages are taken as the reference line. But this is the wrong reference line when most variation is between persons from different countries, not between persons from the same country. Many Swedes might be above the Swedish average in one self-expressive attitude and below the Swedish average in another self-expressive attitude, which makes these attitudes appear inconsistent. However, on a global scale Swedish averages are exceptionally high in all five self-expressive attitudes, so Swedes who are less expressive according to Swedish standards are still very expressive on the global standard. Under the global standard, the five self-expressive attitudes are highly consistent. They do not constitute different social circles.

Another point of criticism that has been raised is that the concept of self-expression values is not theoretically deduced but instead has been discovered inductively by means of factor analyses (Haller, 2002). It appears then that self-expression is just a label tagged on a bewildering assembly of different attitudes, not each of which is actually a measure of values.

However serious one takes this criticism, it does not do away with the finding that human populations tend to score consistently high or

low in all five components of self-expression values. This finding is so robust that it must have some meaning. Hence, one should try to make sense of it rather than ignoring it simply because it has not been theoretically deduced. The fact that a finding has not been fully anticipated by a ready-made theory does not make it less important.

It is true that the five components of self-expression values cover a diversity of domains, from efficacy to activity to trust. But the point is that these components cluster into a coherent syndrome *despite* this diversity. The diversity of domains just underlines that self-expression values constitute a pervasive phenomenon that radiates into many spheres. To be sure, not each component is by itself a direct and perfect indication of the generic syndrome of self-expression values. Participating in elite-challenging actions, for example, is not a value. It is not even an attitude but a behavior. But the fact that each component is related to all others implies that none of the components can just be taken by itself. It has to be seen in connection with the other components, which changes the interpretation. Merely by itself, partaking in elite-challenging actions is not necessarily an indication of a self-expressive orientation. But insofar as it is linked with democratic, liberal, efficacious, and trusting attitudes it certainly is a reflection of a self-expressive orientation, or at least a behavioral manifestation of it.

It makes sense to consider participation in elite-challenging actions as a valid indication of self-expression values, insofar as such participation overlaps with the other components of self-expression values. The way in which these values are measured extracts exactly that overlap. At any rate, self-expression values seem to be real, meaningful, and consequential syndrome of orientations.

POLITICAL ECONOMY AND POLITICAL CULTURE

Both political economy approaches and political culture approaches claim to have

identified the reasons why modernization works in favor of democracy. These claims are in direct contradiction to each other. From the point of view of political economists Acemoglu and Robinson (2006), modernization operates in favor of democracy because it makes the idea of democracy more acceptable in the eyes of elites. From the viewpoint of political culturalists Inglehart and Welzel (2005), modernization operates in favor of democracy because it confronts elites with masses that are more capable and willing to struggle for democratic freedoms and to practice them.

These opposing views reflect different understandings of democracy and its driving forces. In political economy it is thought that the driving force behind democracy is a redistributive interest of the impoverished masses in universal suffrage. It is argued that the masses always profit from universal suffrage because it enables them to impose redistributive policies, so the masses always prefer democracy. The privileged elites, by contrast, fear it for exactly the same reason. Authoritarian regimes thus do not survive because majorities would not prefer democracy: Majorities prefer democracies anyways. Instead, authoritarian regimes survive because elites are capable to repress dissenting majorities. Consequently, the only way how democracy can be established is to make elites accept it so that they concede it to the masses. This is where political economists see the impact of modernization. If it proceeds, it tends to equalize the income distribution to an extent that makes democracy appear less threatening to the elites because if the median income comes closer to them, it becomes unlikely that majorities can be rallied around extensive redistributive policies. If this moment comes elites will start to see the costs of repressing the masses' desire for democracy as more costly than the option to concede democracy.

From a political culture perspective various doubts can be cast on these assumptions. To begin with, most authoritarian regimes did not survive because of an impressive

capacity to suppress dissenting majorities but because they never had been confronted with dissenting majorities, reflecting the fact that throughout most of pre-modern history the wider masses had neither the capacities nor the will to express and organize political dissent (Gat, 2006: 570–661; Nolan and Lenski, 1999: 233–55). The major effect of modernization is not that it makes democracy more acceptable in the eyes of the elites but, instead, that it confronts elites with increasingly efficacious and ambitious masses. When the masses are becoming capable and willing to struggle for democratic freedoms, the elites are left with little choice in the matter. It is also not true that the masses always invariably prefer democracy. Quite the contrary, how strongly the people aspire for democracy depends heavily on their values: The desire for democracy is the stronger, the more people value human freedom and self-expression. Where these values are weak, people emphasize authority and strong leadership instead. This might not prevent people from expressing a preference for democracy, yet these preferences are groundless as they are inconsistent with people's deep-seated values.

While in the eyes of political economists the driving force behind democracy is a redistributive interest of the impoverished masses in universal suffrage, from the political culture point of view it is an emancipative striving for freedom by increasingly capable and ambitious masses. It is up to future research to clarify in how far these opposing views are reconcilable.

THE RESEARCH AGENDA

It belongs perhaps to the more important discoveries of the political culture paradigm that there is a coherent syndrome of democratic, liberal, activist, efficacious, and trusting orientations, called self-expression values, that takes shape and grows stronger with the rise of postindustrial societies and

which is linked with a comprehensive array of major societal transformations, from increasingly equal opportunities for women and other previously under-privileged groups to the strengthening of democracy.

What seems to be clear then is that the syndrome of self-expression values is of major importance. What is not exactly clear, though, is how these values translate into behavior. The precise micro-level mechanism of how self-expression values create certain forms of elite-challenging activities is unobserved so far and it is also not known how these activities aggregate into the mass-level patterns that have been shown to work so strongly in favor of democracy. Future research should work on these research gaps. An obvious way to do this is to connect the survey method with experimental methods targeted at actual behavior, something that is done far too little so far in the empirical social sciences.

NOTES

1. Scholars distinguish 'internal' and 'external' efficacy but there are two versions of this distinction. One version defines internal efficacy as the feeling of being capable to shape one's own life and external efficacy as the feeling of being capable to shape one's environment. The other version defines internal efficacy as the feeling that one's own participation in a collective activity is a significant contribution to this activity's success, whereas external efficacy is the feeling that authorities are responsive to one's participation. Wherever the dividing line between internal and external efficacy is drawn, both tend to go closely together as they have a common ground in reflecting people's sense of human agency.

2. In a factor analysis these five orientations load on the one and only principal component, representing a common underlying dimension, labeled self-expression values or emancipative values. To measure this dimension each orientation is standardized into a similar scale range and then an average is calculated over all five orientations (in such a way that each orientation is weighted for its loading on the common dimension).

3. Schwarz (1992) himself uses other labels: collectivist versus individualistic values are conservative versus openness to change values in

Schwartz's language. And selfish versus unselfish values are self-enhancement versus self-transcendence values in his terminology.

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