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Towards a Theory of the Types of Political Culture: Stakes and Empowerment ⁽¹⁾

نحو نظرية لأنواع الثقافة السياسية: الرهانات والتمكين

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Abstract

Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba proposed three types of political culture: the parochial, subject and participant. A fourth type, they called the *civic*, combines elements of the three foregoing ones. They maintained that the civic culture prevails in democratic societies. *This study wonders* why people differ in their types of political culture. I argue that having stakes in the political system plus feeling empowered to act, qualify a person to have a civic culture regardless of whether they live in a democratic regime or not. In terms of *methodology*, I apply the independent samples t-test on the World Values Survey data (2017-2022) for a sample of three democratic regimes (Chile, Germany and South Korea) and three authoritarian ones (Nicaragua, Russia and Vietnam) to test the hypotheses that follow from this theory. The study *finds* there is evidence that suggests that middle-aged, middle-class (stakes) males with higher education (empowerment) tend to have a *civic* political culture, whereas old, low-class females with low education tend to have a *subject* political culture. *Contribution-wise*, this study represents a contribution towards giving a rationale of why some people may have a *civic* type of political culture while others have other types of it.

Keywords: political culture; civic political culture; subject political culture; stakes; empowerment

المخلص

اقترح جابريل أ尔蒙د وسيدني فيربا ثلاثة أنماط من الثقافة السياسية: الثقافة القاصرة، والخاضعة، والمشاركة؛ هذا بالإضافة إلى نوع رابع أطلقوا عليه "الثقافة المدنية" civic culture. وقد ذهب أ尔蒙د وفيربا إلى أن الثقافة المدنية- والتي تتكون من خليط من الأنماط الثلاثة سالفة الذكر - تسود في النظم الديمقراطية. **تتساءل** الدراسة الحالية عن أسباب تفاوت المواطنين في أنماط ثقافتهم السياسية. ويجادل الباحث بأن ما يؤدي إلى وجود ثقافة سياسية مدنية لدى بعض المواطنين يتمثل في وجود مصالح لهم داخل النظام السياسي بالإضافة إلى شعورهم بالتمكين أو القدرة على التأثير، وذلك بغض النظر عما إذا كان النظام الذي يعيش فيه المواطنون ديمقراطياً أم غير ذلك. وفيما يتعلق **بالمنهجية**، فقد استخدم الباحث اختبار T للعينات المستقلة على بيانات "مسح القيم العالمي" في الدورة 2017-2022 لعينة من ثلاثة نظم ديمقراطية (تشيلي - ألمانيا - كوريا الجنوبية) وثلاثة نظم سلطوية مناظرة (نيكاراجوا - روسيا - فيتنام) من أجل اختبار فروض النظرية الموضوعية. **ومن حيث النتائج**، فقد خلصت الدراسة إلى أنه توجد أدلة على إنه في حين يميل الذكور ذوو التعليم العالي (عنصر التمكين) المنتمون للطبقة الوسطى وفي فئة منتصف العمر (عنصر

المصلحة) إلى امتلاك ثقافة سياسية مدنية، فإن الفئة المقابلة: الإناث ذوات التعليم المنخفض المنتمون للطبقة الدنيا وفي فئة العمر الكبير يمتلكون ثقافة خاضعة. وبالتالي تمثل هذه الدراسة إسهاماً نحو معرفة لم يمتلك بعض الأفراد ثقافة مدنية بينما يمتلك آخرون أنواعاً أخرى من الثقافة السياسية.

الكلمات الدالة: ثقافة سياسية؛ ثقافة سياسية مدنية؛ ثقافة سياسية خاضعة؛ مصالح؛ تمكين.

Introduction

It is common knowledge in the field of comparative politics that citizens in democratic systems tend to be more active in politics than their counterparts in authoritarian ones. This means that the type of political culture that prevails in the first group significantly differs from that which prevails in the second. This paper is interested in another dimension of the story, though.

In their seminal work *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (1963, 1965, 1989), Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba defined political culture as political orientations. By political orientations, they meant the attitudes toward the political system as a whole, its component parts as well as toward how far, if ever, the individual views themselves as influential actors in the system. Accordingly, the pair divided political culture into three types: the parochial, subject and participant.

Each one of these genres has its own characteristics that set it apart from the others. In the parochial type, individuals are insensitive to the existence of a central government; in the subject, they only care for what the government decrees; but in the participatory, they are able to think of themselves as influencing government decisions and actions.

Research questions

From this, stem a set of interrelated questions. What could possibly explain why people have different orientations towards politics? Does gender, age, wealth, education or religiosity divide people into different categories of political culture, even regardless of whether the country is democratic or otherwise? If so, is there a *theoretical* explanation for these relationships?

Literature review

The literature on political culture is vast and diversified. In this section, a brief coverage of some categories is presented. First, there is the literature on the nature and definition of the concept itself; then the literature on political culture and change; on the link between political culture and democracy; on national political cultures; and on sub-cultures and factors related to them.

Definition of political culture

According to James A. Bill and Robert Hardgrave (1981), it was Gabriel A. Almond who first coined the term political culture in the 1950s (p.85). It was not until 1963 that Almond and his colleague Sidney Verba published their all-time master-piece *The Civic Culture*. In it, they studied the cultural features of five nations: Italy, West Germany, Mexico, the US and the UK (Bill & Hardgrave, 1981). The pair published two more editions of the book in 1965 and 1989 under the same title.

Their definition of the term, more or less, concentrated on the set of orientations citizens have toward the political system, its components including inputs, outputs, institutions of power, roles and incumbents along with how citizens feel and think of themselves as potentially influencing the system. Depending on three mental processes related to cognition, affection and evaluation, the couple figured out a tripartite classification of political culture that included the parochial, subject and participant types (Bill & Hardgrave, 1981, pp. 85-90). Civic culture, they thought, was the culture prevalent in stable democracies, namely the US and the UK. Contrary to what many may think, civic culture is not equivalent to the participant type; rather, it is a mix of the three types mentioned earlier. If all citizens were to be participant, this would create chaos; if all of them were to be parochial or subject, this would breed authoritarianism. (Bill & Hardgrave, 1981)

Jackman and Miller (1996) argued that political culture concerns the common values that citizens have towards the political system, not those that are related to any specific individual. In this, they appear to agree with Stephen Chilton (1988) who set forth nine criteria to contextualize the plethora of definitions given to the term since its introduction by Almond. Prime among these criteria was commonality or “sharedness” as he put it.

Political culture and change

Jackman and Miller (1996) also stressed the long-term nature of political culture, despite the fact that they accepted that minor fluctuations may take place from time to time, but in their opinion these fluctuations do not impinge on the overall type of culture people have. This may lend a partial explanation to the puzzle posed, *en passant*, by Chilton (1988) that “The very different cultures of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich both arose from the same German population.” (p. 422)

Harry Eckstein (1988) manifestly tapped into the relationship between political culture and change. According to him, even if the approach has been constructed from the outset to analyze the immutable differences between nations

in terms of their common psychological features of how they think of political authority, and in turn, how this is related to a democratic political system, the thesis that political culture can adapt to change is still tenable. He discussed specific circumstances during which such change in political culture could take place. Rapid industrialization, wars and tough economic hardships, to mention a few conditions, can do the job.

Political culture and democracy

On a different note, the debate over the linkage between political culture and democracy was rekindled in the early years of the 21st century. Back in 1988, Ronald Inglehart used data from the World Values Survey and the Eurobarometer projects collected between 1973 and 1986 to propose a relationship between a type of political culture composed of mutual trust, satisfaction about political life and support for social structures on the one hand, *and* the flourishing of democratic institutions on the other. However, Mitchel Seligson (2002) cast long shadows of doubt on Inglehart's proposed relationship of political trust and democracy, as he retested this relationship on the level of individuals in a number of countries and found no significant relationship between how much a person supports democracy as a system of government and how far they trust others (inter-personal trust). He used his findings to proclaim that the relationship hypothesized by Inglehart is just a spurious one. Inglehart and Welzel (2003) retorted that Seligson committed his own logical misinterpretation by assuming that in order for a relationship to be true it has to be true at all levels of analysis (in this case the aggregate and individual levels) ignoring that a relationship has to be disconfirmed on the very same level at which it was originally incepted. The pair pointed out that a relationship can turn from being positive to being negative if we move from one level of analysis to another, and this should not be taken as a sign that one of them is wrong. They cited William Robinson (1950, cited in Inglehart and Welzel) who found a relationship between ethnic composition in American electoral districts and the probability of returning segregationist representatives to the Congress. Strangely enough, while at the individual level, ethnic Africans elected liberals committed to race equality, and whites elected conservatives committed to maintaining the status quo, at the district level, districts that had sizable minorities of African Americans tended to elect ultra-conservative candidates who vehemently encouraged racial segregation. The explanation of the former puzzle consisted in the fact that white citizens in districts populated by sizable African communities were more motivated to vote for segregationists than their counterparts in mainly white districts. Inglehart and

Welzel (2003) noted that both findings were true and that none negated the other because Robinson was tackling two different levels of analysis.

National political cultures

In another vein, studies of national political cultures are abundant. Almond and Verba's has already been mentioned. Since then, scholars have set out doing studies on the characteristics of the political cultures of specific nations. For example, in his article that discussed the Russian political culture at a very critical moment, Jeffrey W. Hahn (1991) concluded that contrary to the then widely-held expectations, the Russian people espoused a political culture that was not quite far from that of the nations of Western democratic countries. He used a randomly drawn sample from the city of 'Yaroslavl', of which he asked questions related to the dimensions of civic culture such as inter-personal trust, support for democratic institutions, etc. The sample were not sure of their ability to influence political decisions, though.

Uk Heo and Sung Deuk Hahn (2003) considered Confucianism as the major shaping force of the political values, orientations, and attitudes of the South Korean people. They maintained that Asian philosophy is paternalistic in nature and stresses the central value of family and kinship in one's life. Heo and Hahn adopted a maximalist view of democratic consolidation that is not restricted to the continual holding of free and fair elections and the exclusion of the possibility of a return to authoritarian rule, but which extends to a type of "advanced democracy" that ensures mature democratic institutions that are buttressed by a type of political culture that accentuates the civic values of inter-personal trust, acceptance of the majority rule, respect for political and legal institutions, and supremacy of the word of law. According to Heo and Hahn, the political culture of the South Korean people, influenced by Confucian teachings, tends to glorify regional affiliations to the detriment of national interests; voting takes place based on strong regional ties; electoral nominations of political parties are normally challenged by disgruntled regional leaders; parliamentary minorities invariably resort to undemocratic means to hamper the passage of laws, etc.

David P. Conradt (2002) contemplated the differences between the characteristics of the political cultures of eastern and western Germans after the reunification based on the findings of a number of surveys conducted between 1991 and 2000- the first decade as a single, undivided political entity. Conradt discovered differences as well as similarities between the peoples of the two regions on multiple fronts. Both nations harbored feelings of national pride but for different reasons: Easterners took pride in their country because of its

excellent stature in arts, literature, and athletic games; Westerners took pride, by far, in having democratic institutions. In addition, the east-west divide was a good predictor of the varying levels of trust in the institutions of government (federal and local governments, the legal system, security agencies, etc.) in the early 1990s, where Easterners were less trustful than Westerners. Finally, in terms of their support to democracy, Eastern Germans were as much supportive to its values as Western Germans, if not more.

Using a host of surveys that extended back to the 1950s, Peter A. Ulram (2016) identified the political culture of the Austrian people as one supportive of core democratic values and hateful of authoritarianism. According to him, Austrian politics after the war was monopolized by two big camps: the conservatives and the socialists. There had been attempts to heal this rift by forming coalition governments between the two big parties. The strategy backfired, though, after the people grew disgruntled by the performances of such political partnerships, which gave rise to a new type of political culture sympathizing with right-wing populist vibes. In spite of that, survey data showed a commitment shared by the majority of the population to democratic values and an aversion to authoritarian alternatives.

Sub-cultures

On the final dimension of this literature review, it is worth noting that the idea of the existence of diversified political subcultures within societies is not new. Almond and Verba themselves recognized this fact when they stated that the model democratic culture they proposed, the civic culture, was a blend of parochial, subject and participant orientations (Almond & Verba, 1963 cited in Bill & Hardgrave, 1981). These three components can even exist together in a single individual and appear in different situations. In his study of the Indian society in the 1960s, Myron Weiner identified two subcultures: one for the masses and one for the elites (Weiner cited in Bill and Hardgrave, 1981). Bill and Hardgrave (1981) maintain that certain societal denominators may play a role in creating different subcultures. They clearly state that “racial, religious, linguistic, tribal, caste, ethnic, class, or geographic cleavages among the population may serve to sustain separate political subcultures” (p.89). Therefore, they criticized Almond and Verba for the fact that their samples were general, i.e., not differentiated according to the socio-economic factors that could explain having different types of political culture in a single society. In their words: “they [Almond and Verba] make no attempt to determine just who are the people within

each nation who diverge in orientation, nor do they relate the responses [of the interviewed] to socio-economic variables.” (p.90)

In the same vein, a study that was published in 1980 concluded that region is more effective than class in determining the political culture of Canadians. Region, the study found, shapes the attitudes of the people towards the institutions and policies of the government more than class does, despite the fact that the latter also plays a role (Ornstein, Stevenson and Williams, 1980).

American studies that tackle the relationships between demographic factors and political culture approach the topic from the perspective of which citizens align with which political party. It has become textbook knowledge that the voter base of the Democratic Party comes from young adults, women, ethnic and religious minorities, the working class, and the liberals, while the Republican Party’s constituency is largely composed of older people, males, whites, evangelicals, the socially conservative and the wealthy. Today, you find that think-tanks rather than academics are more interested in publishing statistical reports on the issue (See for example: ‘Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2009’, 2009, section 1, pp. 11-28).

The significance of this study stems from the fact that the literature stresses that at any given moment, the political culture of any society is made up of different components, but there is a relative lack of the studies that explain the *rationale* of these differences. In a nutshell, a theory is still missing. This is what this study aims to achieve.

Theoretical endeavor

I argue that what decides the type of political culture, is two factors: stakes and empowerment. By stakes, I mean the vested interest a person has in the political system. This depends on the person’s belief of belonging to a certain polity. This interest is a function of who you think will be able to provide you with your life basics, social and psychological wants. Classically, Maslow (1943) identified five basic needs that humans strive to gratify: *physiological* like food, clothing, reproduction, etc.; *safety* like shelter and protection; *love*, i.e., relationships (like friendship, marriage, etc.); *esteem*, i.e., being respected and looked up to by others; and *self-actualization* which is related to the inner feeling that you have achieved everything you have aspired to achieve. From this angle, the political system can be thought of as responsible for providing its members with the material benefits that, in their turn, will secure the attainment of non-material ones. Feeding the people is the prime function of a polity, regardless of the type of economic arrangements adopted by the regime, i.e., irrespective of

whether the system is a mixed economy or a free-market one. In the former, which still prevails in some developing countries, the state shoulders the responsibility of subsidizing basic foods and power products for needy citizens- normally, most of the populations. In the latter, the state is entitled with creating the environment favorable to private enterprises to start and flourish with the aim of adding more jobs to the work market. Safety is another important good that has to be provided by the political system; it is the framework without which the whole economic process would be severely disturbed. It is no wonder then that the section of law-and-order features high on the agendas and manifestos of political parties in democratic regimes. Keeping order is a priority of no less concern in non-democracies, too, for manifest reasons. Immaterial needs of individuals- love, status and fulfillment of self- are all dependent on material ones.

Understandably, all the people will want to secure these needs, but what exactly is the level of these needs that is required by different individuals? In other words, will the same level of these needs be sufficient and convincing for everybody regardless of their varying characteristics? Will all the people yearn for the same degree of self-actualization, prestige or affection? And, if these are built on physiological and safety needs, so will a specific amount or type of these values be satisfying for everyone? My answer is no. I argue that the intensity of longing for these life rewards will be a function of age and social class.

To start with age, studies show that productivity is linked to it in an inverted V-shaped relationship. Vegard Skirbekk (2004), for example, maintains that one's level of contribution to the economic activity they are employed in tends to be on the increase shortly after they take on the job, before it stabilizes and then starts to decrease. The literature that he reviewed sets 50 years of age as the cut point after which the cognitive and other mental abilities of individuals start to decline.

In addition, it is during the period of middle age that people will normally think of starting families. Consequently, there is reason to believe that individuals in this age bracket will be more willing to secure more of life benefits than youngsters who have not yet set their goals in life or seniors who have most probably already achieved the majority of their goals or at least have come to terms with whatever life gave them. Middle-agers are the ones who still dream of achieving more, i.e., those who have higher stakes in life and consequently lay more claims to the political system.

Likewise, the middle class is the population stratum which aspires, more than others, to change their living conditions. The working and the lower classes

do not normally have long-term plans; they will understandably only want to satisfy their immediate needs. The high class will *not* want, either, to change the status quo because they benefit the most from it; put differently, they have a weaker urge to do more effort to achieve more than what they have achieved because they have already reached and probably surpassed the point of satisfaction; they already achieved a high level of financial security, economic protection and psychological satisfaction; consequently, they lay less claims to the political system; their stakes in it are lower, unlike the case is with middle-class citizens, who still want more from life and the system.

Another strand of the theory is related to empowerment. It is not enough to have interests that you want to get served in order to have specific attitudes that are then translated into action, you also need to be properly empowered to embrace a behavior that will allow you to reach your goals. Empowerment is an idea that finds strong theoretical support in the field of social psychology. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, as cited in [Nickerson](#), 2023) proposed a model of human behavior that went down as ‘the theory of reasoned action’. The pair came up with a chain of causality that related final behaviors to a number of successive variables. According to them, behavior is a direct result of the intention to behave, itself is a function of *attitudes* and *subjective norms*. An attitude is whether you think that something is good or bad to do; it is equal to your mental calculations about whether some action is of positive or negative consequences to yourself. By ‘subjective norms’, they mean how strong you believe others want you to act in a specific way (Nickerson, 2023). In collaboration with others, Ajzen pushed forward the notion of reasoned action by adding a third element that is related to the idea of *personal control*, i.e., how much the person believes that he *can* act (Madden, Ellen & Ajzen, 1992 as cited in Nickerson; Yzer, 2013). Together, the three elements, now referred to as ‘the model of planned behavior’, impact the final actions of individuals. What I care about here is the third element: personal control, which in essence is tantamount to feeling empowered to perform the action that you are convinced will serve your interests.

According to my line of thinking, empowerment is related to being convinced that you have a better relative position in society. This is achieved first by being male and then by having a higher level of education. It is normally thought that males believe that they are better equipped than females to work, make money and materialize their wants. The same feeling of relative strength, that is to say empowerment, goes with a higher level of education.

In conclusion, my theory goes that adding up a high level of stakes in the political system (by being middle-age and middle-class), to a high level of feeling empowered (translated in being male and having a high level of education), will make oneself more interested in politics, more sensitive to the outcomes of the political process, more willing to play a role. The combinations of these two values of the two variables, high stakes plus high empowerment, will translate into a type of political culture that is neither parochial nor subject but participant or at least *civic*, bearing in mind that the civic culture is the one thought to be most prevalent in democratic regimes according to Almond and Verba.

Hypotheses

If the proposed theory is true, regardless of the type of the regime, i.e., whether democratic or authoritarian, I expect to find evidence that supports the general hypothesis that:

middle-class, middle-aged males of higher education tend to have either a civic political culture or a participatory one, whereas the group of opposite characteristics (like low-class, old females of low education) tend to have either a subject or parochial political culture.

This hypothesis can be broken down into a number of sub-hypotheses as follows:

- Middle-class individuals have a higher level of political engagement than others.
- Middle-aged individuals have a higher level of political engagement than others.
- Males have a higher level of political engagement than females.
- People with higher education have a higher level of political engagement than others.

Methodology

I used the independent samples t-test to see if there are statistically significant differences between the levels of political engagement of the people who belong to different categories in the cases of the study, i.e., have different values of age, gender, social class, education, in addition to some other demographic variables like religiosity (religious, non-religious), employment (public, private sector, non-profit) and type of settlement (rural, urban).

I used some questions from the World Values Survey (wave7, 2017-2022) to operationalize the dependent variable *political culture*. The first question revolves around interest in politics in general (World Values Survey [WVS], q. 199); the second and third questions wonder whether the respondent has ever voted in local or national elections, respectively (WVS, q. 221 & q. 222);

questions 4-11 query participants on whether they have done, might do, or would never do political actions like “signing a petition” (q. 209), “joining in boycotts” (q.210), “attending peaceful demonstrations” (q.211), “joining strikes” (q.212), “donating to a group or campaign” (q.213), “contacting a government official” (q.214), “encouraging others to take [a political] action” (q.215), or “encouraging others to vote” (q.216). The report also provides for a number of questions that poll individuals over some virtual political actions that are intended to engage in politics and influence the government; those are the ones that are practiced over the Web and social media like “searching information about politics and political events” (q. 217) and “signing an electronic petition” (q. 218).

The result was an index variable that comprised 13 questions that had been identically asked of citizens in the cases of the study. The following table summarizes how I dealt with the data to build the index.

Table 1: political culture/ political engagement index

Q. No.	Label	Answer categories and codes					
		3	2	1	1		
199	How interested would you say you are in politics?	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not very interested	Not at all interested	Don't know	No answer
221	Vote in elections: National level	always	usually	never	Not allowed to vote	Don't know	No answer
222	Vote in elections: National level	always	usually	never	Not allowed to vote	Don't know	No answer
209	Signing a petition	Have done	Might do	Would never do	Don't know	No answer	
210	Joining in boycotts	Have done	Might do	Would never do	Don't know	No answer	
211	Attending peaceful demonstrations	Have done	Might do	Would never do	Don't know	No answer	
212	joining strikes	Have done	Might do	Would never do	Don't know	No answer	
213	Donating to a group or campaign	Have done	Might do	Would never do	Don't know	No answer	

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Q. No.	Label	Answer categories and codes					
		3	2	1	1		
214	contacting a government official	Have done	Might do	Would never do	Don't know	No answer	
215	encouraging others to take [a political] action	Have done	Might do	Would never do	Don't know	No answer	
216	encouraging others to vote	Have done	Might do	Would never do	Don't know	No answer	
217	searching information about politics and political events	Have done	Might do	Would never do	Don't know	No answer	
218	signing an electronic petition	Have done	Might do	Would never do	Don't know	No answer	

- Source: combined from the World Values Survey (2017-2020).
- Numbers 1,2 and 3 represent the codes with which the values have been entered.
- Strikethroughs are treated as absent values.

The resulting index ranged, at its raw state, between 13-39 points. By dividing the original index over 13, it was reduced to a concise one between 1-3.

The independent variables included gender (q. 260),^[1] age (q. 262, X003R2 recoded 3 groups),^[2] education (q. 275R),^[3] social class (q. 287),^[4] employment (q. 284),^[5] religiosity (q. 6),^[6] type of settlement (H_URBRURAL).^[7]

Case selection

To test my hypothesis, regardless of the regime type, and to make the sample as encompassing as possible, I chose six cases: two in Latin America, two in Europe and two in Asia. The logic of the choice is that each same-region pair are highly similar except in the state of democracy (one democratic, the other authoritarian). This is an application of the *most similar systems design* (MSSD). The three *democratic* countries are as different as possible (just like the three *authoritarian* countries) i.e., they represent the *most different systems design* (MDSD). In consequence, the six cases are meant to follow the *combined method of agreement and difference* proposed by J. S. Mill.

The three democratic countries are Chile (Latin America) Germany (Europe) and South Korea (Asia). On the 2022 Economist Democracy Index, Chile scored 8.22; Germany, 8.80 and South Korea, 8.03. Accordingly, all of them were categorized as fully democratic. The negative cases are: Nicaragua

(2.50), Russia (2.28) and Vietnam (2.73). (Democracy Index, 2022, table 2: pp.7-11)

Results

It turned out that there are common variables among the cases that significantly divided the samples. The variables whose relationships with political engagement were significant are the four variables of gender, age, education and social class.

The following table summarizes the results in each country of the six cases.

Table 2: list of t-test most statistically significant independent variables by country

Variable	Values	Chile	Nicaragua	South Korea	Vietnam	Germany	Russia
gender	1- male 2- female	no significant difference	males (1.63) higher than others (1.54) sig 0.000	males (1.82) higher than females (1.74) sig 0.000	males (1.40) higher than females (1.33) sig 0.000	males (2.29) higher than females (2.22) sig 0.002	males (1.64) higher than females (1.60) sig 0.012
age	1-16-29 2- 30-49 3- 50+	no significant difference	youngsters (1.54) lower than others (1.62) sig 0.001; middle-agers (1.64) higher than others (1.55) sig 0.000	middle-agers (1.83) higher than others (1.75) sig 0.000; the old (1.75) lower than others (1.81) sig 0.013	middle-agers (1.38) higher than others (1.34) sig 0.019; the old (1.33) lower than others (1.37) sig 0.036	middle-agers (2.30) higher than others (2.23) sig 0.012; the old (2.22) lower than others (2.29) sig 0.003	no significant difference
education	Education level (recoded): 1- Lower 2- Middle 3- Higher	low-education (1.48) lower than others (1.73) sig 0.000; high-education (1.85) higher than others (1.62) sig 0.000	low-education (1.50) lower than others (1.67) sig 0.000; high-education (1.73) higher than others (1.54) sig 0.000	low-education (1.64) lower than others (1.80) sig 0.000; middle-education (1.76) lower than others (1.80) sig 0.039; high-education	low-education (1.30) lower than others (1.39) sig (0.000); middle-education (1.35) lower than others (1.38) sig 0.049; high-education	low-education (2.00) lower than others (2.28) sig 0.000; middle-education (2.17) lower than others (2.35) sig 0.000; high-education	low-education (1.50) lower than others (1.63) sig 0.000; middle-education (1.55) lower than others (1.64) sig 0.000; high-education

Towards a Theory of the Types of Political Culture: Stakes and Empowerment

Ossama Saleh

Variable	Values	Chile	Nicaragua	South Korea	Vietnam	Germany	Russia
				(1.84) higher than others (1.73) sig 0.000	(1.48) higher than others (1.33) sig 0.000	(2.44) higher than others (2.14) sig 0.000	(1.66) higher than others (1.53) sig 0.000
Social class (subjectiv)	1-upper 2-upper-middle 3-lower-middle 4-working 5-lower	middle-class (upper and lower) (1.71) higher than others (1.64) sig 0.025; working and lower classes (1.64) lower than others (1.71) sig 0.045	upper class (1.44) lower than others (1.59) sig 0.009; middle class (upper and lower) (1.62) higher than others (1.56) sig 0.008	upper class (2.31) higher than others (1.78) sig 0.02; middle class (1.80) higher than others (1.64) sig 0.000; working and lower classes (1.63) lower than others (1.80) sig 0.000	middle class (upper and lower) (1.40) higher than others (1.34); working and lower classes (1.34) lower than others (1.40) sig 0.001	middle class (upper and lower) (2.31) higher than others (2.02) sig 0.000; working and lower classes (1.99) lower than others (2.31) sig 0.000	middle class (upper and lower) (1.63) higher than others (1.60) sig 0.040; working and lower classes (1.59) lower than others (1.64) sig 0.029

Source: calculations of the author.

The preponderance of evidence suggests that the factors of gender, age, education and social class impact on the level of citizens' engagement in politics and hence probably their type of political culture.

In terms of gender, males had a higher level of political engagement than females in all six countries, with the lone exception of Chile.

When it comes to age, middle-aged people had a higher level of political engagement than younger and older people together in Nicaragua, South Korea, Vietnam and Germany but not in Chile or Russia. In all first four countries, there were other findings that corroborated the pattern: in Nicaragua, younger adults turned out to have significantly lower levels of political engagement compared with mid-and-old-agers together; in South Korea, Vietnam and Germany, the elderly had significantly lower levels of political engagement than other age strata combined.

Education showed up prominently on the list. In all countries of the sample, people with the highest level of education turned out to have significantly higher levels of political engagement than those of a medium-or-low-level thereof combined. The pattern is further augmented by the finding that, again in all countries of the sample, people with a low level of education had lower levels of political engagement than those with a medium-or-high-level thereof combined.

The impact of social class was also unequivocally evidenced since in all countries of the sample, with no exception, there appeared a significant difference between the middle class (both its strata combined: upper-middle and lower-middle) on the one hand, and the upper, working and lower classes combined, on the other hand. The difference was in favor of the middle class: it had a higher level of political engagement. The pattern was further supported by the finding that in five out of the six countries (only Nicaragua was the exception), the working and lower classes combined had a significantly lower level of political engagement than others. In Nicaragua, the break in the pattern was compensated by the fact that the upper class had a significantly lower level of political engagement compared with the rest of the classes. The only country in which the upper class had a significantly higher level of political engagement was South Korea.

The other factors of religiosity, employment and type of settlement were not similarly evidenced, and consequently were dropped from the analysis.

Discussion

Implications of the study

The implications of the foregoing results are impressive. When I combined the effects of specific values of the four significant variables, I got the following tabulated results in terms of the average value of political engagement:

Table 3: Combined Variables

Combined Variables	Values	Chile	Nicaragua	South Korea	Vietnam	Germany	Russia
Gender & Age & Education & Social Class	Male & Middle-age & High-education & Middle-class	1.84	1.85	1.86	1.57	2.46	1.68
Same variables	Female & Old-age & Low-education & Low-class	1.47	1.43	1.47	1.27	1.76	1.49
Net difference		0.37	0.42	0.39	0.30	0.70	0.19

By combining the variables, I mean calculating the levels of political engagement for specific values of the variables gender, age, education and social class taken together. There could be many categories resulting from the process of combination, but I concentrate here on: *first*, the category that is the center of the analysis, i.e., the category which springs directly from the theory (stakes: middle-aged and middle-class; empowerment: males and higher education); *second*, an instance of the categories that are opposite to the first category. According to the theory, opposite categories could be: Old (or young), low-class (or high-class), low education females.

As a reminder, the index is made up of 13 statements (indicators), and then divided by 13, which finally produced scores between 1 and 3.

For the sake of interpreting the results, I further divided the interval between 1 and 3 into three equal parts: 1) $1 > x \leq 1.66$: a low level of political

engagement; 2) 1.67-2.33: a medium level of political engagement; 3) 2.34-3: a high level of political engagement. I keep the net value of 1 for no political engagement at all.

Consequently, if political engagement is taken as representative of the type of political culture, and if we apply Almond and Verba's classification to the current index of political engagement, one can claim that the parochial culture doesn't exist in the cases analyzed (remember that it should be zero, which is 1 here). And, whereas the lowest stratum of political engagement ($1 > x \leq 1.66$) may be considered representative of the subject type, and the highest stratum (2.34-3) of the participant type, the intermediate stratum (1.67-2.33) can be considered expressive of civic culture, the *golden mean*. It is a level of political engagement (political culture) that is neither high nor low. Individuals at this level don't exert too much pressure on the political system, but at the same time, they don't totally shy away from expressing their demands, i.e., they do partake in the political process, but they also respect the laws, decisions and actions of the regime.

In light of the aforementioned analysis, how can the findings of this paper be interpreted? To begin with, the first group of individuals: middle-class, middle-aged, males of higher education, who from now on will be referred to as Group X, has an evidently different type of political culture than the second group: low-class, old females with low education, who from now on will be referred to as Group Y. Group X is more active in politics than Group Y in all the cases of the study. The net difference in political engagement between Group X and Group Y ranges between 0.19 (the case with smallest difference, which is Russia) and 0.70 (the case with the highest difference, which is Germany) points with an average of almost 0.40 points.

In five out of the six cases, Group X is classified in a stratum of political engagement that is different, specifically higher than, Group Y. In four out of the six, Group X belongs to the intermediate stratum, which represents, according to the foregoing interpretation, the civic culture. Only in Germany, the most democratic country in the sample (score 8.80 on the Economist's Index), Group X lies in the highest stratum, i.e., has a participant culture, while Group Y resides in the middle stratum. Vietnam is the only country in which both groups are classified in the same category, though still with a positive difference for Group X.

Put together, these findings, for the most part, can be said to coincide with the expectations of the general hypothesis that middle-aged, middle-class, high-education males will have a level of political engagement, and consequently

potentially a different type of political culture, that is different from groups of opposite characteristics, most notably old-age, low-class, low-education females. In consequence, this could be taken as a potential vindication of the theoretical argument that having a stake in the political system (by being middle-class and middle-age) plus being socially empowered (by being male and highly educated) makes for a type of political culture that is more engaged with the political system, regardless of the type of political regime in terms of democracy/autocracy, with exceptional cases being taken cautiously, and while assuming that all other factors that affect political culture (political engagement) are held constant.

In terms of the weight of evidence of the independent variables, the impact of education comes first as it was evident in all the cases, followed by social class (all the cases, too), gender (five cases) and age (four).

How do the findings of this study relate to the literature?

Again, the work of Almond and Verba (1963) represents the ground-breaking and most notable contribution in the field of political culture studies. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, through their 5000-strong sample of individuals in five nations, they highlighted the impact of group differences on political engagement and attitude. They noted, among other things, that a relatively high socio-economic status (with the indicators of class, education) is correlated with a higher level of engagement and more civil competence. Likewise, gender could also be related with the type of orientation and involvement, with women being more likely to have either a parochial or a subject political culture. But the only gap in this analysis, perhaps just like James Bill and Robert Hargrave (1981) pointed out, is that although Almond and Verba proposed these correlations between some demographic characteristics and certain types and subtypes of political culture, they failed to provide a rationale of these relationships, i.e., they did not provide a full-fledged theory of political culture, they just presented a typology of the concept and highlighted a number of patterns that go with these types. These patterns were either related to group differences or national differences. In either case, no explanations were given for these relationships. This paper aimed to fill this small gap by providing such a rationale for the patterns. To test the theory, a number of hypotheses were extracted and tested in a select number of cases that included both democratic and authoritarian regimes. The results supported some of the relationships uncovered by Almond and Verba on a smaller scale.

Future agenda

Although the results of the study supported some of the patterns highlighted by Almond and Verba, a number of prominent contradictions have appeared; on their own, these exceptions deserve to be researched in separate papers.

First, why is there no difference between males and females in terms of political engagement in Chile, in a clear and rare departure from the pattern in other regimes whether democratic or not?

Second, why does South Korea stand out as an exception as regards the finding that its high class had a significantly higher level of political engagement than the other social classes combined, again in a clear break with the pattern in the rest of the cases of the study (the pattern that grants the middle class this status)?

Third, Germany is the only democratic country in the sample where Group X fell in the highest category of political engagement and Group Y fell in the intermediate category thereof, again in a break with the norm in other democracies of the sample. Why is it the case that Germany stands out among these countries as having the highest level of political engagement for these two opposite groups? And is it a peculiarity of Germany among Western democracies?

Fourth, as is the case with every empirically built theoretical argument, more tests are needed in order to verify it. Tests can be done by deducing more hypotheses from the theory, and by including a number of control variables in the tests.

Conclusion

This study started with a passion about a potential explanation for what makes people differ in terms of their types of political culture. After a thorough literature review, it was discovered that there may still be a relative gap in terms of a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon. A preliminary theoretical argument based on two factors, stakes and empowerment, was offered. The argument goes that where a citizen has high stakes in the political system, and at the same time, they feel empowered to act, they will develop a type of political culture that oscillates between a civic and a participant one. On the other hand, if the citizen has low stakes in the system *and* feel helpless, this will have a subject or parochial political culture.

A general hypothesis and a number of sub-hypotheses followed from this theorization. To test them empirically, an index variable of political engagement

was developed from 13 questions from the World Values Survey (wave 7). In the sample of cases chosen, the preponderance of evidence supported the hypotheses. The cases included three different democracies: Chile, Germany, South Korea and three parallel autocracies: Nicaragua, Russia, Vietnam. Males, the highly educated, the middle-class and the middle-aged had a significantly higher level of political engagement than females, people of lower education, lower and upper classes combined and the older and younger generations combined in four to six cases of the sample. By accumulating the variables, it turned out that middle-aged, middle class, males of higher education had a higher level of political engagement than a comparative group of opposite characteristics. Taking political engagement as an index of political culture, and in five out of the six cases of the sample, the category of political engagement the first group belongs to qualified it to have either a civic or participant type of political culture, whereas the second group was categorized as having a subject political culture. These findings give credence to the general hypothesis that stakes and empowerment highly decide the type of political culture a person has, assuming that other variables are held constant.

Notes

^[1] Question No. 260 categorizes answers into two groups: 1) male and 2) female.

^[2] Question No. 262, X003R2 categorizes answers into three age groups: 1) 16-29, 2) 30-49 and 3) 50 and more years.

^[3] Question No. 275R categorizes answers into three groups: 1) lower, 2) middle and 3) higher education.

^[4] Question No. 287 categorizes answers according to the subjective classification of the respondents themselves into five categories: 1) upper class, 2) upper-middle class, 3) lower-middle class, 4) working class and 5) lower class.

^[5] Question No. 284 categorizes answers into three groups: 1) government or public institutions, 2) private business or industry and 3) private non-profit organization.

^[6] Question No. 6 categorizes answers into four groups: 1) very important, 2) rather important, 3) not very important and 4) not at all important. I divided the answers into two groups in the calculations: the first two groups together as important, the last two groups together as not important.

^[7] Question H_URBRURAL categorizes answers into two groups: 1) urban and 2) rural.

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