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978-1-107-03926-1 - The Civic Culture Transformed: From Allegiant to Assertive Citizens

Edited by Russell J. Dalton and Christian Welzel

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I

Political Culture and Value Change

Russell J. Dalton and Christian Welzel

Approximately fifty years ago, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1963) published *The Civic Culture*, followed soon after by Sidney Verba and Lucian Pye's (1965) *Political Culture and Political Development*. The importance of these two classic studies cannot be overemphasized. They widened the political culture approach into a global framework for the comparative analysis of political change and regime legitimacy in developed as well as developing countries. The guiding question of the Almond-Verba-Pye approach concerned what citizen beliefs make democratic regimes survive and flourish. With the expansion of democracy into new regions of the globe, this civiness question is even more relevant today.

Political Culture and Political Development laid out the analytical tool kit and categories to examine the civiness question empirically. The volume was particularly important on conceptual grounds, yet it lacked systematic cross-national data to support its conclusions because such research was not feasible. Today, this situation has changed dramatically. The World Values Survey (WVS) and other cross-national projects have opened large parts of the developing world to public opinion research. Now there is an abundance of evidence on a wide range of social and political attitudes. This situation creates an excellent opportunity to evaluate contemporary political cultures in terms of the civiness question.

Verba and his colleagues stressed a cluster of orientations that supposedly support a democratic polity: allegiance to the regime, pride in the political system, and modest levels of political participation. This *allegiant model* was most apparent in the United States and Britain, the two mature and stable democracies in their study – and lacking in other democratizing nations. However, the modern wave of comparative research in political culture offers a different answer to the question of what citizen beliefs are congruent with democracy.

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Ronald Inglehart and his associates have stressed that the public's values in established democracies have been changing in fundamental ways that conflict with the normative model of *The Civic Culture* (Inglehart 1977, 1990; Abramson and Inglehart 1995; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). This research argued that contemporary publics are developing more *assertive, self-expressive values* that contrast with the allegiant values of the *Civic Culture* model, thus changing the nature of democratic citizenship. Instead of an allegiant and loyal public, established democracies now have a public of critical citizens (Klingemann 1999; Norris 1999; Dalton 2004).¹

In addition, the expansion of democracy during its third and fourth waves speaks to a democratic potential that was often overlooked in the scholarly community (Huntington 1984). People power movements from the Philippines to communist Eastern Europe to sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate a popular desire for political change that appears inconsistent with the *Civic Culture* model. The *Economist* recognized this development when it described why Egyptians protested for political reform against the various authoritarian regimes they confronted, from the Mubarak regime to the generals controlling the government in late 2013:

[The] worst mistake, however, is to ignore the chief lesson of the Arab Spring. This is that ordinary people yearn for dignity. They hate being bossed around by petty officials and ruled by corrupt autocrats. They reject the apparatus of a police state. Instead they want better lives, decent jobs and some basic freedoms.²

These insights produce a far different image of the average person in a developing nation than what was proposed in *Political Culture and Political Development*. Individuals in these societies do not embrace or accept the authoritarian states in which they live, but rather hold unfulfilled aspirations for a better way of life.

Expanding empirical research on developing nations – both democratic and nondemocratic – often finds that citizen values are a poor match to the patterns presented in the early political culture and political development literature (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Dalton and Shin 2006; Bratton et al. 2004; Moaddel 2007). Many of these publics are politically interested with strong democratic aspirations. In short, some of the stark contrasts the civic culture model posited between developing nations and established democracies seem no longer valid. *The Civic Culture* maintained that allegiant orientations characterize stable democracies and that these orientations need to mature in the developing nations, too, if they ought to become stable democracies as well. Today, however, assertive orientations characterize established democracies, with some evidence that they are also emerging in the developing world.

¹ There are, of course, debates on the processes producing value change and the nature of these values. See, for example, Flanagan and Lee (2003), Schwarz (2006), and Abramson (2011).

² “The Battle for Egypt,” *The Economist*, August 17, 2013, p. 11.

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This book is dedicated to a twofold task: analyzing cross-national survey data in light of the initial Almond-Verba-Pye framework and reevaluating the original civic culture model against more recent empirical evidence. To accomplish this task, the contributors to this book use evidence from the WVS. This is an unparalleled resource that allows us to analyze public opinions toward government and democracy, citizen values, and the potential impact of changing values on contemporary societies.

In the parlance of Hollywood filmmaking, we are not sure if this book represents a remake of the early *Civic Culture* study or a sequel to it. However, our intent is to use the basic concepts and ideas of Almond-Verba-Pye as our starting point. Then we reevaluate this theory – and more recent developments in political culture theory – based on the new evidence of the WVS. The results, we believe, shed new light on how global values have been changing and the implications for contemporary political systems.

THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL CULTURE RESEARCH

A stable and effective democratic government . . . depends upon the orientations that people have to the political process – upon the political culture. (Almond and Verba 1963, 498)

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's (1963) classic *The Civic Culture* began the systematic effort to identify the citizen beliefs that underlie viable and flourishing democratic institutions. Lucian Pye and Sidney Verba's (1965) *Political Culture and Political Development* put this theme in an even broader cross-national perspective, conceptualizing the role of citizen beliefs in the processes of nation building and democratization.

Although the *Civic Culture* framework is well known, it is worthwhile to summarize the key elements on which we build. Almond and Verba (1963, 15–17) characterized a nation's political culture in terms of two dimensions. First, they used a Parsonian approach to distinguish between *different types of attitudes*: (1) cognitive orientations involve knowledge and beliefs about politics; (2) affective orientations are positive or negative feelings toward political objects; and (3) evaluative orientations involve judgments about political options and processes. Second, they identified four *different classes of political objects* toward which citizen attitudes are directed: (1) the political system in general; (2) input objects, such as political parties, interest groups, or political actors engaged in conveying demands from the citizenry to institutions; (3) output objects, such as government bureaucracies or agents of state authority that implement public policies; and (4) orientations toward the self and others in terms of role models of what the ideal citizen should do.

Combining these two dimensions, Almond and Verba identified three ideal types of political culture. The *parochial culture* exists when individuals are essentially apolitical. People are unaware of the government and its policies

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and do not see themselves as involved in the political process. The *subject culture* is one in which individuals are aware of the state and its policy outputs but lack significant orientations toward input objects and toward the individual as an active participant. The subject is aware of politics but only involved as a recipient of orders and an object of mobilization.

In the *participant culture*, people hold orientations toward all four classes of political objects. They are aware of government, the processes of political input, and the outputs of government, and they adopt an activist view of their role as citizens. People know and appreciate that they can express their preferences through interest organizations and political parties, by casting votes for their preferred candidates, or through other political activities.

Almond and Verba portrayed the *civic culture* that is most conducive to democracy as a mixture of the subject and the participant orientations. In a civic culture, citizens strictly abide the law and respect legitimate political authority. Even as participant citizens, they are aware of their limited role in representative democracies, which focuses on electing representatives within organizations or public office holders. Direct involvement in policy formulations and policy implementations is not part of the ordinary citizen's standard repertoire, not even the participant citizen.

Almond and Verba stressed that the parochial, subject, and participant cultures are ideal-typical models, which do not exist in pure form in any society. But they maintained that elements of the three models exist in significantly different proportions in the world of their time. They postulated that elements of the parochial culture were most widespread in the developing world; elements of the subject culture in the communist world; and elements of the participant culture in the "free world" of the West.

Other scholarship from this period reinforced this basic theoretical framework. For example, Pye and Verba (1965) described the cultural impediments to democracy in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Turkey in terms that evoked the concepts of parochial and subject cultures – and a lack of a participant culture. Daniel Lerner's (1958) *The Passing of Traditional Society* described how socioeconomic development and cognitive mobilization could change the political culture of a nation, bringing a transition from parochial and subject orientations to more participatory orientations. Banfield's (1963) research on a rural Italian village highlighted the conditions producing parochial and subject orientations. Seymour Martin Lipset's (1959, 1994) *social prerequisite* framework considered less-developed nations as lacking the social conditions and public sentiments that favor democracy. Accordingly, democracy required socioeconomic modernization to transform a society and its culture in a democracy-compatible fashion (also see Almond and Coleman 1960; Inkeles 1969, 1983; Inkeles and Smith 1974). This research posited a strong relationship between socioeconomic development and the development of a democratic civic culture.

The political culture literature repeatedly emphasized a central assumption – that a stable political system was more likely when the political culture was

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congruent with the structures of the political system (Almond and Verba 1963, 23–26; Eckstein 1966; Almond and Powell 1978, Chapter 2). For instance, a parochial political culture should be predominant in traditional peasant societies that have little contact with a national or regional government. A society that is partly traditional and partly modern, typical of many developing nations, presumably has a mixed parochial-subject culture. Most people in such systems are presumably passive subjects, aware of government, complying with the law, but not otherwise involved in public affairs. The parochials – poor and illiterate urban dwellers, peasants, or farm laborers – have limited contact with or awareness of the political system. Only a very small stratum of the public participates in the political process, and even then in highly restricted ways.

At a further stage of social and political modernization, the congruent culture and institutions reflect a different pattern. For instance, in industrialized authoritarian societies, such as fascist states in Western Europe or the former communist nations of Eastern Europe, most citizens are subjects. They are encouraged and even forced to cast a symbolic vote of support in elections and to pay taxes, obey regulations, demonstrate system identification in state-managed public events, and follow the dictates of government. Because of the effectiveness of modern social organization, propaganda, and indoctrination, few people are unaware of the government and its influence on their lives; there are few parochials. At the same time, few people are involved as participants who autonomously express their authentic preferences. It is even questionable if authentic political preferences exist: Participants in the true sense are absent not only because the system would repress them but also because the citizens have not learned the role model of a participant citizen. There is a strong assumption that modern authoritarian-totalitarian systems are successful in using propaganda, indoctrination, and mass organization to infuse public norms that support the system's power structures.

The Civic Culture implied that a modern industrial democracy has a majority of participants (in the limited, allegiant sense), a substantial number of subjects, and a small group of parochials. This distribution presumably provided enough political activists to ensure competition between political parties and sizable voter turnout as well as attentive audiences for debate on public issues by parties, candidates, and pressure groups.

There is an interesting tension in the Almond-Verba framework. On the one hand, their framework is influenced by modernization theory and open to the idea that socioeconomic modernization changes citizen preferences and expectations. For example, they routinely examined educational differences in political attitudes with the implicit argument that social modernization would expand education and thus transform orientations in a pro-democratic direction. The postulated direction of change was to strengthen many aspects of the allegiant model of citizenship, such as various measures of political support. On the other hand, comparative politics scholars largely overlooked the parallel message that social modernization would also increase feelings of efficacy,

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autonomy, and political tolerance that might lead to new patterns of assertive democratic participants.

In addition, the framework emphasized the indoctrination powers of modern authoritarian systems and their ability to reproduce a culture that is congruent with their authoritarian structures. This was likely a reflection of the Cold War communist experience in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as well as the tragic history of Europe in the mid-twentieth century (Almond 1998). The *Civic Culture* framework thus gave less attention to how socio-economic modernization can give rise to democratic, participatory desires even in nondemocratic systems, accumulating an underground delegitimizing force of authoritarian rule. Rightly or wrongly, many analysts concluded that participant orientations and other democratic orientations can really take root only under existing democratic systems (Rustow 1970; Muller and Seligson 1994; Jackman and Miller 1998; Hadenius and Teorell 2005). This implies a primarily elite-driven model of democratization, if it occurs.

In summary, two broad implications for the democratization process follow from this framework. First, the congruence thesis assumes that regime stability and effective government are more likely if the political culture is congruent with the regime form. Thus, one reason why autocratic governments exist is presumably because they occur in societies where the citizenry tolerates or even expects an autocratic state. Brutally rephrasing Adlai Stevenson, people get the type of government that they deserve. Moreover, if we assume that the political culture is embedded in a network of social relations, traditional norms, and socioeconomic conditions, then cultural change will occur very slowly (Eckstein 1966; Pye 2006). Thus, the congruence thesis implies that autocratic governments endure when there is a parochial and subject culture. Progress toward political modernization is likely to occur slowly and requires profound changes in a nation's political culture that may lag behind institutional change.³ Cultural-institutional congruence is an important condition for stable regimes.

Second, *The Civic Culture* had a constrained view of the values of the ideal democratic citizen. The specter of hyperparticipation by antidemocratic groups in interwar (and postwar) Europe led them to stress *allegiance* as a core virtue of a stable democracy. Participant orientations are a good thing. However, a civic culture requires that participant orientations be tempered by a strong dose of subject orientations. In their words, "the civic culture is an *allegiant* participant culture. Individuals are not only oriented to political inputs, they are oriented positively to the input structures and the input process" (Almond and Verba 1963, 31; emphasis added).⁴ The ideal citizen thus respects political authority

³ Almond and Verba do not say that cultures cannot change or be changed. In fact, the focus on Germany in their study was implicitly to identify how the culture should be changed to produce public values more supportive of postwar German democracy.

⁴ Almond and Verba (1963, 31) continue to state that "in the civic culture participant political orientations combine with and do not replace subject and political orientations. Individuals

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and accepts the decisions of government; this citizen is a follower rather than a challenger. She supports democracy, is satisfied with the democratic process, has confidence in institutions, and becomes engaged only where institutional mechanisms channel her activities toward orderly outcomes. There is limited room for political dissatisfaction, questioning authority, civil disobedience, or elite-challenging activity in *The Civic Culture*.

A COUNTERVIEW

An initial challenge to the importance of an allegiant citizenry for a flourishing of democracy came from the *Political Action* study (Barnes and Kaase et al. 1979). In reaction to the student protests of the late 1960s, this study examined the expanding use of elite-challenging political action, such as protests, boycotts, wildcat strikes, blockades, occupying buildings, and other contentious actions. The project asked whether the extension of the citizens' repertoire to elite-challenging actions undermined representative democracy, as some critics suspected (Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki 1975). The Political Action study did not support this suspicion; protesters did not abstain from conventional forms of political participation, and they showed a strong attachment to democratic norms. For sure, protesters were disillusioned about some aspects of the democratic process. However, they did not reject democracy; they were committed to the democratic ideas of citizen participation, freedom of expression, and the elites' obligation to be responsive to public demands. The 1960–70s protesters seemed to anticipate a new model of an assertive democratic citizen that contrasts with the allegiant model of *The Civic Culture*. Ever since, political culture research has seen a latent tension between an allegiant and an assertive model of democratic citizenship.

Recognizing these developments, Almond and Verba (1980) began to explore the dynamics of cultural change in *The Civic Culture Revisited*. They found that the best examples of the civic culture, the United States and Great Britain, had experienced a decline in allegiant, trustful orientations and a rise in challenging political values that was unexpected in the earlier *Civic Culture* volume. Almond (1998, 5–6) wrote retrospectively, “What we learned from the *Civic Culture Revisited* was that political culture is a plastic many dimensioned variable, and that it responds quickly to structural change. It was not that Verba and I failed to appreciate structural variables . . . But we surely did not appreciate how quickly, and how steep the curves of change were going to be.” Thus the research agenda changed from explaining the persistence of

become participants in the political process, but they do not give up their orientation as subjects or parochials . . . The maintenance of these more traditional attitudes *and their fusion* with the participation orientation lead to a balanced political culture in which political activity, involvement and rationality exist but are balanced by passivity, traditionality, and commitment to parochial values.”

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political cultures to predicting how they could change, and the consequences of change.

Ronald Inglehart's *The Silent Revolution* (1977) provided a theoretical groundwork for this assertive model of democratic citizenship. Inglehart linked the spread of elite-challenging action to the rise of postmaterialist values, which emphasize self-expression and direct participation in politics. Inspired by modernization theory, he explained the emergence of postmaterialist values as the consequence of the rising existential security and cognitive mobilization that characterized the postwar generations in Western democracies. He held that social modernization would also give rise to postmaterialist values in nondemocratic regimes – which is potentially a powerful delegitimizing force against authoritarianism (Inglehart 1990).

The new type of self-expressive, postmaterialist political protester raised the suspicion of scholars who believed that the functioning of representative democracy requires the dominance of an allegiant citizen model (Crozier et al. 1975). Robert Putnam's (1993) influential study of political culture in Italy also accepted the allegiant model of citizenship – at least implicitly. This is apparent in the way he defined social capital, namely, as “trust, norms, and networks that facilitate cooperation and civic action” (167). Social capital was not only operationalized as trust in fellow citizens but also as trust in institutions, including the institutions of government – which is a key allegiant orientation.

Indeed, further research showed that the processes linked to rising elite-challenging politics and postmaterialist values strained the principle of representative democracy. For one, political and partisan competition added a cultural cleavage focused on lifestyle issues to the long-standing economic cleavage centered on material redistribution. This gave rise to New Left parties that mobilize on environmental and other “New Politics” issues and New Right parties that mobilize on immigration and traditional values (Kitschelt 1989; Norris 2005). Furthermore, electoral participation, party identification, confidence in political institutions, and satisfaction with the democratic process were declining in most postindustrial democracies, while support for democracy as a political system and attachment to basic democratic norms remained stable or increased (Dalton 2004; Norris 2011).

The Civic Culture study and much of the early public opinion research typically focused on established Western democracies. The practical reason was that representative mass surveys could not be conducted in the communist world and large parts of the developing world. This situation changed dramatically when consecutive waves of democratization opened the former communist bloc and large parts of the developing world to survey research. This initiated an unprecedented expansion of cross-national survey programs in addition to the WVS: the International Social Survey Program; the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems; and the democracy barometers in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Much of the work in these programs was

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inspired by the initial question of the *Civic Culture* study: What types of citizen beliefs are most beneficial to help new democracies survive and flourish and what makes and keeps citizens supportive of the idea of democracy?

These surveys fielded questions on people's regime preferences and their levels of support for democracy, both in its concrete form and as an abstract ideal. The first reports calculated the percentages of democracy supporters in a country or compared the balance of support for democracy against support for alternative regimes (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998; Klingemann 1999; Mishler and Rose 2001; Klingemann, Fuchs, and Zielonka 2006). This research yielded the surprising – and consistent – finding that support for democracy as a principle was widespread across established democracies, new democracies, and nondemocracies. In sharp contrast to Almond and Verba, the public in contemporary authoritarian states does not seem to embrace rule by autocrats – at least not when one takes people's overt regime preferences at face value.

Scholars also started to differentiate different types of democratic support, such as *intrinsic* and *instrumental* support (Bratton and Mattes 2001; Inglehart and Welzel 2005), *idealist* and *realist* support (Shin and Wells 2005), or support that is coupled with dissatisfaction with the way democracy works: *dissatisfied democrats* or *critical citizens* (Klingemann 1999; Norris 1999). These classifications qualify democratic regime support for the motives and beliefs that lie behind it (Schedler and Sarsfield 2006). Accordingly, they focus attention on the emergence of a new type of nonallegiant democrat and the implications for the development of democracy.

More recently, researchers have tried to disentangle what people in different parts of the world understand about the term *democracy* (Dalton, Shin, and Jou 2007; Mattes and Bratton 2007; Diamond 2008; Chapter 4). Surprisingly as it may seem from the viewpoint of cultural relativism, there is a core liberal understanding of democracy among ordinary people around the world. What first comes to most people's minds when they think about democracy is the freedom to govern their lives that liberal democracy grants them. Pronounced cultural differences exist, however, in the extent to which the liberal notion of democracy trumps alternative notions of democracy (Welzel 2013, 307–32). Yet, despite these differences in relative importance, freedom seems to have appeal across cultures. Resonating with this broad appeal, freedom is the central theme in Amartya Sen's (1999) interpretation of modernization as "human development." He defines development normatively as the growth of freedom. Clearly this definition of development includes liberal democracy.

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005) further elaborate the idea of human development and integrate it into the political culture field (also Welzel, Inglehart, and Klingemann 2003). In *Freedom Rising*, Welzel (2013) expands this approach to describe the growth of emancipative values among contemporary publics. He equates development with the empowerment of people to exert their freedoms. His theory describes liberal democracy as the "legal component" of empowerment. Its significance from an empowerment perspective

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is that it grants people the rights that enable them to practice freedoms (both personal and political). However, in the sequence of empowerment, democracy is the third component. For democracy only becomes effective *after* ordinary people have acquired the resources that make them capable to practice freedoms and after they have internalized the values that make them willing to practice freedoms. In this view, participatory resources and values proliferate the material and motivational components of people power. They must be in place before democracy can be effectively practiced. Welzel identifies a set of orientations that are emancipative in their impetus because they merge libertarian and egalitarian orientations. The prevalence of these emancipative values in a society is more closely linked with levels of democracy than any other citizen belief. The most important component of emancipative values in this respect has been found to be liberty aspirations – quite in line with the emphasis that liberal democracy places on freedom (Welzel 2007). In short, the human development model by Inglehart and Welzel and Welzel's emancipatory theory argue for recognition of an assertive model of democratic citizenship.⁵

The revisionist strand of research champions an assertive model of political culture that also can be congruent with democracy, albeit with different political implications. Some of the key contrasts between allegiant and assertive cultures are summarized in Table 1.1. Changing orientations produce a general increase in postmaterialist and emancipative values as well as a shift in basic authority beliefs. These cultural changes manifest themselves in shifting attitudes toward political institutions, the practice of democracy, and even the definition of a good democracy and a good citizen. These political norms carry over to specific policy views that we also examine in this volume. For example, the traditional model of citizen included a strong priority for economic prosperity and little concern for environmental protection. The new pattern of assertive citizenship heightens environmental concerns. Traditional norms gave limited attention on issues of racial and ethnic equality and sexual liberation; these issues receive strong support under the assertive model of citizenship.

In summary, the debates over the role of political culture owe their inspiration to the initial groundwork laid by Almond and Verba in *The Civic Culture* and by Verba and Pye in *Political Culture and Political Development*. Their research focused on an allegiant model of citizenship as essential to stable democracy, whereas the contours of an assertive model of citizenship became clear only recently. The content of a democratic political culture can be more complex than Almond and Verba and Pye initially envisioned, and the spread of democratic orientations differs markedly from earlier expectations of average citizens. The results, we believe, lead to both a reevaluation of the political

⁵ This same theoretical logic is represented in research on dissatisfied democrats by Klingemann (1999), critical citizens by Norris (1999), and even more clearly the model of engaged citizenship by Dalton (2009).