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**Original citation:** Vecchione, M., Schwartz, S. H., Caprara, G. V., Schoen, H., Cieciuch, J., Silvester, J., Bain, P., Bianchi, G., Kirmanoglu, H., Baslevent, C., Mamali, C., Manzi, J., Pavlopoulos, V., Posnova, T., Torres, C., Verkasalo, M., Lonngqvist, J-E., Vondráková, E., Welzel, C. & Alessandri, G. (2015). Personal values and political activism: A cross-national study. *British Journal of Psychology*, 106(1), pp. 84-106. doi: 10.1111/bjop.12067

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## Personal values and political activism: A cross-national study

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Word count (exc. abstract, reference list, tables, and figures): 7,911

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## **Abstract**

Using data from 28 countries in 4 continents, the present research addresses the question of how basic values may account for political activism. Study 1 (N=35,116) analyses data from representative samples in 20 countries that responded to the 21-item version of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-21) in the European Social Survey. Study 2 (N=7,773) analyses data from adult samples in six of the same countries (Finland, Germany, Greece, Israel, Poland, and United Kingdom) and eight other countries (Australia, Brazil, Chile, Italy, Slovakia, Turkey, Ukraine, and United States) that completed the full 40-item PVQ. Across both studies, political activism relates positively to self-transcendence and openness to change values, especially to universalism and autonomy of thought, a subtype of self-direction. Political activism relates negatively to conservation values, especially to conformity and personal security. National differences in the strength of the associations between individual values and political activism are linked to level of democratization.

Recent decades have witnessed a growing interest in the role of personality in orienting political engagement (Mondak, 2010). Numerous empirical findings have accumulated during the more than half a century since the first contributions (Levinson, 1958; Milbrath, 1965). Most studies focused on basic traits, showing the significant role played by the five factors of personality (Ha, Kim & Jo, 2013; Mondak, Hibbing, Canache, Seligson & Anderson, 2010; Vecchione & Caprara, 2009). Personality, however, encompasses elements other than traits that may affect citizens' political activism. An important component of a comprehensive conception of personality is individuals' value priorities. Basic personal values may provide the reasons to become politically engaged, reasons whose expression in political action depends upon behavioural traits. The study of values may thus contribute to explaining the motivational processes that regulate civic and political action in combination with various social, economic, and cultural factors.

Relations between values and political behaviour have been investigated from different perspectives (e.g., Feldman, 2003; Knutsen, 1995; Rokeach, 1979). We follow most recent studies in adopting the Schwartz theory of basic human values. In its classic form (Schwartz, 1992), the theory proposes 10 motivationally distinct values derived from universal requirements of the human condition: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. Recent studies (Cieciuch & Schwartz, 2012; Cieciuch, Schwartz & Vecchione, 2013) demonstrate that the motivational continuum of values can be partitioned into 15 narrower value constructs. These studies discriminate two subtypes of self-direction (autonomy of action and autonomy of thought), two of achievement (ambition and showing success), two of security (national and personal), and two of universalism, (concern [for all people] and nature [preserving the environment]). They also split tradition into humility (accepting one's own insignificance) and a more narrowly defined tradition value (see Figure 1).

The ten values – and their respective subtypes – can be organized into four broad sets that form two bipolar dimensions of conflicting values: self-enhancement values (power and achievement) versus self-transcendence values (universalism and benevolence), and openness to change values (self-direction and stimulation) versus conservation values (security, conformity, and tradition). Hedonism values share elements of both self-enhancement and openness to change but are closer to the latter.

The theory has been supported in hundreds of samples from over 70 countries (Schwartz, 1992, 2006). Thus, it provides an optimal framework for systematic, cross-cultural investigation of the impact of personal values on various forms of socio-political behaviour.

Several empirical studies from different countries demonstrate systematic relations of the ten Schwartz values with political preferences and ideology (Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione & Barbaranelli, 2006; Caprara, Schwartz, Vecchione & Barbaranelli, 2008; Piurko, Schwartz & Davidov, 2011; Schwartz et al., in press). These studies reveal that citizens tend to vote for parties whose platform or image suggests that electing them will promote attainment or preservation of their cherished, personal values. The few studies reviewed below are the only ones to have investigated the role of values in orienting political participation and activism. They examined whether the importance assigned to given values leads people to be more active in the political sphere, regardless of the ideological content of these activities.

Using Schwartz's model, Caprara, Vecchione and Schwartz (2012) found that, compared with non-voters, Italian voters assigned more importance either to universalism or to security values. These are the values that distinguish most strongly between the appeals of the two major Italian political coalitions. Thus, voters were apparently likely to think that electing one or the other coalition would affect the attainment of their important values. In contrast, non-voters assigned more importance to stimulation and hedonism values. The

election of either coalition was unlikely to increase opportunities for excitement or pleasure. Consequently, voting offered little payoff for non-voters.

Voting, however, is only the minimal and least demanding form of political action. To the best of our knowledge, only three studies have focused on the ways personal values orient more demanding forms of political action. These studies investigated such political actions as participating in public demonstrations and protests, contacting politicians, and working for political groups or organizations. In a first study, Schwartz (2007) examined effects of basic values on political activism in 20 countries that participated in round 1 (2002-03) of the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS measured values with a 21-item version of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ, Schwartz, 2003). It included nine legal political activities that Schwartz summed to obtain an overall index of activism. Universalism values, which emphasize acceptance, appreciation, and concern for the welfare of all others, had the strongest positive impact on political activism. Self-direction and stimulation values also related positively to political activism, although more weakly. Conformity values, which emphasize compliance with external expectations and avoidance of disrupting behaviour, predicted political activism negatively.

Vyrost, Kentos and Fedakova (2007) examined data from the 24 countries participating in round 2 of the ESS (2004-05). They employed the same measures of values and political activism as Schwartz (2007), but only examined effects for the higher-order values. Their findings indicated that political activism was higher among respondents who valued both self-transcendence and openness to change, and lowest among those who valued both self-enhancement and conservation. In a study in the United States, Augemberg (2008) reported that engagement in electoral activities was positively influenced by self-direction and universalism values, and negatively influenced by power and achievement values.

The present study adds to the literature in three ways. First, we elucidate the consistencies and variability in the relations of personal values to political activism in a

variety of cultural contexts. With the exception of Schwartz (2007), previous studies have neither investigated nor attempted to explain variation across countries in relations between political activism and basic values. Second, we investigate whether discriminating more narrowly defined values can add to current understandings of the psychological bases of political activism. This research is the first to examine this possibility. Third, we compare the predictive power of values with that of basic socio-demographic variables typically used as predictors of activism by political scientists.

A conceptual analysis suggests that the causal influence of basic values on political activism is substantially stronger than the reverse effect. Basic values are fundamental, abstract, motivational principles whereas political activism refers to specific behaviours that may express these motivations in particular contexts. Furthermore, people's basic values are typically quite stable across time (Schwartz, 2006), changing little even in the face of many life transitions (Bardi, et al. 2014). In contrast, people's political activity is often situational and episodic, depending on the salience of particular political issues (Norris, 2004). Basic values are more central than political activism to the self-identity of most people and are therefore more resistant to change. Of course, behaviour does reciprocally affect basic values to some extent. However, basic values are subject to reciprocal influences from behaviour in all domains of life because they are implicated in all voluntary behaviours. Political activism is only one life domain, one probably not crucial for most people. Its influence on the basic value priorities of most people is therefore likely to be minimal. Consequently, we base our hypotheses on causal reasoning, although our correlational design does not test causality.

### The Current Research

We conducted two studies. Study 1 examines relations of the four higher-order values (i.e., openness to change, conservation, self-enhancement, and self-transcendence) to political activism in representative samples from 20 ESS countries. It measures values with the PVQ-

21. We assess cross-national variation in the strength of relations between the higher-order values and political activism and link it to the country level of democratization.

Study 2 examines relations between basic values and political activism in adult samples from 14 countries. It extends the analysis to eight European and non-European countries not in the first study. Moreover, it measures personal values with the full 40-item PVQ. This allows us to assess more specific types of values with sufficient reliability to examine relationships with political activism. According to the theory (Schwartz, 1992), the value circle represents a motivational continuum that can be partitioned into broader or more fine-tuned values, depending on the level at which one wishes to discriminate among motivations. The ten basic values, and the respective subtypes, provide more precision and insight into value effects than the four higher-order values.

### **STUDY 1**

This study examines the joint role of basic values and of socio-demographic variables as determinants of political activism. We used the four higher-order values as predictors because past analyses of the samples we studied revealed that only these four could be differentiated reliably with the PVQ-21 in eight of our 20 countries (Davidov, 2008). We considered four socio-demographic variables, education, income, gender, and age.

Education provides citizens with the cognitive resources to participate effectively in politics (Verba, Scholzman & Brady, 1995). Moreover, highly educated people are more likely to exhibit pro-participatory values and attitudes (e.g., Inglehart, 1997). We therefore expected a positive relation between education and political activism, as in prior research (e.g., Milligan, Moretti & Oreopoulos, 2004). Household income is a proxy for available monetary resources. The availability of these resources and the time they provide to engage in non-paying activities facilitate investing energies in political activism (Verba et al., 1995). We therefore expected income to relate positively to activism.



Due to women's greater burden of home and family responsibilities, they may have more difficulty finding time for political activism than men do. Moreover, differential socialization has been credited with men's showing greater interest in and knowledge about politics than women (Milbrath & Goel, 1977). We therefore anticipated that women would report lower levels of political activism than men.

As young adults move through the life cycle they become more integrated into the community, increase their social and political ties, get more experienced in the political domain, and thus acquire more resources and opportunities for political activism. This reasoning, however, may not apply to all forms of political activism. Younger people, for example, tend to be more inclined than middle aged adults to participate through protest and other non-institutionalised channels (e.g., Kaase, 1990). Moreover, activism may decline when disabilities that accompany aging make political engagement more difficult (Sears, Huddy, & Jervis, 2003). We therefore expected a weak positive association between age and activism, with a curvilinear trend that peaks in middle adulthood.

Our main hypotheses concerned the effect of personal values on political activism over and above the contribution of socio-demographic variables. Values, as motivational constructs, are likely to capture a different set of pro-participatory factors than the demographics, whose effects are mostly linked to the availability of opportunities and politically relevant resources (Verba et al., 1995). We also expected that the effect of personal values on political activism would be stronger than that of demographic variables. This expectation rests on the long-term decline of socio-structural determinants of political behaviour and the concomitant increase in the importance of individual characteristics (Jost, 2006). Earlier studies have demonstrated the primacy of values over demographic variables in predicting voting (Caprara et al., 2006) and electoral participation (Caprara et al., 2012). In these studies, individual's basic values were much more influential than gender, age, educational level, and income.

Self-transcendence values (universalism and benevolence) motivate people to care for the welfare of others and to act selflessly. As political activism often aims to promote goals like social justice and preserving the environment, these values should be conducive to political engagement (Schwartz, 2007). In terms of cost-benefit calculations, political activism might be construed as irrational because each individual citizen makes only a negligible contribution to the attainment of political goals (Whitley & Seyd, 1996). But those who cherish self-transcendence values may pay less attention to such calculations because they may view political action as a kind of moral obligation (Finkel, Muller, & Opp, 1989). We therefore hypothesized that self-transcendence values have the strongest positive impact on political activism. In contrast, we hypothesized that self-enhancement values (power and achievement), which emphasize the pursuit of personal interests, relate negatively to political activism. Activism typically seeks to advance causes beneficial to the collectivity, even at a cost to the actor.

Conservation values (security, conformity, and tradition) share the goal of avoiding or overcoming anxiety. They emphasize risk avoidance, personal security, acceptance of traditional practices, adherence to established norms, and commitment to preserving the status quo. Political activism is often aimed at changing the status quo, and it is reasonable to assume that challenging existing arrangements will lead to unexpected and uncontrolled outcomes that might threaten one's security. Therefore, we hypothesized that conservation values relate negatively to political activism.

In contrast, we hypothesized that openness to change values (self-direction and stimulation) relate positively to political activism. Self-direction values should promote engagement in civic and political activities because they emphasize personal autonomy and freedom of expression for all people, even for those who hold minority views and pursue unconventional habits and life styles. Stimulation values are likely to promote engaging in

risky forms of political activities such as protests which are a source of excitement (Schwartz, 2006).

Finally, we anticipated systematic differences across countries in the strength of the relationships between basic values and political activism. We hypothesized that basic values relate more strongly to political activism the higher the level of democracy in a country. This hypothesis rests on the notion that situational constraints weaken the impact of values on behaviour by restricting opportunities for their expression. More democratic governments grant their citizens greater freedom to voice their opinions and greater opportunities to influence the political system. Therefore, the higher the level of democratization, the more able citizens are to act politically on the basis of their values.

We also speculated about cross-level interactions between level of democratization and two of the demographic variables. There are fewer social and cultural barriers to women's political involvement in more democratic societies (Norris & Inglehart, 2003). Gender may therefore have a weaker effect on activism the higher the level of democratization. Also, opportunities to be politically active may depend less on having economic resources in more democratic countries because governments grant greater civil liberties to all. Income may therefore have a stronger effect in less democratic countries. We had no clear rationales to speculate about how level of democratization might moderate effects of age or education on activism.

## **Method**

### **Participants and procedures**

Study 1 analysed data from representative samples in 20 countries that participated in the second round of the ESS (2002-2003). The data, downloaded from website <http://ess.nsd.uib.no>, included 35,116 individuals aged 14 to 110. Participant countries were: Austria (n=2,142), Belgium (n=1,740), Czech Republic (n=1,192), Denmark (n=1,438), Finland (n=1,738), France (n=1,265), Germany (n=2,726), Greece (n=2,273), Hungary

(n=1,476), Ireland (n=1,742), Israel (n=1,993), Netherlands (n=2,248), Norway (n=1,793), Poland (n=1,836), Portugal (n=1,349), Slovenia (n=1,273), Spain (n=1,556), Sweden (n=1,669), Switzerland (n=1,957), United Kingdom (n=1,710). Further sample details are available at <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>.

## **Measures**

Personal values. Basic personal values were measured with the PVQ-21. The scale includes 21 short verbal portraits of different people, each describing a person's goals, aspirations, or wishes that point implicitly to the importance of a value. For example, "It is important to him to listen to people who are different from him, even when he disagrees with them, he still wants to understand them" describes a person for whom universalism values are important. The PVQ-21 measures each of the 10 motivationally distinct types of values with two items (three for universalism). For each portrait, respondents indicate how similar the person is to themselves on a scale ranging from "very much like me" to "not like me at all." Respondents' personal values are inferred from the implicit values of the people they indicate as being similar to themselves. Items were combined to yield a mean score for each of the four higher-order values. Hedonism items were excluded because they share elements of both openness to change and self-enhancement (Schwartz, 2006).

The average Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for the four value dimensions in each country were .72 (SD=.03) for Conservation, .70 (SD=.05) for Self-transcendence, .66 (SD=.04) for Openness to Change, and .71 (SD=.05) for Self-enhancement. Previous studies (Davidov, 2008) assessed the measurement invariance of the four value dimensions in the PVQ21 across the current ESS samples with multi-group confirmatory factor analyses. Partial metric invariance (i.e. equivalence of factor loadings) was supported, allowing comparison of the associations of values with political activism across countries.

Political activism. Respondents indicated whether they had performed each of ten behaviours in the past 12 months on a yes (1) -- no (0) scale. To measure political activism,

we summed responses to the following behaviours: ‘contacted a politician or government official’, ‘worked in a political party or action group’, ‘worked in another organization or association’, ‘wore or displayed a campaign badge/sticker’, ‘donated money to political organization or group’, ‘signed a petition’, ‘took part in a lawful public demonstration’, ‘boycotted certain products’, ‘bought a product for a political/ethical/environment reason’ and ‘participated in illegal protest activities’. Higher scores on this index signify greater political activism.

We performed a confirmatory factor analysis on the ten indicators of political activism, using the WLSM method of estimation (Muthén & Muthén, 1998). Model fit was evaluated using the  $\chi^2$  likelihood ratio statistic, the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). We regarded CFI values greater than .90, and RMSEA values lower than .08, as indicative of a reasonable model fit.

The one-factor model had a reasonable fit,  $\chi^2(35)=7535.55$ ,  $p<.001$ , CFI=.92, RMSEA=.07, with factor loadings all  $> .50$ . Because the ten indicators refer to activities that might be categorized as conventional (e.g., donating money, contacting politicians) or unconventional (e.g., protesting, political consumerism), we also tested a two factor model. This model fits significantly better than the one-factor model:  $\Delta\chi^2(1)=2762.61$ ,  $p<.001$ . However, with large sample sizes this test is almost always significant, even when differences between models are negligible. Most importantly, the two factors correlated highly (.70). Although distinct facets of activism were supported statistically, their high factor correlation raised concerns about their discriminant validity. For the sake of parsimony and ease of presentation, we decided to treat political activism as a single general factor.<sup>1</sup>

Socio-demographic variables. We coded the socio-demographic variables as follows:

Gender (0=males, 1=females), age (in years), education (0=incomplete primary education;

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<sup>1</sup> Although we assumed a reflective model, one might argue that the items of political activism are better conceived as formative indicators (Bollen & Lennox 1991). The use of a single combined index is compatible with both conceptualizations of political activism.

1=primary or first stage of basic; 2=lower secondary or second stage of basic; 3=upper secondary; 4=post-secondary, non-tertiary; 5=first stage of tertiary; 6=second stage of tertiary), and perceived adequacy of household income (1=finding it very difficult on present income, 2=finding it difficult on present income, 3= coping on present income, 4=living comfortably on present income).

Level of democratization of the country. To measure democratization, we used the 2006 Democracy Index published by the Economist Intelligence Unit (Kekic, 2007). The index includes 60 indicators grouped into five categories: electoral process and pluralism (i.e., free and fair competitive elections), functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties (i.e., protecting basic human rights). We downloaded the scores from [http://www.economist.com/media/pdf/DEMOCRACY\\_INDEX\\_2007\\_v3.pdf](http://www.economist.com/media/pdf/DEMOCRACY_INDEX_2007_v3.pdf)

### **Analyses**

We computed Pearson correlations to assess associations of political activism with the four higher-order values and socio-demographic variables. For the values, we centred each persons' responses on his/her own mean rating of the 21 items to correct for individual differences in scale use (Schwartz, 2006).

We aggregated results across countries by computing sample-weighted mean correlations. To assess the similarity of correlations across countries, we performed a test of heterogeneity (Hunter & Schmidt, 1990, 2000). This statistic is approximately distributed as chi-square with  $k-1$  degrees of freedom (where  $k$  is number of samples). A significant test indicates substantial differences across countries in the sample-weighted mean correlations, suggesting the presence of moderators that cause heterogeneity.

To disentangle the variance accounted for by values and demographics we used hierarchical linear regression, including the demographic variables and the four (uncentred) higher-order values in separate blocks. This analysis allowed us to assess the relative

predictive power of the values and demographic variables and to ask whether each accounted for significant additional variance in political activism after the other was taken into account.

We assessed the moderating role of democratization by using a multilevel model with restricted maximum likelihood (REML) estimators, containing both fixed and random effects (Raudenbush, 1988). Specifically, we used a random slopes model in which the Democracy Index at level-2 accounted for variability in the slopes of the basic values and demographic variables at level-1. We first estimated a random slopes model that included the four higher-order values and the demographic variables as level-1 predictors. This model enabled us to assess whether the slopes of the values varied significantly across countries, controlling for gender, age, education, and income. In order to explain the expected variability, we included the level-2 Democracy Index and its cross-level interactions with the level-1 predictor variables.<sup>2</sup> We centred the level-1 variables around their group (country) means (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998).

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

Means of political activism (i.e., number of politically relevant acts performed) varied from .49 (Hungary) to 2.00 (Norway). Some degree of non-normality was present in the data: Average skewness was 1.88 (SD=0.95) and kurtosis was 5.06 (SD=6.38). Although substantial deviation from normality was detected in several countries, correlation and regression analyses are relatively robust to the violation of normality assumption, especially in large samples (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

### Relations of political activism with basic personal values and demographic variables

The top panel of Table 1 presents the sample-weighted mean correlations of political activism with basic personal values. As hypothesized, activism correlated significantly with

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the small number of cases at the group level, we performed these analyses separately for each value, controlling for the effect of the demographic variables.

openness to change ( $r_w = .18, p < .01$ ), self-transcendence ( $r_w = .12, p < .01$ ), and conservation ( $r_w = -.22, p < .01$ ), but not self-enhancement ( $r_w = .00, ns$ ). The percentage of variance jointly accounted for by the four values was 8.7%. After taking the demographic variables into account (see below), basic values accounted for an additional 5.3% of variance. As expected, the chi-square tests for heterogeneity indicated that the observed correlations varied significantly across countries.

We therefore performed separate analyses for each sample to explore the generalizability of findings.<sup>3</sup> Openness to change values correlated positively and significantly in all countries (coefficients ranged from .07 to .28 across countries). Self-transcendence values correlated positively in 19 of 20 countries and significantly in 15 of 20 (coefficients from -.04 to .23). Conservation values correlated negatively and significantly in all countries (coefficients from -.33 to -.06). Self-enhancement values correlated positively with political activism in 4 countries, negatively in 2 countries, and not at all in 14 countries (coefficients from -.12 to .10). Overall, at least two value dimensions correlated with political activism in each country. Values explained most variance in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and U.K. (9% or more of accounted variance), and least variance in Greece, Hungary, Portugal, and Slovenia (4% or less).

The bottom panel of Table 1 reports the correlations with the demographics. Activism correlated significantly with education ( $r_w = .28, p < .01$ ) and perceived adequacy of household income ( $r_w = .10, p < .01$ ). The correlation with age was negative and weak ( $r_w = -.09, p < .01$ ). Supplementary regression analyses revealed the expected curvilinear (i.e., quadratic) relationship ( $\beta = -.12, p < .01$ ). Consistent with previous research, political activity was lower among younger and older people than among middle-aged adults (Sears et al., 2003). Gender showed a negligible but significant negative correlation ( $r_w = -.03, p < .01$ ). The demographic

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<sup>3</sup> The complete correlation matrix is available in the online Appendix.



variables jointly explained 7.0% of the variance in political activism. They explained an additional 4.0% of the variance after taking the contribution of values into account.

The chi-square tests for heterogeneity were significant for all the demographic variables. In the analyses performed on separate samples, education correlated positively and significantly in all countries (coefficients ranged from .18 to .35). Correlations with income were positive in 18 of 19 countries and significant in 16 of 19 (coefficients from .00 to .19).<sup>4</sup> Correlations with age were negative in 19 of 20 countries and significant in 15 of 20 (coefficients from -.23 to .00). The quadratic relationship with age was significant in all countries (standardized beta coefficients from -.19 to -.05). Males engaged in politics more than females in 8 of 20 countries, less in 1 country (Finland) and there was no gender difference in 11 countries (coefficients from -.10 to .08). The total variance that demographics explained ranged from 3% (Hungary) to 13% (France).

Explaining cross-national differences in the impact of values: A multilevel approach

The fact that the magnitude of the correlations of basic personal values with political activism varied considerably across countries raises the question of potential moderators. We first examined a multilevel model containing only random effects to establish whether the slopes of the values varied significantly. As expected, based on the correlations, the slopes indicated that people were more politically active the more importance they attributed to self-transcendence ( $b = .13, p < .01$ ) and openness to change ( $b = .05, p < .01$ ) values, and the less importance they attributed to conservation values ( $b = -.08, p < .01$ ). Moreover, political activism was higher among men than women ( $b = -.05, p < .01$ ) and increased linearly with age ( $b = .05, p < .01$ ), education ( $b = .23, p < .01$ ), and income ( $b = .03, p < .01$ ). The quadratic component of age was also significant ( $b = -.08, p < .01$ ), replicating results of correlational analysis. Most importantly, this model revealed that the slopes of values varied

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<sup>4</sup> Data for perceived adequacy of household income were not available for France.

significantly (at least  $p < .05$ ) across countries after controlling for the effects of gender, age, education, and income. This points to the presence of country-level moderators.

We next added the Democracy Index as a level-2 predictor in the multi-level regression. It showed a significant main effect: The higher the level of democratization, the higher the rate of political activism (unstandardized beta coefficient =  $.35$ ,  $p < .01$ ). We then added the cross-level interactions of the Democracy Index with personal values. The Index significantly moderated the effect of the three basic values that predicted political activism. Each one had a stronger effect in more than in less democratic countries: conservation ( $b = -.02$ ,  $p < .05$ ), self-transcendence ( $b = .05$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and openness to change ( $b = .03$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Figure 2 displays the unstandardized simple slopes, using the approach devised by Preacher, Curran and Bauer (2006). The variability in the slopes of the three values was no longer significant once we added the cross-level interactions to the regression. Thus, country level of democratization accounted for the variability across countries in the prediction of political activism by values. The cross-level interaction between self-enhancement values and democratization, like the self-enhancement main effect, was not significant ( $b = .01$ , ns).

Finally, we added the cross-level interactions of the Democracy Index with the demographic variables. The interactions were in the expected direction both for gender ( $b = .04$ , ns) and income ( $b = -.02$ , ns), but not significant. The interactions with age ( $b = .00$ , ns) and education ( $b = .01$ , ns) were not significant.

## **Discussion**

Study 1 indicates that basic personal values correlate significantly with political activism. Self-transcendence and openness to change values were conducive to higher levels of political activism, whereas conservation values inhibited political activism. Contrary to our expectations, self-enhancement values were unrelated with political activism. We will discuss this outcome below in the conclusions linking it to the distinction between conventional and unconventional activism.

As expected, values had a unique effect on activism, over and above the contributions of gender, age, education, and income. However, values contributed only slightly more than the demographics to the variance accounted for in political activism. This suggests that socio-structural cleavages still influence political engagement, as predicted by the classic resource-based explanatory model of political participation (Verba & Nie, 1972).

Of particular interest, were the substantial cross-national differences in the strength of relations between values and activism. As expected, rates of political activism were higher in more democratic countries. Importantly, basic values related more strongly to political activism in countries higher on the Democracy Index. Associations of values with activism were weak or even non-significant in countries low in democracy. Less democratic political systems restrict citizens' freedom to express their views, thereby limiting the expression of personal values in political engagement. The variation in value associations across countries highlights the importance of studying a wider range of countries which vary even more on democratization.

## **STUDY 2**

Study 2 aimed to replicate the results of Study 1 in several of the ESS countries and to extend the analyses to other countries and continents. We collected data in six countries included in Study 1 (Germany, Greece, Finland, Israel, Poland, and the United Kingdom) and, in addition, in Italy, Ukraine, and Slovakia (two ex-communist countries), Turkey (a developing society at the crossroads of Europe and Asia), and four non-European countries from three continents, Brazil and Chile (South America), Australia (Oceania), and the United States (North America).

Study 2 goes beyond Study 1 in using a more fine-grained conceptualization of values that distinguishes 15 types of values. Because values form a circular motivational continuum, their relations with external variables should exhibit a sinusoid pattern (Schwartz, 1992). This enables us to predict correlations between the full set of values and activism, correlations that

range from zero to both significantly positive and significantly negative. Next, we spell out our more specific hypotheses.

Autonomy of thought, a subtype of self-direction, may be especially relevant to engaging in politics. It emphasizes generating and expressing one's own independent ideas and opinions. As such, it may encourage people to form and express their own political views and preferences. Augemberg (2008) found that Americans who gave high priority to reliance on and gratification from their independent capacity to make decisions were more engaged in the political domain. We hypothesize that autonomy of thought relates most strongly to political activism. The second subtype of self-direction, autonomy of action, may relate more weakly to political activism because it lacks an ideological component. It emphasizes unconstrained freedom of action to pursue personal desires.

The circular motivational structure of values implies that universalism and stimulation, the values adjacent to self-direction, should also correlate positively with political activism. Universalism values promote social justice and preserving the environment, common goals of political activism. We therefore hypothesize that both subtypes of universalism (i.e., nature and concern) relate positively to political activism. Finally, as anticipated in Study 1 and reported by Schwartz (2007), we hypothesize that stimulation values relate positively to political activism because activism can be exciting and even risky. This would apply, in particular, to unconventional forms of activism like joining protests.

The logic of the motivational circle suggests that the associations of the other values with political activism should be progressively less positive moving around the circular structure of values in either direction from autonomy of thought. We hypothesize that conformity and security values correlate most negatively with activism. Conformity values should inhibit activism because they emphasize restraint of one's impulses and compliance with social expectations. Both subtypes of security should inhibit activism because they emphasize

maintaining a safe personal and societal environment, one free of turbulence and of actions that might upset or threaten the existing order.

## **Method**

### **Participants and procedures**

Self-report questionnaires were administered in 14 countries: Australia, Brazil, Chile, Germany, Greece, Finland, Israel, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and the United States. Data come from an ongoing cross-national project that is investigating the role of values in shaping political attitudes and choices. Except in Australia and Germany, participants were recruited by university students and completed the questionnaire individually. Responses were given in writing in 11 countries, by telephone interview in Germany, and online in Australia and Finland. The Australian sample came from a database of community participants administered through a university. Convenience samples were obtained in all countries but Germany (representative national sample) and Turkey (representative sample of the Istanbul province). Table 2 describes the characteristics of the samples.

### **Measures**

Personal values. We measured personal values with the PVQ-40 (Schwartz, 2006). Native language versions of the instrument were developed using rigorous back-translation procedures. We performed preliminary analyses to assess the measurement invariance of the PVQ-40 across countries, using MGCFA with maximum likelihood estimation. Although more stringent levels of invariance can be considered, we focused on metric invariance because it allows one to compare the relations between the latent factors and other constructs across groups (Davidov, Schmidt & Schwartz, 2008). Due to the large number of items, we assigned each of the 15 values to its higher-order category and estimated separate models for each of the four higher-order values. Goodness of fit statistics indicated an adequate fit of the configural model for each higher-order value and

the narrower values grouped into it: self-enhancement,  $\chi^2(154)=1194.6$ , CFI=.947, RMSEA=.029, SRMR=.066; self-transcendence,  $\chi^2(487)=1884.3$ , CFI=.935, RMSEA=.019, SRMR=.067; openness to change,  $\chi^2(406)=1840.4$ , CFI=.935, RMSEA=.021, SRMR=.051; conservation,  $\chi^2(770)=2658.7$ , CFI=.915, RMSEA=.017, SRMR=.060.

We assessed the reliability of the 15 values with the Index of Quality (Saris & Gallhofer, 2007). Indices were higher than .60 for each of the 15 values in all countries, ranging from an average of .65 (SD=.08) for Humility to .79 (SD=.04) for Hedonism.

We next tested models positing metric invariance. Metric invariance was fully supported for the set of openness to change values. Partial metric invariance was established for the sets of self-enhancement, conservation, and self-transcendence values (at least two indicators per factor were invariant across countries). Variances of the latent factors were also substantially equivalent across countries.<sup>5</sup> We therefore concluded that correlations using the 15 values measured by the PVQ-40 can be compared meaningfully across countries.

Political activism. We performed a confirmatory factor analysis on responses to engaging in the following nine behaviours to measure political activism during the past 12 months: ‘contacted a politician, government or local government official’, ‘worked in a political party or action group’, ‘worked in another organisation or association’, ‘was a member of a political party’, ‘took part in a lawful public demonstration’, ‘signed a petition’, wore or displayed a campaign badge/sticker, and ‘boycotted certain products’. A one-factor solution fit the empirical data:  $\chi^2(20)=996.69$ ,  $p<.001$ , CFI=.90, RMSEA=.07, with factor loadings all  $>.45$ . As in Study 1, the fit of a two-factor model was better,  $\Delta\chi^2(1)=406.22$ ,  $p<.001$ , but the two factors were highly correlated (.64). Because this suggests only weak discriminant validity of the two factors, we treated political activism as a single variable, as in Study 1.

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<sup>5</sup> Details available from the authors.

Socio-demographic variables. We included the following demographic variables: Gender (0=male, 1=female), age, years of education, and perceived household income (1=very much below average, 2=below average, 3=a little below average, 4=about average, 5=a little above average, 6=above average, 7=very much above average).

## **Analyses**

We performed correlational analyses identical to those in Study 1 to examine relations of political activism to the four higher-order values and the demographic variables. We also computed Pearson correlations with the 15 values. Finally, we compared the proportion of variance in political activism explained by: (a) the four higher-order values, (b) the 15 values, and (c) the four socio-demographic variables. We did not assess moderation effects of level of democratization because this is appropriate only with representative samples.

## **Results**

### Descriptive statistics

The distributional properties of the political activism index were similar to those in Study 1. On average, the number of politically relevant acts performed in the last year varied from .62 (Poland) to 2.06 (Germany). The average skewness and kurtosis across countries were, respectively, 1.46 (SD = 0.47) and 2.78 (SD = 2.02).

### Relations of political activism with basic personal values and demographic variables

The top panel of Table 3 presents the sample-weighted mean correlations of the four higher-order values. As in Study 1, political activism related significantly to openness to change ( $r_w = .16, p < .01$ ), self-transcendence ( $r_w = .13, p < .01$ ), and conservation ( $r_w = -.19, p < .01$ ). The percentage of variance jointly accounted for by the four higher-order values was 10.0%. Taking the contribution of the demographic variables into account, basic values accounted for an additional 8.8% of the variance.

The test of heterogeneity was significant for all values. In the analyses we performed on the separate samples, openness to change correlated positively in all countries and

significantly in 12 of 14 (coefficients ranged from .03 to .26 across countries), self-transcendence values correlated positively in 13 of 14 countries, and significantly in 8 (coefficients ranged from -.08 to .36), conservation values correlated negatively and significantly in 13 of 14 countries (coefficients ranged from -.40 to .00). Self-enhancement values were uncorrelated in 9 of 14 countries, correlated positively in 2, and negatively in 3 (coefficients ranged from -.17 to .19). The proportion of variance in political activism accounted for by the four values ranged from .01 (Poland, Slovakia) to .21 (Finland).

The middle panel of Table 3 presents the correlations with the 15 values. As expected, self-direction—thought ( $r_w = .16, p < .01$ ) had the highest positive association with political activism. It correlated positively in all countries, and significantly in 12 of 14. Self-direction—action ( $r_w = .06, p < .01$ ) correlated positively in 11 of 14 countries, and significantly in 5. Universalism—concern ( $r_w = .12, p < .01$ ) correlated positively in 12 of 14 countries, and significantly in 8. Universalism—nature ( $r_w = .07, p < .01$ ) correlated positively in 12 of 14 countries, and significantly in 5. Stimulation ( $r_w = .11, p < .01$ ) correlated positively in 13 of 14 countries, and significantly in 10.

Correlations with the other values decreased monotonically in both directions around the motivational circle, showing progressively less consistent associations across countries. Benevolence ( $r_w = .08, p < .01$ ) correlated positively in 12 of 14 countries, and significantly in 7.

The pattern for the self-enhancement values was the least consistent across countries. Power values ( $r_w = .02, ns$ ) correlated positively in 3 of 14 countries, and not significantly in 11. Achievement—success ( $r_w = -.01, ns$ ) correlated positively in 2 countries, negatively in 2, and not at all in 10 countries. Achievement—ambition ( $r_w = -.02, ns$ ) correlated positively in 2 countries, negatively in 4, and not at all in 8 countries. As expected, hedonism ( $r_w = .00, ns$ ) showed a null or weak negative relation in most countries. Humility ( $r_w = -.08, p < .01$ )



correlated negatively in 13 of 14 countries, significantly in 4. Tradition ( $r_w = -.09$ ,  $p < .01$ ) correlated negatively in 12 of 14 countries, significantly in 8.

Conformity and security values showed the highest negative correlations: Conformity ( $r_w = -.17$ ,  $p < .01$ ) correlated negatively in all countries, and significantly in 12 of 14. Personal security ( $r_w = -.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ) correlated negatively in all countries, and significantly in 13 of 14. National security ( $r_w = -.08$ ,  $p < .01$ ) correlated negatively in 13 of 14 countries, and significantly in 7. The association with national security reversed in the United States, where it was positive and significant ( $r = .09$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The percentage of variance in political activism jointly accounted for by the 15 values was 11.3% . The percentage in the single countries ranged from 1% in Poland to 25% in Finland.

The bottom panel of Table 3 reports the correlations of the demographic variables. Taken together, the observed pattern replicated most findings of Study 1. However, correlations in this study were slightly weaker and less consistent across countries. The percentage of variance in political activism accounted for by the demographic variables was 3.8%, ranging from 0% in Slovakia to 11% in the United States. After the contribution of the demographic variables was taken into account, basic values accounted for an additional 2.1% of variance. The weaker effects of demographic variables in Study 2 versus Study 1 were probably due to the fact that their variance was smaller in the convenience samples of Study 2 than in the representative samples of Study 1.

## **Discussion**

Findings from Study 2 provide substantial support for the hypotheses of Study 1 and extend them to additional European and non-European countries. This further supports the argument that values that emphasize independence of thought, readiness for new experience, and concern for the welfare of others drive political activism, whereas values that emphasize self-restriction, order, and resistance to change discourage people from engaging actively in politics. In addition, by distinguishing between more narrowly defined values, Study 2

provides a more nuanced understanding of links between values and political activism. It reveals how the whole motivational system, captured by the value circle, relates systematically to political activism.

The trade-off between giving high priority to autonomy of thought (self-direction—thought values) versus restraining the self and complying with norms and social expectations (conformity values) exhibited the strongest associations with political activism. This is a trade-off between values that are opposed in the motivational circle. The trade-off between giving high priority to promoting the welfare of all others and of nature (universalism values) and avoiding danger and maintaining the safety of self and dear ones (personal security values) was also highly associated with political activism. Universalism is adjacent to self-direction in the motivational circle of values and security is adjacent to conformity. Self-direction and universalism are linked respectively to freedom and equality (Schwartz, Caprara & Vecchione, 2010), two key building blocks of democracy (Rokeach, 1979). Consequently, these two closely related trade-offs appear to provide the main motivational underpinnings for political activism.

### **General discussion**

Political activism is a central issue in theories of democracy and citizenship. A substantial literature has sought to uncover antecedents of political activism. The current research contributes to this literature by examining the contribution of basic personal values to promoting or inhibiting political activism. We investigated effects of values in two studies that involved 28 countries from Europe, North America, Oceania, and South America.

Findings from both studies showed that basic values significantly affect political activism. The overall pattern of correlations observed across countries exhibited the integrated structure hypothesized on the basis of the circular motivational structure of the value system. In a few cases, however, findings deviated from expectations. This suggests that cultural factors may influence the link between personal values and political activism. In contrast to its

negative correlation elsewhere, for example, national security related positively to political activism in the United States. This may reflect a social and political atmosphere in the United States in recent years that has placed national security at the centre of political discourse in response to fear of terrorist attacks.

As noted, the confirmatory factor analyses suggested that political activism may be split into conventional (e.g. donating money to parties and contacting political offices) and unconventional (e.g. petitions, protests, and demonstrations) subtypes (e.g., Kaase & Newton, 1995). We chose to treat political activism as a unidimensional construct for simplicity. However, to check what doing so might obscure, we replicated the analyses of the two studies while distinguishing these two forms of activism. Most results were similar, but there were some differences. Relations with values were generally stronger for unconventional than for conventional activism. This suggests that motivational factors have a greater influence on engagement in non-institutionalized and extra-parliamentary forms of political action. Because conventional political activities are more normative, they are probably more influenced by social expectations than unconventional activities are and less influenced by personal decisions based on individual differences.

The two types of activism exhibited different relations with power and tradition values. As expected, power values tended to correlate negatively with unconventional activism, but were slightly positively correlated with conventional activism. Using a single index that included both conventional and unconventional political activism probably led to the null finding for self-enhancement values in both studies.

The negative correlation with unconventional activism may reflect the fact that such activism is usually intended to serve collective interests (e.g., environmental and consumer activism) or the interests of minority and disadvantaged groups (e.g. women, immigrants). Engaging in such activities may entail sacrificing personal resources and interests for the sake of others, outcomes opposed by power values. The positive correlation of power values with

conventional activism was unexpected. It may reflect the fact that this type of activism often takes the form of participation in organizations such as political parties, trade unions, and business organizations that produce and distribute resources (Van Tatenhove & Leroy, 2003). In such organizations, activism may serve as a path to power. However, most of the correlations were weak. Stronger associations might be found by including indicators of activism that are compatible with the goal of pursuing personal status and prestige, such as applying for influential positions within political organizations.

Tradition values were unrelated to conventional activism, but correlated negatively with unconventional activism in most countries. These values call for accepting and maintaining the beliefs, practices, ideas, and modes of behaviour promulgated by religious and other authoritative institutions. Unconventional political activism is often directed against prevailing norms and practices, and aims to change them by using methods other than those available when following institutionalized norms. This would account for the negative correlation we found.

Overall, the explanatory power of values was not particularly great. The variance accounted for by the whole set of values ranged from 1 to 25% across the two studies. This suggests that many additional variables influence political activism. In assessing the robustness of the effect, however, one should consider that values predicted activism at least as well as socio-demographic variables traditionally seen as major determinants of citizens' engagement in politics (Verba & Nye, 1972). These variables accounted for between 0 and 13% of the variance in political activism. Among them, education was the most important predictor across countries. This is consistent with assertions in the literature that people with higher education have more personal resources to draw upon for political involvement, are more informed, and more inclined to participate actively in their communities (e.g., Milligan et al., 2004). Income and age were also related to political activism: Activism was greater among wealthier people, and middle-aged people reported higher levels of activism than the

young or elderly. Given the cross-sectional nature of our data, however, we are not able to disentangle effects of age due to cohort versus life-cycle. Finally, males engaged more in political activities than females, although gender differences were negligible in most samples.

Findings from this research have implications for the processes that lead to policy preferences and decisions. In our account, political activism attracts people who give high priority to certain values and low priority to certain others. Prior research has demonstrated that the same four values that relate most strongly to activism (universalism, self-direction, conformity and security) also shape policy preferences (e.g., Davidov et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2010; Vecchione, Caprara, Schoen, González Castro & Schwartz, 2012). If these personal values shape both policy preferences and political activity, they can affect which policies are likely to receive most attention.

Certain limitations of this research merit mention. The use of convenience samples in Study 2 precludes generalizing the results to the respective populations. Moreover, although we presented conceptual arguments to support a causal link from personal values to political activism and used causal terminology, our results cannot prove causality due to the correlational nature of the study. Values may influence decisions to be politically active, but involvement in political life may also influence personal values. Longitudinal studies are therefore needed to address possible reciprocal relations between values and political activism.

A further limitation is the use of self-report data that are subject to possible biases in self-presentation. This is relevant both for the political activities and values. However, research suggests that socially desirable responding in the basic value questionnaire is minimal and largely reflects true variance in value priorities rather than response bias (Schwartz, Verkasalo, Antonovsky & Sagiv, 1997). Finally, the approach used in both studies related values to an index that summed political behaviours that may have occurred at different times and in different contexts. This made it possible to capture the cross-

situationally stable aspect of value-behaviour relations, but not to identify value x situation interactions. The interaction between values and the country level of democracy in their effects on political activism makes clear the potential of value x situation interactions to shed light on the processes leading to activism.

A more complete understanding of political activism requires considering additional potential determinants such as political efficacy, trust in institutions, and satisfaction with democracy. These and other personal, socio-cultural, and institutional variables may have direct effects on political activism, may interact with basic values, or may even be mediated by values. Future comparative studies are needed to understand the conditions under which both broad and more specific values and the motivations they express influence political activism. Such studies might include contextual factors other than level of democratization that may constraints on or facilitators of expressing one's values in political activity.

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Table 1. Pearson correlations of political activism with values and demographic variables  
(Study 1).

	Correlation coefficients				Heterogeneity statistics		
	$r_w$	SE	z	95% CI	Range	$\chi^2$	p
<b>Basic values</b>							
Openness to Change	.18**	.01	18.31	.16, .19	.07, .28	73.93	<.001
Self-Enhancement	.00	.01	0.31	-.02, .02	-.12, .10	81.11	<.001
Conservation	-.22**	.01	-16.74	-.24, -.19	-.33, -.06	141.06	<.001
Self-Transcendence	.12**	.02	6.92	.08, .15	-.04, .23	223.11	<.001
<b>Demographics</b>							
Gender	-.03**	.01	-2.59	-.05, -.01	-.10, .08	86.42	<.001
Age <sup>a</sup>	-.09**	.01	-7.57	-.11, -.06	-.23, .00	97.61	<.001
Education	.28**	.01	28.48	.26, .30	.18, .35	83.30	<.001
Perceived income adequacy	.10**	.01	9.33	.08, .12	.00, .19	73.27	<.001

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ . <sup>a</sup> The unstandardized beta coefficient that reflects the quadratic component of age was -.12 on average.

Table 2. Description of the samples in Study 2.

Country	N	% Female	Mean age (SD)	Mean years of education (SD) <sup>a</sup>	Median household income
Australia	285	54%	36.1 (13.9)	16.6 (3.6)	3
Brazil	995	56%	34.1 (9.0)	19.1 (4.1)	2
Chile	415	50%	43.3 (13.4)	15.8 (4.2)	3
Finland	428	68%	40.1 (13.2)	16.2 (4.3)	4
Germany	1066	46%	53.7 (16.4)	14.6 (4.4)	4
Greece	374	48%	41.9 (12.0)	15.3 (3.5)	3
Israel	478	57%	38.6 (12.7)	15.6 (3.0)	4
Italy	557	56%	38.7 (13.9)	15.3 (3.7)	4
Poland	431	56%	35.1 (12.1)	15.1 (2.9)	3
Slovakia	485	51%	47.7 (14.6)	14.4 (3.3)	5
Turkey	512	46%	37.7 (13.2)	11.4 (3.3)	5
Ukraine	735	48%	41.1 (12.6)	14.0 (3.3)	4
United Kingdom	469	64%	36.7 (12.1)	14.2 (2.9)	2
United States	543	56%	32.6 (14.4)	14.0 (2.2)	4

<sup>a</sup> Includes compulsory years of schooling.

Table 3. Pearson correlations of political activism with values and demographic variables (Study 2).

	Correlation coefficients				Heterogeneity statistic		
	$r_w$	SE	z	95% CI	Range	$\chi^2$	p
Basic values							
Openness to Change	.16**	.02	8.52	.13, .20	.03, .26	48.8	<.001
Self-Enhancement	-.01	.02	-0.22	-.05, .04	-.17, .19	73.8	<.001
Conservation	-.19**	.03	7.32	-.24, -.14	-.40, .00	89.6	<.001
Self-Transcendence	.13**	.03	4.59	.07, .18	-.08, .36	99.2	<.001
Self-direction – thought	.16**	.02	8.18	.12, .20	.05, .30	53.4	<.001
Self-direction – action	.06**	.01	4.36	.03, .09	-.05, .13	24.6	<.05
Stimulation	.11**	.02	6.01	.08, .15	-.06, .21	44.8	<.001
Hedonism	.00	.01	0.17	-.03, .03	-.14, .09	25.1	<.05
Achievement – ambition	-.02	.02	-1.01	-.07, .02	-.22, .10	70.3	<.001
Achievement – success	-.01	.02	-0.41	-.05, .04	-.18, .17	64.6	<.001
Power	.02	.02	1.16	-.01, .06	-.09, .19	41.5	<.001
Security – national	-.08**	.02	-3.67	-.13, -.04	-.29, .09	67.7	<.001
Security – personal	-.15**	.02	-6.76	-.19, -.10	-.30, -.01	61.4	<.001
Conformity	-.17**	.02	-7.81	-.21, -.12	-.32, -.04	60.5	<.001
Tradition	-.09**	.02	-4.84	-.12, -.05	-.20, .06	41.5	<.001
Humility	-.08**	.01	-5.63	-.11, -.05	-.17, .00	24.8	<.05
Benevolence	.08**	.02	4.48	.05, .12	-.06, .18	42.1	<.001
Universalism – nature	.07**	.02	3.35	.03, .12	-.05, .29	61.8	<.001
Universalism – concern	.12**	.03	4.54	.07, .17	-.08, .28	92.9	<.001
Demographics							
Gender	-.03	.02	-1.31	-.08, .02	-.19, .10	76.7	<.001
Age <sup>a</sup>	.00	.03	0.15	-.06, .06	-.17, .26	118.9	<.001
Education	.14**	.02	7.95	.10, .17	.01, .24	38.5	<.001
Perceived income adequacy	-.06**	.02	-2.75	-.11, -.02	-.21, .09	65.4	<.001

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .<sup>a</sup> The unstandardized beta coefficient that reflects the quadratic component of age was  $-.04$  on average.

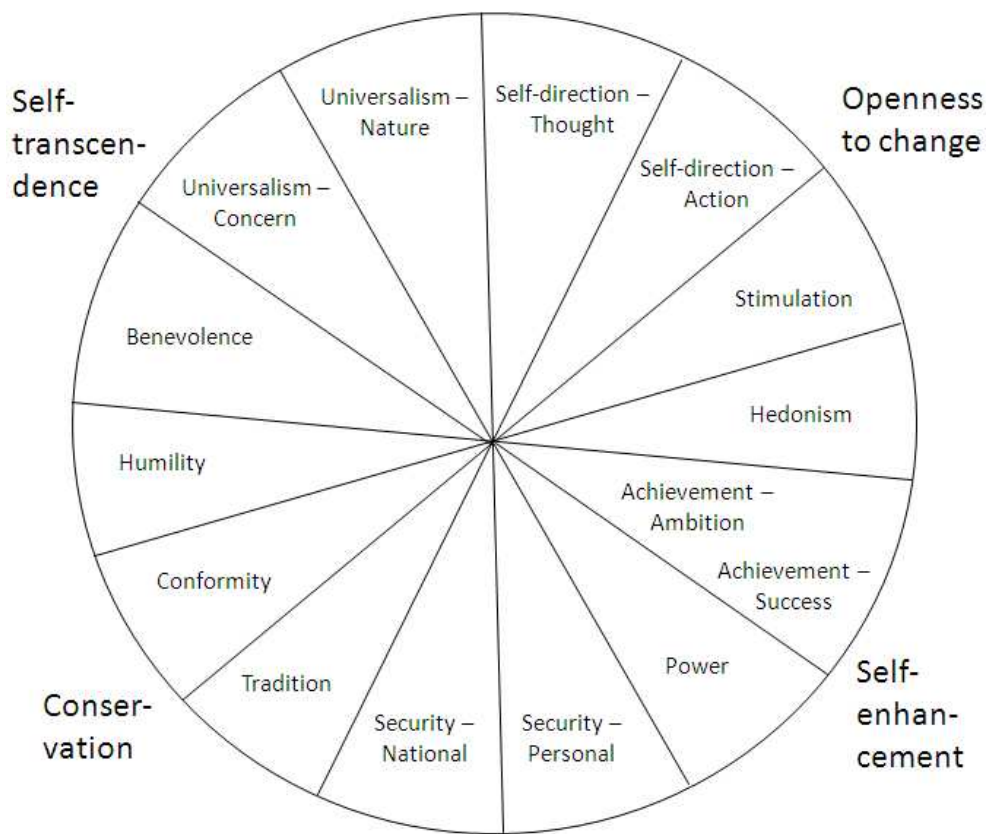


Figure 1. The motivational continuum of 15 basic personal values (Cieciuch & Schwartz, 2012).



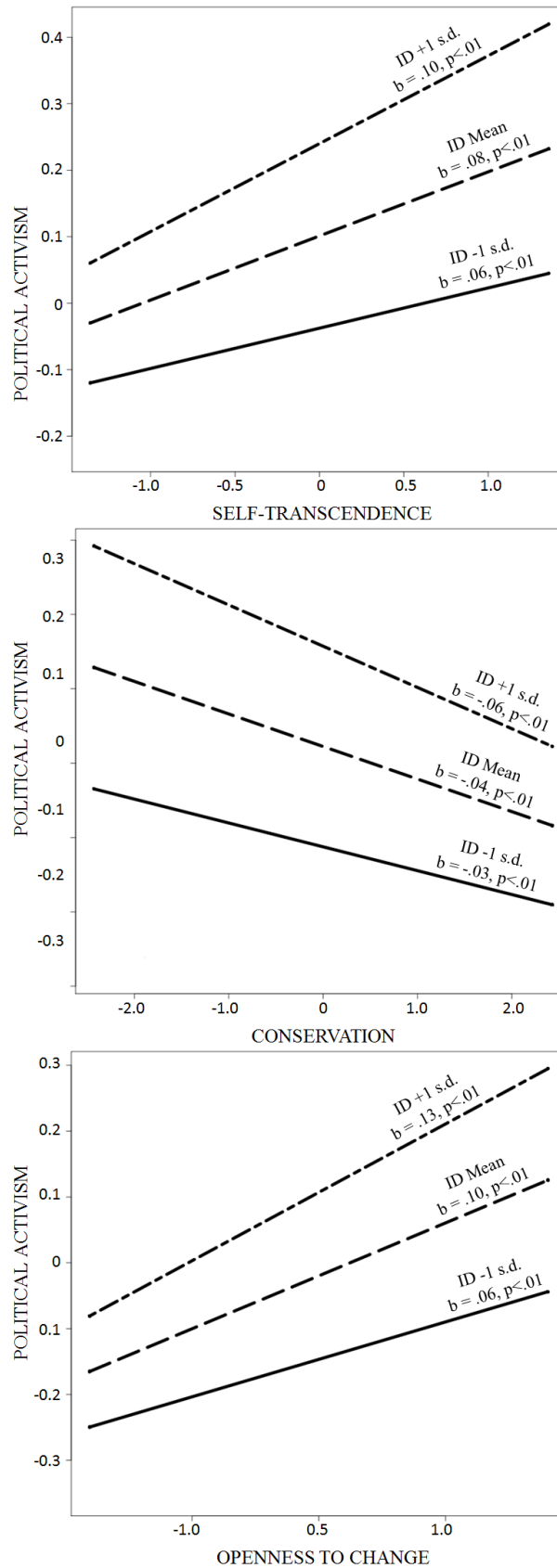


Figure 2. Unstandardized simple slopes from regressions of political activism on the higher order values, at three levels of democratization (ID = Index of Democracy).