

P A R T I V

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POLITICAL REGIMES  
AND TRANSITIONS

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## CHAPTER 13

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# MASS BELIEFS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

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ONE of the central questions in comparative politics is “What determines the emergence, survival, and development of democracy?” Since its inception, political culture research has been inspired by this question and has claimed to provide a profound answer: the fate of democracy depends on ordinary people’s intrinsic commitment to democratic principles.

This premiss involves two assumptions. First, one assumes that mass tendencies in individual-level beliefs differ from one population to another, providing meaningful descriptions of a population’s political culture. Second, one assumes that mass beliefs are relevant in shaping the emergence, survival, and functioning of political systems. This relevance claim constitutes the major justification of most political culture research: unless mass beliefs affect political systems, there is little point in analyzing them. But even though this is the field’s most fundamental claim it has rarely been demonstrated or even investigated. In fact most research has been limited to analyzing orientations and beliefs at the individual level.

This chapter addresses this puzzle in three steps. To begin with, we outline why political culture studies have been reluctant to analyze the aggregate effect of mass

beliefs on democracy. As we will show, this has much to do with the widespread assumption that the impact of mass beliefs on democracy can be inferred from individual-level findings. In the next step we will illustrate that this assumption represents an “individualistic fallacy,” arguing that the impact of mass beliefs on democracy can only be analyzed at the aggregate level. For democracy only exists at this level. In the final step we report findings from recent studies, which demonstrate that mass beliefs have indeed an aggregate effect on the emergence and survival of democracy. We relate this insight to other approaches in the comparative study of democracy, embedding it in a broader theory of democratic development.

## 2. CONGRUENCE THEORY

The claim that mass beliefs are system relevant was formulated long ago. When Aristotle asked in *Politics* why some polities have oligarchic orders while others have democratic ones, he sought the answer in the prevailing mentality of a given polity: a democratic order, for example, flourishes when the prevailing mentality is one of moderation and mutual respect, so that citizens consider each other as equals. More than 2,000 years later similar arguments were advanced by Charles de Montesquieu (1748) in *De l'esprit des lois* and Alexis de Tocqueville (1843) in *De la démocratie en Amérique*, both of whom speculated that political systems in which power is subject to popular control are most likely found among publics with a liberal-minded spirit.

All of these works assume that there is a natural link between two different types of societal-level phenomena: *institutional system properties* characterizing a society's political system, and *psychological mass tendencies* describing a population's dominant orientations. In modern times, Eckstein (1966) framed this *mass-system linkage* in terms of congruency theory, claiming that the political system's authority patterns must be congruent with the authority orientations that guide people in their daily activities. Otherwise the system will lack acceptance and become unstable. A democratic order, for example, will be fragile if it is imposed on an authoritarian-minded population.

The failure of democracy in Weimar Germany is a significant illustration of this pattern. Certainly, deficiencies in institutional design helped the Nazis to abuse democratic procedures, but these deficiencies do not explain why the Nazis were able to gain mass support in the first place. Along with others, Bracher (1971/1955) concluded that democracy failed in Weimar Germany because it was a “democracy without democrats.” The assumption underlying this statement is that democracy was incongruent with the authoritarian-minded spirit of most Germans, a legacy of Prussian militarism under the Kaisers. The authoritarian mentality did not suffice to guarantee the failure of democracy in Weimar Germany. But it made the arrangement so vulnerable that it broke down under the imprint of the Great Depression.

### 3. DEMOCRATIC AND AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY

Empirical research on belief systems began with psychological studies of personality types. Adorno et al. (1950) identified an “authoritarian personality,” which these authors saw rooted in threat perceptions that nurture low self-esteem, misanthropy, and dogmatic rigidity. In a complementary way, Harold D. Lasswell (1951) explored the qualities of the “democratic character,” which emanates from “freedom from anxiety” and consists of an open ego, confidence in human potentialities, and above all self-esteem. Succinctly put: “The failure of democracy is the failure to develop social relations that allow for high levels of self-esteem” (Lasswell 1951, 521).

Likewise, Maslow (1988/1954) argued that two essential facets of a “self-actualizing” orientation—emphasis on individual autonomy and a sense of human equality—constitute a democratic orientation, “indeed a democratic orientation in the deepest possible sense” (Maslow 1988/1954, 167). For people who rely on their own judgement and see others as equals are unlikely to accept absolute authority and are not easily mobilized against other groups of people. Thus, an emancipative orientation that combines individualistic and humanistic attitudes makes people immune to authoritarian and xenophobic temptations, providing a mental ground for democracies to emerge and to flourish.

In the same vein, Rokeach (1960) held that authoritarianism and xenophobia are allied in a “closed” belief system, which is anchored in existential threats. By the same token, liberalism and altruism go together in an “open” belief system, anchored in existential security (Rokeach 1960, 72). Asking with which political systems these orientations are most compatible, it is evident that open beliefs are more compatible with democracy, while closed beliefs are more compatible with authoritarian rule (Rokeach 1973). Triandis (1995, 50–60) made a similar assumption. He classified societies in which open beliefs prevail as “individualistic cultures” and societies in which closed beliefs are dominant as “collectivist cultures,” claiming that individualistic cultures have a stronger affinity to democracy than collectivist ones. All of this work points to the conclusion that a population’s prevailing psychological outlook is a selective force in the emergence and survival of political regimes, helping to delegitimize incompatible regimes and legitimize compatible ones.

### 4. A PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

Political scientists are largely unaware of these early psychological approaches. This is a serious deficiency as these approaches provide the building blocks of

a comprehensive theory of democracy in two ways. First, they identify types of psychological orientations that constitute a selective force in the evolution of political systems. Second, they link these orientations with social conditions that determine which orientations tend to become dominant in a society. Putting these two aspects together leads to a comprehensive theory of democratic development.

First, social configurations that induce existential pressures (e.g., precarious economic conditions, crime and war, conflated cleavages, and extreme social polarization) are conducive to closed belief systems. Existential pressures tend to close people's minds because they make people feel vulnerable, leading them seek for protection under the shield of group cohesion, absolute authority, and dogmatic rules. By the same token, social configurations that induce more permissive existential conditions (e.g., economic prosperity, physical security, cross-cutting cleavages, and moderate social polarization) nourish open belief systems. Permissive existential conditions tend to open people's minds because they lower anxiety, diminishing the need for protection that nurtures group closure, absolute authority, and dogmatic rules. This gives people more room to emphasize autonomy, liberty, tolerance, and trust. Hence, processes such as economic modernization that bring more favorable existential conditions tend to shift a society's belief systems from a more closed to a more open outlook (Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997).

Second, belief systems affect the legitimacy of institutional settings, with closed belief systems legitimizing authoritarian systems and open belief systems legitimizing democratic ones. Thus, if closed mass beliefs change into open ones, a given authoritarian system comes into conflict with mass beliefs. The system becomes illegitimate. Other conditions being equal, this makes an institutional change to democracy more likely because open beliefs provide the motivations guiding people to support pro-democracy movements and join freedom campaigns. Conversely, economic breakdowns or social crises tend to close people's minds in ways making them more receptive to authoritarian solutions. In any case, belief systems should constitute a major selective force in the evolution of political systems.

Dahl (1973) advanced another variant of this assumption, arguing that the psychological orientations he considers conducive to democracy (tolerance and moderation) emerge under specific social conditions: middle-class-dominated, meritocratic market societies. This type of societies, which already existed in pre-industrial freeholder or merchant communities, is characterized by relatively equal opportunities (in terms of market access) and existential autonomy (in terms of individual property). Equal opportunities and existential autonomy nurture a sense of human equality and choice, eliminating the need for absolute authority and group closure. Dahl, like Lipset (1959), saw libertarian-egalitarian orientations embedded in social configurations that feature meritocracy, existential autonomy, and relatively equal opportunities. And like Lipset, he saw these libertarian-egalitarian orientations as the psychological ground on which democracies emerge, survive, and flourish. Taken together these reflections provide the model of regime selection depicted in Table 13.1.

This model differs from recent versions of modernization theory (Przeworski and Limongi 1997) and resource distribution theories (Vanhanen 2003; Boix 2003) in that

**Table 13.1** A psychological model of regime selection

	Authoritarian track	Democratic track
Objective social conditions	Pressing and polarized	Permissive and balanced
	↓	↓
Subjective orientations	Closed mass beliefs	Open mass beliefs
	↓	↓
Selective force in favor of	Authoritarian regimes	Democratic regimes

it includes mass beliefs. Including mass beliefs as an intervening variable between socioeconomic conditions and democratization is completely logical. Democratization cannot be achieved by socioeconomic conditions themselves as it always needs collective actions to install democracy; but such actions in turn need motivational forces driving them to such a particular outcome as democracy. Mass beliefs provide these motivational forces. Thus, people's prevailing beliefs translate socioeconomic conditions into the collective actions that attain, sustain, and deepen democracy.

Although the building blocks of this model have been available for many years, it has not been tested empirically until recently. This is partly a legacy of how the influential civic culture study conceptualized the link between mass beliefs and democracy.

## 5. THE LEGACY OF THE CIVIC CULTURE STUDY

Studies of personality types helped to identify the psychological orientations giving people a predisposition to support democratic or authoritarian rule, respectively. But these psychological studies did not measure how widespread these orientations are among given populations, so no assessment of an entire society's democratic "maturity" was possible.

This deficiency has been a starting point of the civic culture study by Almond and Verba (1963), which conducted representative national surveys of orientations that were thought to be crucial for the persistence of democracy. This was done in five countries allowing for cross-national comparisons of political culture. A number of important political culture studies followed this example, such as the Political Action study (Barnes and Kaase et al. 1979), the Continuities in Political Action study (Jennings and van Deth 1989), and the Beliefs in Government series (Kaase and Newton 1995). These studies stimulated the emergence of long-term cross-national survey programs, the first of them being the Eurobarometer, followed by

the International Social Survey Program, Latinobarometer, the New Europe Barometer, the Afrobarometer, the East Asia Barometer, the Asiabarometer, and the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. Finally, the European Values Study led to the emergence of a genuine World Values Survey that has now measured mass beliefs in more than eighty societies worldwide.

The civic culture study covered only five countries, and five cases is simply too small a number to permit statistically significant analyses of the linkage between mass beliefs and variation in political systems. But we now have data from scores of societies, covering the full range from authoritarian to democratic regimes, which makes it possible to make meaningful empirical tests of the central claim of the political culture school—that cross-national variation in mass beliefs affects democracy.

Despite a massively widened database, statistically significant tests of whether and to what extent mass beliefs affect democracy are still very rare (exceptions include Muller and Seligson 1994; Inglehart 1997, ch. 6; Welzel, Inglehart, and Klingemann 2003; Seligson 2002; Hadenius and Teorell 2004; Welzel and Inglehart 2006; Welzel 2006). This is partly a legacy of the way in which the civic culture study conceptualized the link between mass beliefs and democracy.

The civic culture study champions a “civic allegiance” model emphasizing orientations that support democratic systems when they are already in place. These orientations include satisfaction with participative opportunities, policy outcomes, and a given democratic system at large. The fixation on allegiance led to a neglect of orientations that motivate people to *oppose* a given system and to demand democracy when it is not in place. This has left a lasting imprint on political culture studies to date, which are still more concerned with attitudes that help to consolidate democracy than with attitudes motivating popular pressure to democratize. As a consequence, the political culture approach has been ill equipped to shape the field of comparative democratization studies—despite an improved database. In a sense the civic culture tradition has distracted studies of mass beliefs too far from the older psychological studies. It became forgotten that this work identified the orientations that can motivate popular pressure to democratize.

Why did the civic culture study not conceptualize mass orientations in light of their potential to motivate pressures to democratize? A plausible answer is that when Almond and Verba were writing no “societal-led” democratization was observable. Societal-led transitions to democracy seemed to have been a unique feature of the handful of early democracies in Western Europe and North America where democratization had started with the liberal revolutions of the eighteenth century. When Almond and Verba were writing, the most salient cases of democratization (Germany, Italy, and Japan) were post-war democracies in which democratization was not a societal-led but rather an “externally monitored” process (Karl and Schmitter 1991). In this light it seemed that mass orientations that—in theory—could motivate popular pressure to democratize are practically irrelevant when the question of whether a society becomes democratic or not is decided by external events such as wars and military intervention. In such cases, mass orientations can affect the sustenance but not the attainment of democracy.

But externally monitored democratization played virtually no role in the massive third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991). Apart from Grenada, all of the third wave transitions were of the societal-led type, in which internal forces played the crucial role. But a lingering tendency to consider mass orientations as democracy consolidating, but not democracy inducing, has inhibited the political culture school in the study of democratization. Insensitivity to the individualistic fallacy is another reason for this inhibition.

## 6. UNAWARENESS OF THE INDIVIDUALISTIC FALLACY

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Most political culture studies examine the individual-level determinants of attitudes that are assumed to have an impact at the aggregate level. Scholars who analyze support for democracy do this because they assume that more widespread support makes democratic systems more stable. But even though this is an aggregate-level assumption, scholars do not test it at this level. Instead they estimate individual-level effects on support for democracy, as if knowing what increases support for democracy at the individual level is the same as knowing what stabilizes democracy at the aggregate level (Seligson 2002).

Almond and Verba (1963, 186) set a precedent for this practice, opening chapter 8 of the civic culture study by claiming to analyze “how civic competence and participation affect a political system.” Although this addresses an aggregate-level question in which the dependent variable is a society’s political system, Almond and Verba actually analyze how system support at the individual level is shaped by people’s sense of subjective competence and self-reported political participation. This example was followed in scores of subsequent studies, all of which assume that when one knows what increases support for democracy at the individual level, one also knows what strengthens democracy at the aggregate level. The assumption that one can draw aggregate-level conclusions from individual-level findings pervades the entire political culture literature.

The fact that this assumption is widespread does not make it true. In fact it is false. Knowing what increases incomes at the individual level does not tell us what increases incomes at the aggregate level. If taking profit from corruption increases incomes at the individual level, one cannot conclude that more corruption will increase national income levels. Concluding that the way things operate at one level of analysis, tells us how they function at another level, is a mere leap of faith that cannot be taken for granted until the conclusion has been tested.

This was demonstrated long ago by Robinson (1950) who showed that the relationship between two variables can vary in strength, significance, and sign at different levels of analyses. Robinson concluded that no inference from one level of analysis to

another level is validated until it has been tested. This is true for cross-level inferences in both directions: the “ecological fallacy” consists in falsely assuming that a relationship found at the aggregate level also exists at the individual level. But the reverse form of reasoning is also unwarranted: the “individualistic fallacy” consists in falsely assuming that a relationship found at the individual level also exists at the aggregate level (Alker 1969).

There is widespread awareness of the ecological fallacy but research in mass beliefs is remarkably unaware of the individualistic fallacy. In fact, the prevailing conception of the ecological fallacy is itself an exemplification of the individualistic fallacy.

## 7. MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE ECOLOGICAL FALLACY

The prevailing conception of the ecological fallacy has made scholars very hesitant to analyze aggregate-level effects of individual-level attitudes. Unfortunately, this is unnecessary as the prevailing conception of the ecological fallacy is itself fallacious. Consider one of the most widely cited notions of the ecological fallacy problem: Przeworski and Teune’s (1970, 73) dictum that an aggregate-level relation that is not reflected at the individual-level within each aggregate unit is spurious. This claim implies that an aggregate-level relation is meaningless if it does not show up in the same way among individuals within the units of aggregation.<sup>1</sup> Scholars still use this dictum as authority to invalidate aggregate-level findings by demonstrating that the same relations are not present at the individual level (Seligson 2002). Let’s consider an example showing why this method is flawed.

There was a significant aggregate-level relation between the Nazi vote and the unemployment rate in late Weimar Germany, such that people in regions with higher unemployment rates were more likely to vote the Nazis. But Falter (1991) has shown that within a given region, unemployed people were *not* more likely to vote for the Nazis than people who had jobs. If one applied Przeworski and Teune’s dictum to this case, one must conclude that the region-level relation between unemployment and the Nazi vote is meaningless because there is no corresponding relation among individuals within the regions. This is a strong cross-level inference: one deduces the non-validity of an existing relation at the aggregate level from the non-existence of the same relation at the individual level—which is a pure form of the individualistic fallacy.

The failure in this conclusion is to overlook that social phenomena, such as unemployment, do not have to influence the behavior of an individual as a *personal* attribute of this individual itself; they can also influence the behavior of an individual

<sup>1</sup> To avoid misunderstandings, we do not claim that there is no such thing as an ecological fallacy. We only claim that a widespread notion of it is wrong.

as an aggregate attribute of the population in which the individual lives. In this case the relation is invisible at the individual level *within* populations. It only becomes obvious when aggregate-level variation between populations is taken into account. To be concrete, individuals were not more likely to vote for the Nazis if they themselves had been unemployed. For this reason there was no individual-level relation between unemployment and the Nazi vote within regions. But individuals were more likely to vote for the Nazis if unemployment in their region was high because regional unemployment created a climate affecting all individuals in the same region, regardless of whether they had themselves been unemployed or not. Thus, regional populations with higher aggregate unemployment had higher aggregate vote shares of the Nazis.

The fact that a phenomenon such as unemployment affects individual behavior as an aggregate attribute of the surrounding population, not as a personal attribute of the individuals themselves, does not make this phenomenon spurious. The fact that unemployment affected voting behavior as an aggregate attribute rather than a personal property does *not* invalidate unemployment as a cause of a rising Nazi vote share. It simply illuminates the mechanism through which unemployment became effective. In this case this was largely an *ecological* mechanism: aggregate unemployment, not individual unemployment, shaped people's behavior.

## 8. AGGREGATE RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL BELIEFS

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Analyzing four waves of individual-level data from the World Values Survey, Inglehart and Welzel (2005) identified a broad syndrome of emancipative orientations, which they labeled “self-expression values.” This syndrome resembles what Rokeach (1960) called an open belief system or what Maslow (1988/1954) characterized as a “self-actualizing” orientation, and approximates what Lipset (1959) and Dahl (1973) described as libertarian-egalitarian orientations. According to Lasswell (1951) this syndrome is rooted in a “general belief in human potentialities”—a belief that integrates individualistic and humanistic attitudes into an overarching emancipative orientation. Due to an aggregate-level factor analysis over some 140 national surveys, this emancipative orientation becomes manifest in five attitudes (factor loadings on common dimension in brackets): emphasis on human freedom reflected in liberty aspirations (.87), an affinity to civic action reflected in self-reported participation in petitions (.84), a sense of self-esteem reflected in life satisfaction (.82), tolerance of nonconformity reflected in acceptance of homosexuality (.78) and an open-minded attitude to others reflected in generalized trust in people (.61).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For measurement details see the Internet Appendix to Inglehart and Welzel 2005 at [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/publications/humandevlopment.html](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/publications/humandevlopment.html), under “Variables” (#49).

Two components of this syndrome, liberty aspirations and life satisfaction, are very weakly related at the individual level within populations, showing correlations as low as  $r=.01$  in a number of national samples. But at the aggregate level we find a highly significant  $r=.67$  correlation between liberty aspirations and life satisfaction: populations in which more people value liberty are on average more satisfied with their lives. But people are not more satisfied with their lives than the average of their population when they also are more liberty-minded than average. It is not people's own liberty-mindedness that affects their life satisfaction. Instead, the effect is ecological: populations in which an emphasis on liberty is widespread create a liberal climate that affects all individuals in that population, increasing the mean level of life satisfaction. Thus, esteem of liberty does not impact on life satisfaction as a personal characteristic, but as an aggregate property of one's society.<sup>3</sup> Ecological effects of this sort are invisible among individuals within the same aggregate unit; they become manifest only when one varies the aggregate units. The fact that many characteristics affect individuals as aggregate attributes of their population, not as their personal attributes, is not an ecological *fallacy* but an ecological *reality*.

Some relations are entirely ecological and *only* exist at the aggregate level. Democracy, for example, exists only at the aggregate level, so the assumption that the beliefs of individuals affect democracy can only mean that aggregations of these beliefs affect democracy. But this has hardly been demonstrated.

## 9. MASS BELIEFS IN DEMOCRATIZATION RESEARCH

Among hundreds of articles in comparative survey research dealing with democratic attitudes, only a handful have analyzed the linkage between mass beliefs and democracy at the aggregate level. Among the few exceptions is Putnam's (1993) study in which he demonstrates a strong aggregate-level relation between democratic performance and generalized trust. But this aggregate analysis, convincing as it is, is limited to regions within one nation, Italy. Very few comparable studies have been done on a multi-country basis, the exceptions including work by Paxton (2002) and Norris (2002).

The lack of studies analyzing the aggregate effects of beliefs is particularly obvious in one of the most important fields of comparative politics: the study of democratization. The study of democratization has been dominated by two approaches: an actor-centered approach focusing on collective actions that bring democracy, and a

<sup>3</sup> In a regression analysis in which individual life satisfaction is the dependent variable (measured on a 1 to 10 scale) and in which an individual's own liberty aspirations as well as its population's aggregate liberty aspirations are introduced as predictors ( $N=241,125$ ), aggregate liberty aspirations show a clearly stronger effect than individual liberty aspirations (the beta coefficients are .296 and .012).

structural approach emphasizing socioeconomic configurations that condition democratization processes. Neither of these approaches pays much attention to mass attitudes. This is surprising, since the political participation literature, the social movement literature, and the mobilization literature all have demonstrated that attitudes operate as a major intervening force between socioeconomic conditions, on one hand, and collective actions on the other hand (Klandermans 1984; McAdam 1986; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). These studies make it clear that socioeconomic conditions cannot translate into collective actions unless these conditions help produce the attitudes that *motivate* these actions. Socioeconomic conditions structure societies but cannot by themselves generate specific actions. Conversely, collective actions do not take place without motivational forces that channel them towards specific goals. Thus, any explanation of democratization is incomplete if it does not include the motivational forces through which objective socioeconomic conditions translate into concrete collective actions (Huntington 1991, 69).

These considerations point to a model in which democratization is explained by (1) given socioeconomic conditions being conducive to (2) specific patterns of mass beliefs that (3) motivate the collective actions that ultimately bring democratization.

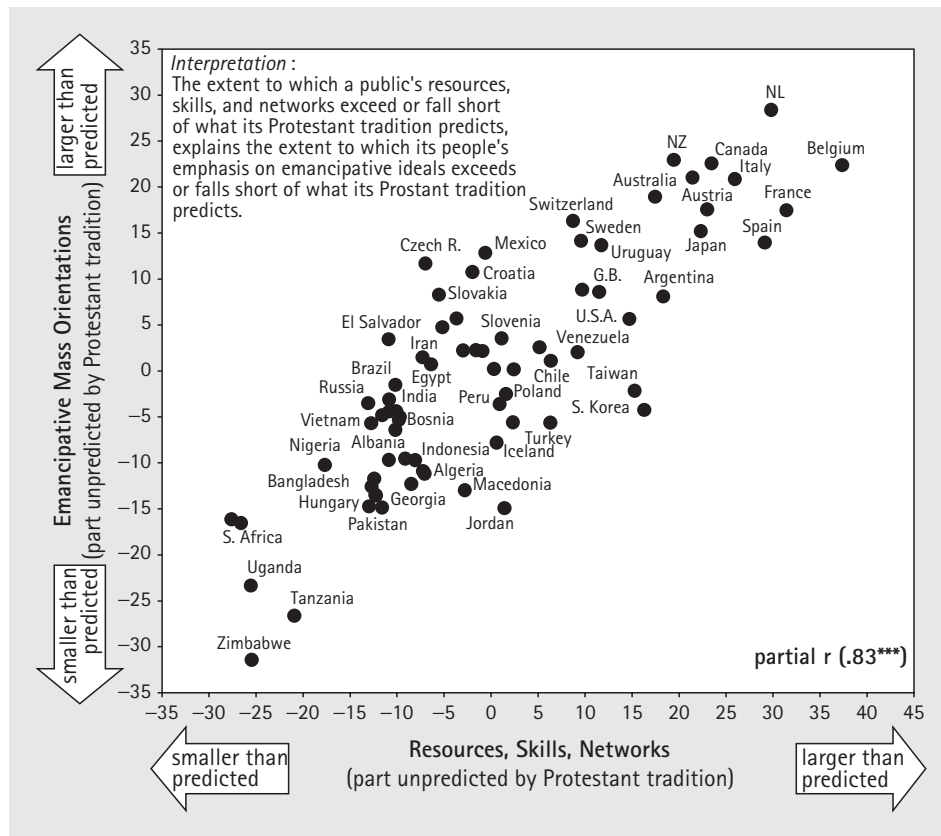
The most comprehensive analyses to test this model were carried out by Welzel and Inglehart (Welzel, Inglehart, and Klingemann 2003; Welzel and Inglehart 2005, 2006; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Welzel 2006). Their findings confirm this model in three respects. First, they show that there is an ecological syndrome of emancipative orientations whose attitudinal components resemble what Lasswell, Rokeach, and Maslow, respectively, described as “democratic,” “open,” and “self-actualizing” orientations. This syndrome integrates individualistic and humanistic attitudes into an emancipative ethos tapping liberty aspirations, tolerance of nonconformity, affinity to civic action, trust in people, and a sense of self-esteem. The components of this syndrome vary consistently between populations, with populations that score high on one of these orientations scoring correspondingly high on the others as well.

Second, this syndrome of emancipative orientations is rooted in social configurations that lower existential pressures and bring more permissive living conditions, giving people a stronger sense of security and autonomy. Economic modernization contributes to this process as it increases people’s material resources, intellectual skills, and social opportunities to network with other people as they choose. This nurtures a sense of human autonomy that leads people to emphasize emancipative ideals, giving rise to mass self-expression values. Accordingly, a summary indicator of a population’s material resources, intellectual skills, and social networks taken from Vanhanen (1997)<sup>4</sup> predicts very well how large a share of a population

<sup>4</sup> Vanhanen measures the availability of material resources using data on the share of family farms in the agrarian sector and the deconcentration of production property outside the agrarian sector. To measure intellectual skills he uses literacy rates and tertiary enrollment ratios. We interpret his measure of occupational complexity (based on urbanization and the size of the non-agrarian sectors) as an indicator of network diversity, assuming that more complex societies have more diverse networks. Vanhanen combines these three measures of resources, skills, and networks in a summary indicator that he calls “power resources.” We use his measures of this index for around 1993 (see Vanhanen 1997, 42–63).

emphasizes emancipative ideals. As the partial plot in Figure 13.1 illustrates, the fact that permissive conditions give rise to emancipative orientations is not a Western phenomenon, restricted to Protestant societies as a cultural relativist might suspect. For the effect holds even when one controls for the strength of a society's Protestant tradition.<sup>5</sup>

Third, emancipative mass orientations are conducive to democratization, especially the rise of "effective" democracy, as opposed to mere electoral democracy: the extent to which a society emphasizes emancipative ideals explains fully 80 percent



**Fig. 13.1** The Effect of Resources, Skills and Networks on Emancipative Orientations Controlled for the Protestant Tradition

*Note:* Resources, skills, and networks cover a period in the early 1990s. Emancipative orientations cover the period 1989–1999. The control variable (Protestant tradition) covers the early 1990s.

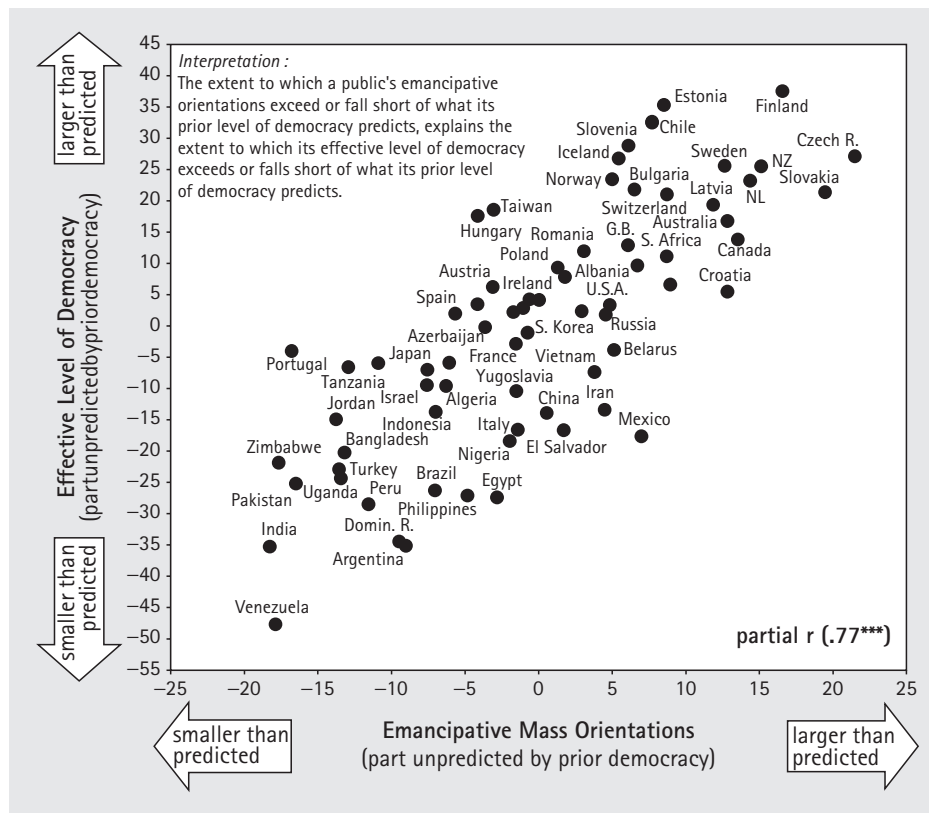
<sup>5</sup> As a proxy for the strength of the Protestant tradition we use the percentage of denominational Protestants per country (data are from the early 1990s taken from the Britannica Book of the Year 1998).

of the variance in effective democracy.<sup>6</sup> One might suspect that the causal order of this effect runs in fact into the opposite direction, so that widespread emancipative orientations are produced by previous democracy. But this is not the case as the partial plot in Figure 13.2 indicates. Controlling for the level of democracy measured before emancipative orientations<sup>7</sup>, these orientations still show a significantly positive effect on subsequent levels of effective democracy. Interestingly, emancipative mass orientations have an even stronger effect on democracy than has explicit mass support for democracy. The reason for this is that emancipative orientations indicate an intrinsic commitment to the principles of liberty and tolerance that are inherent in the concept of democracy without naming it. By contrast, support for the mere word democracy can easily be inflated by lip service without involving deeper commitments to democratic freedoms. Thus, emancipative orientations give people a firmer motivation to stand up for democratic freedoms than does explicit support for democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 270).

We assume that emancipative mass orientations affect democracy because these orientations motivate the mass actions that help sustain or attain democratic freedoms. Evidence for this is available for self-reported participation in civic mass action. When one separates participation in civic actions from emancipative orientations, treating self-reported activities such as demonstrations, boycotts, and petitions as a dependent variable, emancipative orientations show the strongest effect on these activities, both at the individual and aggregate level (Welzel, Inglehart, and Deutsch 2005, 136). Interestingly, the individual-level effect of emancipative orientations on civic action varies with the distribution of individual resources and democratic freedom in a society, as a multi-level model shows. Although there is a significant fixed effect of emancipative orientations on civic actions that holds under all context variations (including authoritarian systems), it is also true that the strength of the effect grows with increasing resources and freedom. In other words, emancipative orientations always translate into civic actions, but they do so more easily when more resources and more freedom are available.

<sup>6</sup> Our measure of “effective” democracy deflates measures of democratic freedom taken from Freedom House. It deflates democratic freedom to the extent to which corrupt governance practices lower the quality of this freedom (corruption measures taken from the World Bank). Thus, a society’s effective level of democracy can be low for either of two reasons: either there is no democratic freedom, so there is nothing to deflate; or there is democratic freedom but corrupt governance practices deflate it seriously. In both cases, citizens are hindered to effectively practice democratic liberties, a perspective under which it does not matter for which of the two reasons effective democracy is low. Note that the societies’ “effective” levels of democratic freedom are more closely related to emancipative mass orientations than is true for “raw” levels of democratic freedom. India, for instance, is in no way an outlier with respect to its effective level of democracy, which is located where the Indians’ emancipative orientations predict it should be. Also, societies do not bounce in their effective levels of democratic freedom as they sometimes do in their raw levels of democratic freedom when a democratic constitution is adopted or abandoned (Welzel and Inglehart 2006). For measurement details see the Internet Appendix to Inglehart and Welzel 2005 at [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/publications/humandevlopment.html](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/publications/humandevlopment.html), under “Variables” (#21).

<sup>7</sup> For this matter we use a summary democracy score combining the Freedom House scores and the Polity IV scores covering the years 1984–8. This period ends one year before the period covered by emancipative orientations starts.



**Fig. 13.2** The Partial Effect of Emancipative Orientations on Effective Democracy Controlling For Prior Democracy

*Note:* The measure of effective democracy covers the years 2000–2004. Emancipative orientations cover the period 1989–1999. The control variable (prior democracy) covers the period 1984–88.

Unfortunately, the linkage between mass orientations and actions cannot be systematically analyzed with regard to *observed* mass activities because standardized data on observed actions are not available in the same differentiation as data on mass orientations. But some illustration is possible using the threefold classification by Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005). These authors have shown that whether a non-democracy converts into democracy, whether such a transition will end in incomplete democracy only or lead to complete democracy, and whether a fall back into non-democracy happens, all depends on how much the public is involved in pro-democratic civic actions. To demonstrate this, Karatnycky and Ackerman have classified mass involvement in pro-democratic civic actions as “weak or absent,” “moderate,” and “strong.” Using this classification, the box plot in Figure 13.3 shows that pro-democratic mass actions are indeed linked with emancipative mass orientations. Emancipative orientations are least widespread where pro-democratic mass activities are weak or absent and most widespread where these activities are strongest.

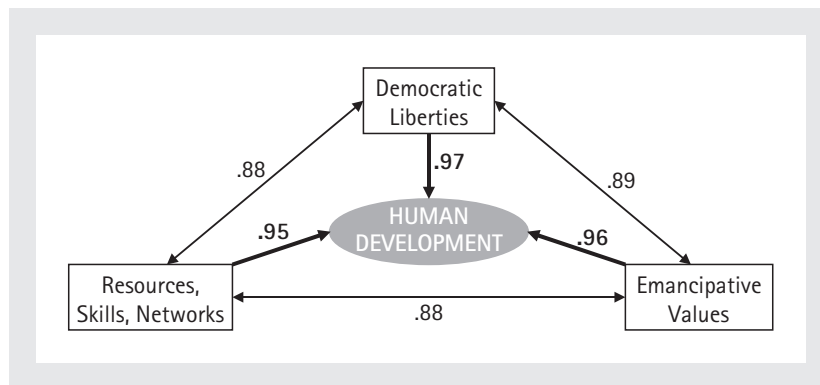


Fig. 13.3 The Human Development Nexus

Note: Numbers on bidirectional arrows are correlation coefficients ( $r$ ). Numbers on one-directional arrows are factor loadings on common underlying dimension.  $N=74$ .

Regardless of how exactly the causal mechanisms operate, the crucial point is that (1) people's resources, skills, and networks, (2) their emancipative orientations, and (3) their democratic liberties go so closely together that they indeed reflect just one underlying dimension of cross-national variation. This is illustrated in Figure 13.4. We call this underlying dimension "human" development. For the common theme underlying each of its three components—freedom of choice—constitutes a genuinely *human* potential (Sen 1999). Since making autonomous choices is a universal potential of our species, societies do not differ in this human potential, regardless of cultural traditions. What differs is how much space societies allow for the human potential to develop. As Table 13.2 illustrates, this space is measured in three major dimensions of social reality: socioeconomic conditions, cultural belief systems, and political institutions. Within this framework, democracy is just one out of three major manifestations of human emancipation, all three of which tend to co-evolve very closely.

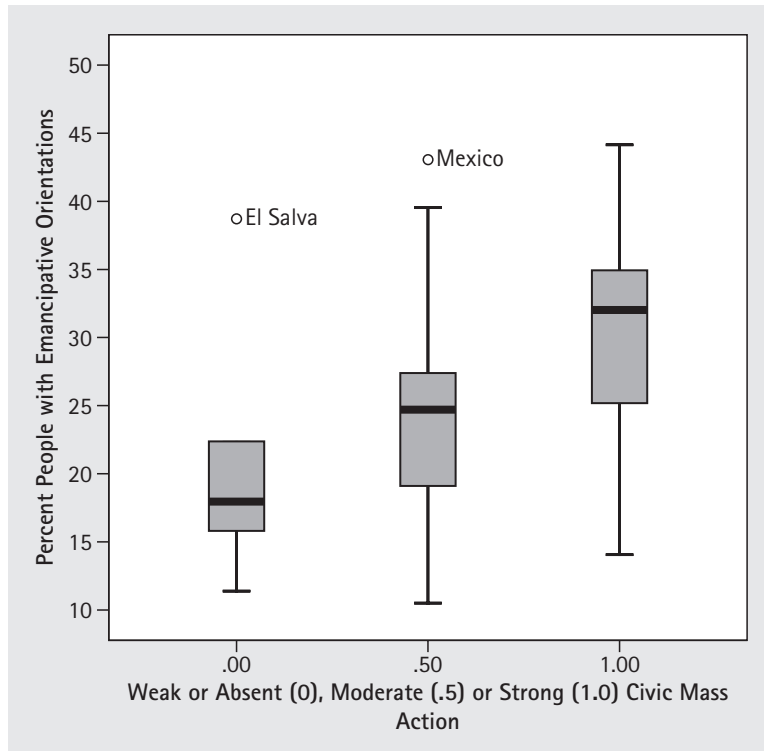
## 10. MASS BELIEFS AND INSTITUTIONS

The psychological make-up of given populations is a central aspect of social reality: societies are run by believing, thinking, and striving people. Political culture research measures and analyzes this aspect of reality through standardized cross-national surveys. It focuses on the very core of democracy, the people.

The political culture approach differs in important ways from institutional approaches. Institutional approaches have tended to ignore attitudes, assuming that human motivations do not differ—or if they do, they do so only as a response to different incentives set by institutions. Thus, under given institutional settings, human motivations are seen as constant, so that it is unnecessary to measure them.

**Table 13.2** The human development (HD) of societies

	Socioeconomic dimension	Cultural dimension	Institutional dimension
HD takes place when:	Resources, skills, and networks empower people <i>means-wise</i> .	Emancipative ideals empower people <i>motivation-wise</i> .	Democratic liberties empower people <i>rights-wise</i> .
HD determines:	the extent to which people are able to pursue	to which people are willing to pursue self-chosen	people are entitled to pursue
HD enlarges people's:	Capabilities of Self-determination	Aspirations for	Entitlements to
HD results in:	Human empowerment (diminishing external constraints on intrinsic human choice)		



**Fig. 13.4** The Link between Emancipative Mass Orientations and Pro-Democracy Mass Action

The political culture approach, by contrast, assumes that human motivations can and do differ, independent of institutional incentives. Because institutional incentives are *extrinsic* to people, these incentives cannot eliminate people's *intrinsic* motivations. But precisely because of this, what institutions offer can easily come into conflict with what people want. This is why motivational forces sometimes nurture pressures for institutional change, as when emancipative orientations motivate social pressures to democratize an authoritarian regime.

## 11. CONCLUSION

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We started from the puzzle that the most central premiss of the political culture school—that mass beliefs affect democracy—has rarely been tested, outlining some of the reasons why this is so. Besides the fact that suitable data have not been available for a long time, a neglect of attitudes that motivate pressures to democratize in combination with the belief that individual-level findings allow for conclusions about the state of democracy at the aggregate level, all inhibited the political culture school to demonstrate that mass tendencies in individual-level beliefs have aggregate effects on democracy. We argued that this is an unnecessary deficiency, going back to psychological studies that already identified the emancipative orientations that are most likely to motivate popular pressures to democratize. Then we reported findings from a series of recent cross-national studies that have analyzed the effects of mass beliefs on the broadest possible basis. These findings indicate that emancipative mass orientations have indeed a positive effect on democracy and are themselves nurtured by socioeconomic modernization. These findings locate democracy in a broader theory of human development, the underlying theme of which is human emancipation. Mass beliefs constitute the central component in this theme, building the link between socioeconomic structures and political institutions. We conclude that for the first time in the history of comparative politics there is systematic evidence demonstrating that the political culture school's most central claim is correct: mass beliefs do affect democracy.

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