Civil Society on Democracy/Democratization

Example question:

Discuss the relationship between civic culture and democracy as illustrated by the civic culture literature such as Almond and Verba, Putnam, Inglehart, Dalton, Norris and others. Discuss any studies that challenge this relationship both in terms of causal directions and its very validity. How do the authors of the civic culture literature respond to such challenges? Please make sure you cite the empirical evidence used by the various authors to support their findings. What do you see as the opportunities for future research on this topic? (2014Spr.)

What’s civil society?

Civic society refers to the totality of all non-state institutions, organizations, and civic associations functioning in public domain (Wunk-Lipinski, 2007). Putnam argues that an important network in the civic society is built upon social capital, that is, the social networks, trust, and norms facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (1993, 2000). In terms of relationship with political transition, Almond and Verba (1963) argues that the civic society permit changes but moderate the process.

What’s political culture?

There are two ways to interpret political culture. One is at the micro-level, political culture is regarded as the shared meaning and meaning-making in political issues (Ross 2009). It consists of individuals attitudes towards the political system, components, and self-role in a political system. It also includes political trust and tolerance (Almond & Verba 1963). AV argue that there are three types of micro-level culture: parochial, subject, and participant, although in most cases they should be combined.

The other way to address political culture is from the macro-level. It is considered as a collective property of groups with a function as a control mechanism to limit the option. It should be used as a collaborator with structural and institutional explanations rather than a competitor. Good for explaining institutional difference, bad for democracy because it is too broad; nor to individual opinions, because individuals do not have culture, but only values (Elkins & Simoen 1979). Macro-level favorers emphasize that political culture is a macro-phenomenon, although they also concede it roots in citizens’ attitudes (Fuchs 2007). But they focus more on the trait, the pattern shown in the political environment. For instance, Eckstein (1998) focuses on the “authority pattern,” a set of structures and processes by which social units are directed or, put otherwise, their structures and processes of governance in his famous congruency theory.

Contribution

Ross (2009) generalizes five contributions of political culture analysis to CP studies:

1. Frame context in which politics occurs;
2. Link the individuals with collective identities;
3. Define the boundaries of groups
4. Offer a framework for interpreting the actions and motives of others
5. Provide resources for political organizations and motivations.

Relation between civic culture and democracy/Democratization

About the relationship between civic culture and democracy, there are generally two types of explanations. First, the classical explanation. The classic works of cultural study intend to demonstrate that different type of political culture have different relations with the performance of democracy (largely from an institutional view). For example, Almond & Verba (1963) and Eckstein (1998) argues that only when political culture is congruent to political structure/institution can democracy be stable. Putnam (1993, 2000) argues that the variance of the performance in democracies can be explained by cultural difference.

A potential issue of the classic explanation is that the mechanism between culture and political institution is vague. It is not very clear about how culture can affect the institution, even if given the positive association between political culture and democratic performance. Another issue is that the classic cultural theory only address the cultural influence within democracies, but not sufficiently discuss how culture and cultural changes can affect the democratization process in a non-democratic regime. For the mechanism concern, classic works by Putnam (1993, 2000) already gives some suggestion. He argues that the cultural engagement has a significant association with the political participation, in which people are more willing to participate in political issues when they live in a society favoring coordination and cooperation, i.e., with high social capital. Fuchs (2007) integrates this logic from Putnam’s political culture vis-à-vis a democratic function (promoting political participation) to civic culture vis-à-vis the persistence of democracy at the macro level.

Inglehart & Welzel (2005) gives a more explicit and unique view of the mechanism. They focus more on the influence of cultural transition to democratization: (1) given socioeconomic conditions being conducive to (2) specific patterns of mass beliefs that (3)motivate the collective actions that ultimately bring democratization

Empirical evidence

Empirical evidence come from three aspects:

First, culture matters:

1. Pharr(1990): use Japanese case on social protest showing that the attitudes and solutions of social conflicts root in traditional culture (in Japan, privatize social conflicts to restrict its spread, and save the government’s resource to get power and doing other state goals.)
2. Rose, Mishler & Munro (2006): 1992-2005 surveys show the most important factor for regime support is political culture. Also the passage of the time make the masses resigned rather than enthusiast support the regime.

Second, culture relates to democracy:

1. Almond & Verba(1963): political cultural indicators (confidence, competences, etc) positively correlate to the effective democratic outcomes (US, UK, balanced, congruent culture, Italy, Mexico the worst, Germany is in between).
2. Putnam(2000): Showing the trend of social capital (measured by political participation, civic participation, religious participation, etc.. 1900~late 1960, US meta-analysis.
3. Dalton (1999): finds a decline of trust in politicians in the 1990s in democracies, and a decline of confidence in political institutions.

Three, causality evidence:

1. Inglehart & Welzel (2005): Empricial support (81 countries, 85% of world’s population) to the congruence theory. Though socioeconomic development tends to bring predictable changes in people's worldviews, cultural traditions (protestantism, confucianism or communism) continue to show a lasting imprint on a society's worldview. Therefore, modernization is not linear. The increase of self-expression makes democracy increasingly likely.
2. Inglehart & Welzel (2005): The causal arrow runs from self-expression values to democratic institutions, not vice versa. macro socio-economic development is linked to micro-emancipative value change, which in turn has the macro manifestation of collective freedom, where democracy is the logical outcome. - Moving up to the societal level again, when emancipative values prevail in a given society there exists a strong demand for effective rights.

Challenge to this relation

1. Ross(2009):
   1. Unit of analysis: Almond and Verba vs. Seligon and Geertz
   2. Unclear of the mechanism: culture works in various ways.
   3. How to explain the cultural changes.

Methodological,

Regular statistical problems:

1. Almond & Verba (1980): downplaying political structure, poor case selection (Mexico), individualistic fallacy, causal arrow, and elite measurement.
2. Laitin (1995): Putnam forgets to mention that the regions that are regions that are rich in civic culture in his study are also the traditional strongholds of Italy’s fascist regime; civic culture can make political institutions function effectively, but it does not necessarily make them more democratic.

Level of analysis:

1. Fuchs (2007): political culture must be construed by the aggregation of micro-data. Only political culture as a macro-phenomenon can affect macro-level political system. Long-term is meaningful only when the bearers can be identified(e.g., collective actors, such as party or political institution).
2. Elikins & Simoen (1979): culture can’t be measured by mode or average because it is a collective property of groups. But Lane(1992) believes that the attempt to apply the political culture concept to whole nations has been a major error, since it has overly abstract conceptualizations and weakening the explanatory capacity, and each cultural group to determine assumptions that we can then use in a rational choice framework.

Theoretical,

Cultural doesn’t matter:

1. Converse (1965): the masses do not have clear ideology, nor are they influenced by the elites too much. Shown by two-year panel interview on 20 Americans.
2. Verba, Schlozman, Brandy (1995): interest (those who are interested in politics), information (how aware someone is politically), efficacy (if a person thinks they can be effective), and partisan intensity provide the impetus for people to get involved with politics but if they don’t have the wherewithal: time, money and skills, it won’t matter. (Based on a survey of 15000 individuals in the US.)

Spurious causality:

1. Foley & Edwards (1996): Putnam understates the ability of political institution to foster the civil community, also ignored the real and sharp conflicts in the civil society which is negative to democracy.
2. Jackman & Miller (2009): voting behaviors is a result of institutional arrangement. Putnam used strong assumption and way back tracing in history to belies the actual record in 1993 book, and selected information (replying mainly on a single survey question) in 2000 book.
3. Seligon (2002): Inglehart has an individual fallacy on the relationship between trust (interpersonal trust, political satisfaction, life satisfaction) and democracy. Using aggregative data (freedom house as DV) and new data Latinbarometer, find the correlations in Inglehart’s model are very weak. Welzel and Inglehart respond that social phenomena 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 as an aggregate attribute of the population in which the individual lives (often studied from literatures, qualitative studies, etc.).
4. Muller & Seligon (1994): civic culture is not the reason of democracy but the result. The most important explanatory variable is income inequality (The size of the top quintile of income negatively associate with democracy). Empirical evidence: three level of democracies, 1970~ 1980s.
5. Tang (2011): political culture works for both democracy and non-democracy.

Example: How do state, market, economic modernization, and technology affect media freedom and public opinion and political behavior? Please include key concepts and authors in the political communication literature, the differences and similarities of these effects in democratic and non-democratic societies, and any remaining research questions in the future study of comparative political communication. Please use concrete examples in your discussion. (2013Spr.)

Economy:

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2. Inglehart & Welzel (2005) gives a more explicit and unique view of the mechanism. They focus more on the influence of cultural transition to democratization: (1) given socioeconomic conditions being conducive to (2) specific patterns of mass beliefs that (3)motivate the collective actions that ultimately bring democratization
3. Welzel and Inglehart (2008): the major effect of modernization is not making democracy more acceptable to elites but increasing ordinary people’s capabilities and willingness to struggle for democratic institutions.

Employment

1. Inkeles and Smith (1974): Life experience influences individual modernization, and later life experience can overcome the early ones. Using 1000 surveys in each of six developing countries showing that education, mass media directly matters to individual modernization (modern score, attitude questions), but urban residence, ethnicity, religion just affect the education and exposure to media to indirectly affect modernity. Factory experience matters, while the urban environment doesn’t.