

- H1a: The scale to measure process preferences consists of three correlated dimensions: compromise-orientation, competition, and efficiency.
- H1b: The scale to measure process perceptions consists of three correlated dimensions: compromise-orientation, competition, and efficiency.
- H1c: The process preferences scale and the process perceptions scale are independent constructs.

Moreover, I assume that the measurement of process preferences is culturally invariant.⁴⁴ Cultural invariance refers to the aspect that a construct has the same meaning in different cultures. Measurement invariance is a precondition for interpreting differences in scores in different cultures (cf. Bensaou, Coyne, & Venkatraman, 1999; Little, 1997). The metric invariance of the process preference scales was tested with samples from two different cultures: Switzerland as a consensus democracy and Germany as a rather competitive democracy. Cultural invariance of the scale is given if it has the same measurement structure for citizens from Germany as it has for Swiss citizens.

- H2: The process preference scale is culturally invariant.

In addition, the invariance of the process preferences scale as regards the objects of assessment is assumed. This study distinguishes between process preferences concerning the executive political branch (i.e. the Swiss government) and the legislative branch (i.e. the Swiss parliament, which consists of National Council and Council of States). Invariance is given if the scale measures citizens' preferences as regards decision-making processes within the executive branch in the same manner as it measures citizens' preferences as regards decision-making processes within the legislative branch. This study is interested in the measurement invariance as a precondition for being able to meaningfully interpret differences in score.

- H3: The process preference scale shows invariance as regards the objects of assessment.

5.2. Method

Section 5.2.1 describes the variables and operationalization. The data collection procedure is outlined in Section 5.2.2. Section 5.2.3 discusses the methods of data analysis.

44 Whereas the measurement of policy preferences has received some scholarly attention, the measurement of process preferences has not (John R. Hibbing & Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, 2001a, p. 147). This study aims to make a methodological contribution to the development of a standardized scale to measure process preferences. Hence, the cultural invariance as well as the invariance regarding different objects of assessment were tested for the process preferences scale.

5.2.1. Variables and Operationalization

In this section, the operationalization of the variables is described (see Appendix 10.2 for precise item wordings; the survey questionnaires (in German language) can be requested from the author). The scales were designed as a multidimensional research instrument to understand the specific preferences that citizens hold concerning how political decisions should be made and the perceptions of how political decisions are actually made. Based on the literature, indicators of political efficiency, consensus-orientation and competition discussed are derived. In addition, special care was taken to ensure that the items developed to measure citizens' process preferences and perceptions are linked to patterns in media information on political decision-making procedures (see Chapter 4). Weatherford (1992) used indicators from the National Election Studies to measure the fairness of political processes. The items refer to the role of major interests, blame for corruption, fair courts, good politicians, trust in the government to do what is right, and the feeling of being well represented in the political system. Fairness in that sense is a rather broad concept that encompasses the role of lobbyists as well as issues of representativeness. The items used in this study, in contrast, were adapted from relational justice scale items that are used, for instance, by Tyler, Degoe, & Smith (1996) and Tyler & Rasinski (1991). The according items refer to the role of politeness and fairness and the equal consideration of different issue positions. The dimension consensus-orientation in this study, hence, encompasses six indicators that relate to the respectfulness and fairness of political behavior, whether political parties concede a point to the other side, the consideration of diverging interest, the avoidance of losers in a political process, and the role of political compromises.

To our knowledge, no survey items refer to the importance of competitive elements in decision-making processes. The items used in this study build on statements in an article by Kaase & Newton (1995). The dimension competition of political processes contains six items that relate to the decisiveness of political actors, the role of political quarrels and power struggles, the insistence on political opinions, the ability of political parties to put their plans through, and the possibility of hierarchical orders.

Using survey data from the American National Election Surveys, Weatherford (1992) found that efficiency can be measured by three indicators: Citizens' perception of the way political actors make use of financial resources (e.g. wasting taxes), the extent to which they perceive politicians as incompetent or crooked, and the extent to which respondent perceive that the people running the government are smart and know what they are doing. Efficiency in that sense encompasses both aspects of how resources are handled as well as aspects of political competence. The items used in this study focus on the measurement of efficiency in terms of time. The efficiency dimension of political processes is measured with five variables that refer to fast and efficient decision-making processes, simple and short processes, the avoidance of delays in decision-making, and the role of clear instructions.

Altogether, a set of 17 preference statements was developed. Because the literature provides evidence for the usefulness of rating scales as an alternative to ranking scales for the measurement of values (Alwin & Krosnick, 1985), a 7-point scale response format assessed how relevant the different aspects of political decision-making are for the individual respondent. When responding to the scale, individuals were asked the following questions: ‘Citizens hold different preferences regarding how political decisions should be made. Please answer according to the following scale how important you consider the various preferences. The scale ranges from 1 (not important at all) to 7 (very important)’. Preferences regarding the consensus-orientation of political processes were for instance measured with the question ‘How important is it for you, that political parties sometimes concede a point to the other side?’ Preferences regarding the efficiency of political processes were for example measured with the question ‘How important is it for you that political decision-making processes are simple and short?’ The items used to measure process preferences are presented in Table 5.2.

The measurement of process perceptions was developed by adapting the process preferences items. All items were measured on a 7-point scale and had the following stem: ‘Now we would like to know how, in your opinion, political decisions are actually made in Switzerland. Please answer according to the following scale and indicate to what extent the following statements on political decision-making processes in Switzerland, in your opinion, apply or not apply. The scale ranges from 1 (does not apply at all) to 7 (fully applies).’ Perceived consensus-orientation of political processes was for instance measured with the statement ‘Political parties sometimes concede a point to the other side.’ Perceived efficiency-orientation was for example measured with the statement ‘Political decision-making processes are time-consuming.’ The items used to measure process perceptions are presented in Table 5.3.

In order to test the cultural invariance of the process preferences scale (see Section 5.3.2), surveys with Swiss and German students were conducted. In these pilot studies, a Likert response format was used to measure process preferences.⁴⁵ The following question was asked: ‘Please answer according to the following scale, to what extent you agree with the following statements. The scale ranges from 1 (fully agree) to 7 (do not agree at all).’ Process perceptions were measured by asking: ‘How are political decisions actually made in Switzerland/Germany? Please answer according to the following scale and indicate to what extent the following statements on political decision-making processes in Switzerland, in your opinion, apply or not apply. The scale ranges from 1 (does not apply at all) to 7 (fully applies).’ The data from this comparative survey do not encompass all nine scales items. Therefore I am able to test the cultural invariance on a restricted data set only. Missing variables are the ones that refer to the question whether political parties should concede a point to

45 The Likert response format appeared to be somewhat problematical, because the items would not have been accepted as “own” statements. Therefore, process preferences in the final study were measured by asking how important a variety of process aspects are for the respondents.

the other side, one political party is able to put their plans through, and delays in political processes are avoided. Thus, for each of the three dimensions the data set contains two variables (shown in Table 5.5). The wording of items in this study is slightly different from the variables in the first study. The core messages are the same, however.

In order to test the discriminant validity of the process preferences scale as regards different objects of assessment, data from the another pilot survey with 530 Swiss citizens was used. Process preferences concerning decision-making processes in the Swiss government (“Bundesrat”) and the Swiss parliament – which consists of National Council (“Nationalrat”) and Council of States (“Ständerat”) – were distinguished. A 7-point scale response format assessed how relevant the different aspects of political decision-making are for the individual respondent. When responding to the scale, individuals were asked the following questions: ‘Citizens hold different preferences regarding how political decisions in the parliament should be made. Please answer according to the following scale how important you consider the various preferences. The scale ranges from 1 (not important at all) to 7 (very important)’, ‘Citizens hold different preferences regarding how political decisions in the government should be made. Please answer according to the following scale how important you consider the various preferences. The scale ranges from 1 (not important at all) to 7 (very important)’. Preferences regarding the consensus-orientation of political processes were for instance measured with the question ‘How important is it for you, that politicians in the parliament sometimes concede a point to the other side?’ / ‘How important is it for you that politicians in government sometimes concede a point to the other side?’ Preferences regarding the efficiency of political processes were for example measured with the question ‘How important is it for you that political decision-making processes in the parliament are simple and short?’ / ‘How important is it for you that political decision-making processes in the government are simple and short?’ The items used to measure process preferences are presented in footnote 56.

5.2.2. Participants and Procedures

A first pretest of the process preferences and perceptions items was done with five persons.⁴⁶ The persons were informed about the purpose of pretesting the questionnaire. The test included a post-interview probing with a focus on comprehension. Pretests are a relevant step in developing the final questionnaires (Probst, 1998). They encompass the careful analysis of unclear formulations, redundancies, and questions that result in many “don’t know” answers. Moreover, the variances of items might give hints on whether the scales are appropriate. In addition, pretests

46 The persons were doctoral students at the University of Zurich and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich.