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0521609712 - Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel

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Introduction

This book presents a revised version of modernization theory that integrates socioeconomic development, cultural change, and democratization under the overarching theme of human development. Although the classic view of modernization developed by Marx, Weber, and others was wrong on many points, the central insight – that socioeconomic development brings major social, cultural, and political changes – is basically correct. This insight is confirmed by a massive body of new evidence analyzed in this book, including survey data from eighty-one societies containing 85 percent of the world's population, collected from 1981 to 2001, that demonstrates that the basic values and beliefs of the publics of advanced societies differ dramatically from those found in less-developed societies – and that these values are changing in a predictable direction as socioeconomic development takes place. Changing values, in turn, have important consequences for the way societies are governed, promoting gender equality, democratic freedom, and good governance.

Early versions of modernization theory were too simple. Socioeconomic development has a powerful impact on what people want and do, as Karl Marx argued, but a society's cultural heritage continues to shape its prevailing beliefs and motivations, as Max Weber argued. Moreover, sociocultural change is not linear. Industrialization brings rationalization, secularization, and bureaucratization, but the rise of the knowledge society brings another set of changes that move in a new direction, placing increasing emphasis on individual autonomy, self-expression, and free choice. Emerging self-expression values transform modernization into a process of human development, giving rise to a new type of humanistic society that is increasingly people-centered.

The first phase of modernization mobilized the masses, making modern democracy possible – along with fascism and communism. The postindustrial phase of modernization produces increasingly powerful mass demands for democracy, the form of government that provides the broadest latitude for individuals to choose how to live their lives.

This book demonstrates that coherent changes are taking place in political, religious, social, and sexual norms throughout postindustrial societies.

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It presents a model of social change that predicts how the value systems of given societies will evolve in coming decades. And it demonstrates that mass values play a crucial role in the emergence and flourishing of democratic institutions. Modernization is evolving into a process of human development, in which socioeconomic development brings cultural changes that make individual autonomy, gender equality, and democracy increasingly likely, giving rise to a new type of society that promotes human emancipation on many fronts.

Democracy is not simply the result of clever elite bargaining and constitutional engineering. It depends on deep-rooted orientations among the people themselves. These orientations motivate them to demand freedom and responsive government – and to act to ensure that the governing elites remain responsive to them. Genuine democracy is not simply a machine that, once set up, functions by itself. It depends on the people.

This book presents a unified theory of modernization, cultural change, and democratization. Building on recent work by Welzel, we interpret contemporary social change as a process of human development, which is producing increasingly humanistic societies that place growing emphasis on human freedom and self-expression. A massive body of cross-national data demonstrates that (1) socioeconomic modernization, (2) a cultural shift toward rising emphasis on self-expression values, and (3) democratization are all components of a single underlying process: human development. The underlying theme of this process is the broadening of human choice. Socioeconomic modernization reduces the external constraints on human choice by increasing people's material, cognitive, and social resources. This brings growing mass emphasis on self-expression values, which in turn lead to growing public demands for civil and political liberties, gender equality, and responsive government, helping to establish and sustain the institutions best suited to maximize human choice – in a word, democracy.

The core of the human development sequence is the expansion of human choice and autonomy. As this aspect of modernization becomes more prominent, it brings cultural changes that make democracy the logical institutional outcome. In previous accounts of modernization, the central role played by cultural change has been either overlooked or underestimated.

To a large extent, culture is transmitted from one generation to the next. But people's basic values reflect not only what they are taught but also their firsthand experiences. During the past half century, socioeconomic development has been changing people's formative conditions profoundly and with unprecedented speed. Economic growth, rising levels of education and information, and diversifying human interactions increase people's material, cognitive, and social resources, making them materially, intellectually, and socially more independent. Rising levels of existential security and autonomy change people's firsthand life experiences fundamentally, leading them to emphasize goals that were previously given lower priority, including the pursuit of freedom. Cultural emphasis shifts from collective discipline to individual liberty, from group conformity to human diversity, and from state authority to individual autonomy,

TABLE 1.1. *The Process of Human Development*

	Human Development		
	Socioeconomic Dimension	Cultural Dimension	Institutional Dimension
Processes advancing human development	Modernization	Value change	Democratization
Components of human development	Socioeconomic resources	Self-expression values	Civil and political liberties
Contributions to human development	Enhancing people’s <i>capabilities</i> to act according to their choices	Increasing people’s <i>priority</i> to act according to their choices	Broadening people’s <i>entitlements</i> to act according to their choices
Underlying theme	The broadening of human choice (an increasingly humanistic society)		

Source: Adapted from Welzel (2002: 46).

giving rise to a syndrome that we call self-expression values. These values bring increasing emphasis on the civil and political liberties that constitute democracy, which provides broader latitude for people to pursue freedom of expression and self-realization. Rising self-expression values transform modernization into a process of human development, generating a society that is increasingly people-centered. This reflects a humanistic transformation of modernity.

In short, socioeconomic modernization brings the objective capabilities that enable people to base their lives on autonomous choices. Rising emphasis on self-expression values leads people to demand and defend freedom of choice. And democratic institutions establish the rights that entitle people to exert free choice in their activities. These three processes all focus on the growth of autonomous human choice. Because autonomous choice is a specifically human ability, we characterize the processes that develop this potential as “human” development (Table 1.1).

As we will demonstrate, a humanistic culture that emphasizes self-expression values radiates into all major domains of life, helping to reshape sexual norms, gender roles, family values, religiosity, work motivations, people’s relation to nature and the environment, and their communal activities and political participation. Growing emphasis on human autonomy is evident in all these domains, transforming the fabric of contemporary societies. People in postindustrial societies are coming to demand freer choice in all aspects of life. Gender roles, religious orientations, consumer patterns, working habits, and voting behavior all become increasingly matters of individual choice. Massive contemporary changes – from growing gender equality and changing norms concerning sexual orientation, to growing concern for genuine, effective democracy – reflect

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growing emphasis on human autonomy. These changes are not a patchwork of loosely related phenomena but a coherent pattern that integrates seemingly isolated events into a common whole. As it coalesces, this process of human development broadens human choice and autonomy in all domains of life.

Nevertheless, despite globalization the world is not becoming homogeneous, and the imprint of cultural traditions is not disappearing. Quite the contrary, high levels of human development reflect a relatively recent trend that so far has been concentrated in postindustrial societies and only emerges in developing societies insofar as they experience sustained economic growth. Most low-income societies and many post-Soviet societies show relatively little impact from the trend toward greater human autonomy and choice. The value systems of these societies continue to impose strong constraints on human self-expression. The diversity of basic cultural values helps to explain the huge differences that exist in how institutions perform in societies around the world. The degree to which given publics give high priority to self-expression largely shapes the extent to which societies provide democratic rights, the degree to which women are represented in positions of power, and the extent to which elites govern responsively and according to the rule of law. Going beyond elitist and institutional explanations of democracy, we demonstrate that democracy, gender equality, and responsive government are elements of a broader human development syndrome. This book explores how the shifting balance between modernization and tradition shapes human values, and how these values affect political institutions, generating a human development sequence in which modernization gives rise to self-expression values, which are favorable to democratic institutions.

This sequence can also operate in the reverse direction, with threats to survival leading to increased emphasis on survival values, which in turn are conducive to authoritarian institutions. Operating in either direction, the sequence has a common theme: the broadening or narrowing of human autonomy and choice. Operating in one direction, it brings human development and increasingly humanistic societies. Operating in the reverse direction, it brings retrogression toward authoritarian and xenophobic societies.

This book has two major parts. The first part, “The Forces Shaping Value Change,” explores the major dimensions of cross-national variation in basic values, charts how values are changing, and examines how modernization and tradition interact to shape these changes. The second part, “The Consequences of Value Change,” examines the impact of one major dimension of cross-cultural variation – self-expression values – on democracy. We find strikingly strong linkages between these values and democracy, regardless of how it is measured. In fact, self-expression values prove to be more strongly linked with democracy than any other factor, including variables that figure prominently in the literature on democratization, such as interpersonal trust, associational membership, and per capita GDP. Economic prosperity is strongly linked with the emergence and survival of democratic institutions, but it operates primarily through its tendency to give rise to self-expression values. Controlling for self-expression

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values, the impact of economic development and other structural factors, such as ethnic fractionalization, diminishes sharply. This finding is far from obvious and suggests that future research on democracy and democratization needs to give more attention to the role of mass values.

Extensive analysis of the causal linkage between self-expression values and democracy indicates that the causal arrow flows mainly from culture to institutions rather than the other way around, an issue that has been highly controversial in recent research. These findings contradict the claim that democracy can easily be established in any society, regardless of its underlying culture: it has been claimed that if one provides well-designed formal institutions, a democratic political culture is of secondary importance. Contrary to this claim, the empirical evidence presented here indicates that democratization requires more than just imposing the right constitution. This conclusion is also supported by extensive historical experience, from that of Weimar Germany, to the Soviet successor states, to contemporary Iraq.

A Brief Overview of the Book

Chapter 1 presents a new and unified version of modernization theory. Although previous versions of modernization theory were deficient in several important respects, a massive body of evidence indicates that its most central premise was correct: socioeconomic development brings major changes in society, culture, and politics. Four waves of survey data from more than eighty societies demonstrate that socioeconomic development tends to transform people's basic values and beliefs – and it does so in a roughly predictable fashion. Nevertheless, earlier versions of modernization theory need to be revised in at least three major aspects.

First, although socioeconomic development tends to bring predictable changes in people's worldviews, cultural traditions – such as whether a society has been historically shaped by Protestantism, Confucianism, or communism – continue to show a lasting imprint on a society's worldview. History matters, and a society's prevailing value orientations reflect an interaction between the driving forces of modernization and the retarding influence of tradition.

Second, modernization is not linear. It does not move indefinitely in the same direction but reaches inflection points at which the prevailing direction of change, changes. Thus, modernization goes through different phases, each of which brings distinctive changes in people's worldviews. The Industrial Revolution was linked with a shift from traditional to secular-rational values, bringing the secularization of authority. In the postindustrial phase of modernization, another cultural change becomes dominant – a shift from survival values to self-expression values, which brings increasing emancipation *from* authority. Rising self-expression values transform modernization into a process of human development that increases human freedom and choice.

Third, the inherently emancipative nature of self-expression values makes democracy increasingly likely to emerge; indeed, beyond a certain point it

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becomes increasingly difficult to *avoid* democratization. Thus, modernization brings cultural changes that lead to the emergence and flourishing of democratic institutions. The growth of human autonomy is the theme underlying the processes of modernization, rising self-expression values, and democratization. These processes give rise to increasingly humanistic societies, that is, societies with a people-centered orientation.

Chapter 2 analyzes the most important dimensions of cross-cultural variation, producing a two-dimensional global map that reflects differences in scores of diverse norms and values. Cross-cultural variation proves to be surprisingly coherent, and a wide range of attitudes (reflecting people's beliefs and values in such different life domains as the family, work, religion, environment, politics, and sexual behavior) reflects just two major dimensions: one that taps the polarization between *traditional values* and *secular-rational values*; and a second dimension that taps the polarization between *survival values* and *self-expression values*. More than eighty societies containing 85 percent of the world's population are plotted on these two dimensions. To a remarkable degree, these societies cluster into relatively homogeneous cultural zones, reflecting their historical heritage – and these cultural zones persist robustly over time. Despite the lasting imprint of a society's cultural heritage, socioeconomic development tends to shift a society's position on these two value dimensions in a predictable fashion: as the work force shifts from the agrarian sector to the industrial sector, people's worldviews tend to shift from an emphasis on traditional values to an emphasis on secular-rational values. Subsequently, as the work force shifts from the industrial sector to the service sector, a second major shift in values occurs, from emphasis on survival values to emphasis on self-expression values.

Chapter 3 undertakes something that is considered the decisive test of theories in the natural sciences, but which social scientists have tended to resist: *prediction*. In the *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Popper (1992 [1959]) argues that in order to be empirically validated, theories must be able to make reasonably accurate predictions of future events. Nevertheless, social scientists rarely test their theories against genuine predictions. Because modernization theory purports to provide a systematic interpretation of how socioeconomic development reshapes societies, we use this theory to make and test predictions about cultural change.

First, we use data from the first three waves of surveys to “predict” future responses, using regression analyses of existing data to devise predictive formulas that utilize indicators of a society's socioeconomic development together with variables that tap its historical cultural heritage. We use these formulas to “predict” the responses found in the Fourth Wave, carried out in 1999–2001. These, of course, are not genuine predictions but postdictions that explain findings in data already gathered. But a comparison of the predicted and observed values demonstrates that most predictions are in the right ball park (even for societies that were not surveyed in the first three waves) and that a model based on our revised version of modernization theory generates forecasts

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that are far more accurate than random predictions. We then use our model to predict how the publics of 120 societies will respond to key questions that will be asked in the 2005–6 World Values Survey – predicting the values and beliefs not only of publics that were covered in past surveys but also the responses that we expect to find from the publics of scores of societies that have *not* been surveyed previously. This book's Internet Appendix (which can be downloaded from <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/publications/humandevlopment.html>) presents the predicted values that we expect to find in the next wave of the Values Surveys, enabling researchers to test these predictions when the data become available in 2007.

Chapters 4 and 5 analyze human values in a longitudinal perspective, examining changes observed across the four waves of the Values Surveys that have been carried out so far. We find that rich postindustrial societies show large intergenerational differences, with the younger cohorts generally placing much stronger emphasis on secular-rational values and self-expression values than do the older cohorts. By contrast, low-income societies that have not experienced substantial economic growth during the past five decades do not display intergenerational differences; younger and older cohorts are about equally likely to display traditional or modern values. This result suggests that these intergenerational differences reflect historical changes rather than anything inherent in the human life cycle. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that, when we follow a given birth cohort's value orientations over time, the cohort does *not* become more traditional or survival-oriented as it ages, as the life-cycle interpretation implies. Instead, the generational differences are an enduring attribute of given cohorts, which seem to reflect the different formative conditions they experienced as succeeding cohorts grew up under increasingly favorable conditions. The intergenerational differences found in postindustrial societies seem to reflect the long-term socioeconomic changes resulting from the economic miracles that occurred during the decades after World War II.

Chapter 5 examines the changes over time that have taken place in specific components of the two value dimensions. For example, one important aspect of the rise of self-expression values has been the spread of elite-challenging forms of civic mass action: people are becoming increasingly likely to sign petitions and take part in demonstrations and boycotts. Another major change concerns family values and sexual norms. Traditionally, the family represents the basic reproductive unit of any society. Consequently, traditional cultures tend to condemn harshly any behavior that seems to threaten reproduction and child-rearing within the family, such as homosexuality, divorce, and abortion. But in postindustrial societies with advanced welfare institutions, a strong family is no longer necessary for survival. These rigid norms gradually lose their function, and more room is given to individual self-expression. This does not happen overnight. Changing norms concerning abortion and homosexuality have given rise to heated political debate in developed societies today, but acceptance of divorce, homosexuality, and abortion is spreading massively throughout rich

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postindustrial societies – but *not* in low-income societies, where existential insecurity remains widespread.

Chapter 6 explores the psychological traits of self-expression values, showing their close linkages to widely used individualism and autonomy scales developed by social psychologists. These scales are based on various theories and various data sources, using various methods. But as we demonstrate, individualism, autonomy, and self-expression values all tap the same underlying dimension: they reflect a common underlying orientation toward human emancipation. This exercise in triangulation not only confirms the validity of the self-expression values dimension. It also illuminates the antidiscriminatory nature of self-expression values, indicating that the spread of these values will make publics more *humanistic* but not more egocentric.

Having analyzed the forces shaping human values, the second half of this book examines the societal impact of changing value orientations. We focus on self-expression values, the value orientations that are most central to human development and the emergence of democracy. Our other major dimension of cross-cultural variation – traditional versus secular-rational values – is examined in another recent book (Norris and Inglehart, 2004), so we give it relatively little attention here. Instead, we address one of the most debated questions in the social sciences: the causal linkage between values and institutions. In political science, this debate has centered on the question, Is a prodemocratic political culture among the public a *precondition* for the success of democratic institutions at the system level? Or are prodemocratic mass values simply a *consequence* of living under democratic institutions?

Chapter 7 discusses the causal link between democratic values and democratic institutions within the framework of human development, focusing on the conditions that determine how much freedom people have in shaping their lives. Liberal democracy is vital in this regard because it guarantees civil and political rights that entitle people to make autonomous choices in their private and public activities: it institutionalizes freedom of action. Human choice is at the heart of liberal democracy, and mass demand for democracy reflects the priority that people give to autonomous choice. Although the desire for freedom is a universal human aspiration, it does not take top priority when people grow up with the feeling that survival is uncertain. But when survival seems secure, increasing emphasis on self-expression values makes the emergence of democracy increasingly likely where it does not yet exist and makes democracy increasingly *effective* where it already exists. Conversely, adopting democratic institutions does not automatically make self-expression values people's top priority. These values emerge when socioeconomic development diminishes material, cognitive, and social constraints on human choice, nourishing a subjective sense of existential security. This can occur under *either* democratic or authoritarian institutions, depending on whether they attain high levels of socioeconomic development. Rising emphasis on self-expression does not reflect the prior existence of democracy; quite the opposite, it can emerge under either democratic or authoritarian institutions, and when it does, it generates mass

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demands for democracy. Accordingly, Chapter 7 argues that the causal arrow in the relationship between liberal democracy and self-expression values runs from cultural change to democracy rather than the reverse.

Chapter 8 tests these propositions about the causal linkage between mass values and democratic institutions, analyzing a large body of empirical evidence in order to determine whether self-expression values give rise to democratic institutions, or whether democratic institutions cause self-expression values to emerge. We do this in a four-step strategy, using several different analytical approaches and various ways of measuring our key variables, to analyze the causes of liberal democracy.

First, we use the Freedom House civil and political rights scores as indicators of liberal democracy. Taking advantage of the fact that the Third Wave of democratization brought a massive expansion of democracy, we analyze whether the level of liberal democracy that a given country had before the Third Wave had a stronger impact on its subsequent level of self-expression values; or whether these levels of self-expression values had a stronger impact on levels of democracy after the Third Wave. The results strongly support the latter interpretation.

Second, we test the congruency thesis, analyzing the extent to which *discrepancies* between a given country's level of mass demand for democracy and its level of democracy seems to shape subsequent *changes* in levels of democracy. The results show that large shifts toward more democratic institutions were most likely to occur in societies where mass demands for freedom exceeded the institutional supply of freedom. Conversely, although most societies moved toward higher levels of democracy during this era, a few moved in the opposite direction – and they tended to be societies in which the previous supply of freedom was relatively high, in comparison with the level of mass demands for freedom. Regime changes toward and away from democracy largely reflect the preexisting discrepancies between genuine mass demands for freedom and the society's actual level of democracy.

Third, we build on the recent literature concerning “illiberal democracies,” “electoral democracies,” “deficient democracies,” and “low-quality democracies,” which argues that many of the new democracies of the Third Wave are democratic in name only. Civil and political rights do not necessarily exist in actual practice; they can be rendered ineffective by corrupt elite behavior that violates the rule of law. We use indicators of law-abiding elite behavior (i.e., “elite integrity”) to measure how effective democracy really is; this enables us to test the impact of self-expression values on subsequent levels of *effective* democracy, controlling for other variables that are prominent in the democratization literature. Self-expression values show a robust and strongly positive impact on effective democracy even when we control for other factors – and even when we control for a society's prior experience with democracy.

Fourth, we examine discrepancies between formal and effective democracy, as they are produced by variations in elite integrity. The analyses demonstrate that self-expression values operate as a social force that closes the gap between

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formal and effective democracy: if self-expression values are weak, there may be large discrepancies between formal and effective democracy, with a society's level of effective democracy falling far short of its level of formal democracy; but if self-expression values are strongly anchored in a society, its level of effective democracy will be close to its level of formal democracy. Self-expression values help close the gap between nominal and real democracy by generating pressures for elite integrity. Thus, a fundamental aspect of elite behavior – elite integrity – is not independent from mass-level attributes. It reflects them.

These analyses use four different ways of measuring and analyzing democracy, but they all point to the same conclusion: self-expression values have a massive impact on a society's *subsequent* democratic performance but are themselves only modestly influenced by a society's *prior* level of democracy.

Chapters 9 and 10 deal with significant theoretical and methodological problems in the study of democratization and value change. Chapter 9 relates our findings to alternative theories, which emphasize other causal factors behind the emergence and strengthening of democracy than the emancipative social forces linked with rising self-expression values. Most theories that ignore or reject the impact of broader societal forces on democratization emphasize the role of international context and collective actors. Both perspectives are partly right, but they do not invalidate the role of motivational social forces, such as mass self-expression values. In fact, the interplay between international context, collective actors, and social forces is important. Changes in international context have sometimes been necessary in order to unblock the impact of social forces rooted in mass self-expression values. But the international context cannot create these values – they were generated by the public's firsthand existential experiences. Where these values are absent, favorable international conditions do not help to instill effective democratic institutions. Furthermore, democratization always proceeds through collective action. But there must be motivational forces that direct actions toward specific outcomes. Mass self-expression values are such a force, as they channel collective actions toward democratic outcomes, when external conditions permit it.

Chapter 10 deals with a fundamental methodological question that is still widely misunderstood. Even today, many social scientists assume that phenomena must operate in the same way at the individual level as at the system level – and that unless they do, any linkage between them is somehow “spurious.” In this book's context, the question is, How can mass values and beliefs, which exist only within individuals, have an impact on democracy, which exists only at the societal level? We show that individual-level attitudes, such as self-expression values, have central tendencies that are genuine societal-level characteristics that can affect other societal-level characteristics, such as democracy, in ways that are not – and cannot be – reflected at the individual level (where democracy does not exist). As we will show, whether such linkages are “spurious” or real can only be analyzed at the level where the linkage exists: