Article

The Structure of Moral Culture and the Effect of Social Capital in South Korea

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This article seeks to categorize value classes in South Korea based on Schwartz's human values and examine the influence of social capital. To achieve this, we employed latent class analysis as a typological approach. The analysis resulted in identifying four distinct value classes in South Korea. Despite South Korea's economic structure paralleling that of Western European countries, the composition of value classes in South Korea resembles that of countries where Eastern and Western cultures coexist. This finding suggests that culture plays a more significant role than economic structure in shaping values. Furthermore, our results indicate a significant influence of social trust on value-neutral orientation, while social support networks play a fundamental role in socializing specific values. Finally, this research identified the estimated rate of value classes for each socio-demographic group.

Keywords: *moral culture, value, social capital, typological approach, latent class analysis*

Introduction

In the field of social sciences, moral culture has been viewed as one of the most important factors maintaining social orders in societies (e.g., Parsons 1937). However, because the concept of culture encompasses wide and diverse meanings and contexts, it is not clear how culture operates within the social order. For example, Hitlin (2008) categorized culture into three levels: (a) that shared by all individuals, (b) that shared by some individuals, and (c) that unique to particular individuals. This suggests that we could attribute every social phenomenon to culture. However, at the same time it does not provide us with a comprehensive explanation without further exploration.

In recent years, researchers have tried to elaborate the process by which culture shapes social order, focusing on morality as one of the key factors in this process. Hitlin and Vaisey (2013) and Haidt (2008) stated that research on morality in psychology and neuroscience is experiencing a renaissance. Contemporary studies on morality have primarily focused on the relationship between brain function and moral judgment, with a particular emphasis on identifying the specific brain regions involved in activating moral reasoning in humans (Appiah 2008; Greene et al. 2008; Sinnott-Armstrong 2008; Turiel 2002).

For instance, Moll, de Oliveira-Souza, and Eslinger (2003) used fMRI findings to explain that moral judgment tasks activate the frontopolar cortex and Brodmann's areas (i.e., the medial frontal gyrus). Greene et al. (2008) investigated the brain regions activated when individuals confront moral dilemmas, such as the "trolley problem." Their research revealed that the ventromedial prefrontal cortex is involved in intuitive emotional responses during "personal moral dilemmas" (e.g., footbridge dilemmas), while the dorsolateral frontal cortex, in conjunction with working memory, is engaged during "impersonal moral dilemmas" (e.g., trolley dilemmas). Furthermore, an increasing number of studies aim to elucidate the mechanisms of human cooperation rooted in morality (Frank 2013; Simpson and Willer 2015; Tomasello and Vaish 2013; Willer 2009).

While research on morality has thrived in other social science disciplines, morality has received relatively less attention in the field of sociology (Hitlin and Vaisey 2013). However, this does not suggest that morality is less significant in sociological investigations (Abend 2010). Just as psychological research on morality encompasses various cultural domains beyond fairness and care (e.g., Graham et al. 2011), the domain of moral sociology is also expanding its interest to narratives, identities, institutions,

symbolic boundaries, and cognitive schemas (Hitlin and Vaisey 2013). Furthermore, unlike the prevailing moral universalism, which is often observed in neuroscience research, sociological investigations of morality delve into moral culture as shaped by diverse social factors, such as class, race, religion, and generation (Vaisey and Miles 2014).

This study aims to categorize the moral culture in South Korea by utilizing the value framework developed by Schwartz (1992). While Schwartz's value types were primarily derived from Western populations (Graham et al. 2011), previous research has demonstrated the applicability of this framework in analyzing South Korean society (Choi and Lee 2014; Kim and Choi 2009; Suh and Chong 2012). In doing so, we offer a distinct perspective from Seok, Chang, and Kim (2019), who classified moral groups in South Korean society based on moral foundations theory.

To gain insight into a typology of moral culture in South Korea, we utilized latent class analysis, a widely used statistical method for categorization purposes. Furthermore, we used multinomial logistic regression to explore the effect of social capital on shaping different value classes. Through these robust analytical techniques, our study aims to examine the distribution patterns of various types of values within South Korean society. Additionally, we seek to evaluate the significant impact of social capital on the moral culture within the specific social context of East Asian society.

Theoretical Backgrounds

Moral culture and Schwartz's moral value theory

Moral culture is a complex concept. While culture plays a key role in keeping up social order, at the empirical level, the meaning and domain of culture is not clear. Therefore, some researchers have sought to narrow down the domain of the "culture" into "moral culture," making it more tractable concept (Vaisey and Miles 2014). The terms "morality" or "morals" mainly denote two different ideas. Sociologists view morality as universally shared standards regarding what constitutes harm, right, or justice (e.g., Stets and Carter 2012). But more micro approaches to morals stress the question of good and bad as it varies among individuals or groups (e.g., Hitlin and Vaisey 2013). The former understanding emphasizes the idea of morals as shared beliefs in a certain group of people that regulate their social actions, while the

later focuses on the uniqueness of attitude and differences among actors. Between the two, our study adapts the second definition as the current study is concerned with classifying the differences in moral culture among people.

Based on this argument, in this paper we have defined moral culture as a shared belief regarding what is a good thing and a bad thing to do among some people associated with various social locations (Vaisey and Miles 2014). By stressing "some people," we position ourselves between moral individualism (i.e., each person has unique attitude toward a moral object) and moral universalism (i.e., every person has the same attitude toward a moral object). This means that moral culture can vary among groups or people and can be classified such that certain kinds of values are more salient in one group than in others.

We use Schwartz's values as a well-established tool to measure moral culture. For Schwartz, a value is a deeply held ideal or belief about what is important, good, or right. It is understood as one of the elements that make up culture, along with other concepts such as desirables, cosmologies, and worldviews. It is more universal and fundamental than other elements, and remains stable over societies or situations (Schwarts 1992). Schwartz's value theory has broad applicability across diverse cultural backgrounds (Sortheix, Olakibi, and Helkama 2013) and finds utility in various fields of study. He suggested a value structure that classified universal human values into 10 categories using multi-dimensional scaling based on data from numerous national samples (1992; 2006).[1] The definition of each value type is presented in Table 1.

Schwartz posited that values exhibit a circular motivational continuum, wherein closely related values frequently appear together, while values in opposition cannot be expressed simultaneously. Figure 1 illustrates the structure of values. Schwartz focused on determining the priority among values, rather than simply assessing the importance of specific types of values (Vaisey and Miles 2014). As a result, a value, which motivates a single decision or action, can be derived by examining the differences between conflicting values (Miles 2015).

An important feature of Schwartz's value framework is its hierarchical structure. The framework consists of 10 value types which are categorized into four areas that form two axes (Conservation/Openness to Change and Self-Transcendence/Self-Enhancement). This structure gives rise to the

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[1] Schwartz et al. (2012) later expanded the number of value types to 19. However, due to data limitations in this study, we utilized the earlier distinction of values prior to the expansion.

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TABLE 1
CONCEPT OF VALUE TYPES

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Value type	Concept
Security	Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self
Tradition	Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provides
Conformity	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms
Self-direction	Independent thought and action (choosing, creating, exploring)
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life
Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature
Benevolence	Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact
Achievement	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards
Power	Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources
Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself

Source: Schwartz et al., 2012.

universal value structure known as the Schwartz value circle, where combined value categories can be identified. Within this structure, for example, "Hedonism" is a value type that overlaps with Openness to Change and Self-Enhancement. In this study, it is classified as Openness to Change, referring to Magun, Rudnev, and Schmidt (2016). In terms of value focus, Openness to Change and Self-Enhancement can be combined to form a "Personal Focus," while Conservation and Self-Transcendence can be merged into "Social Focus." Another dimension of value categorization includes "Growth," which encompasses Openness to Change and Self-Transcendence, and "Self-Protection," which combines Conservation and Self-Enhancement.[2]

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[2] The former is a distinction according to whether the interests provided by value are personal or social, and the latter is one according to whether anxiety is avoided or free.
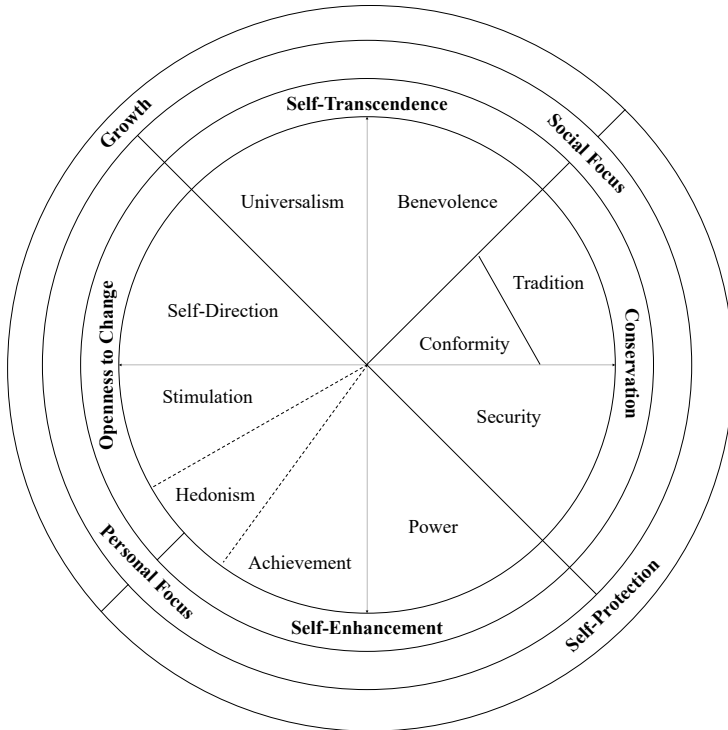
Fig. 1.—Schwartz value circle.

Sources: Schwartz 1992.

Typological approach and latent class analysis

Previous typological studies in sociology consistently endeavored to classify moral culture. For example, Bellah et al. (2007) categorized moral classes in the United States into four types: expressive individualist, utilitarian individualist, civic republican, and biblical. Riesman (2001) classified individuals into three types based on social structure: the tradition-directed type, the inner-directed type, and the other-directed type. Lamont (1992) also sought to establish a typology of moral culture by examining the value standards of French professional men, categorizing them as cultural, traditional ethics, and socio-economic. Building upon these previous studies, our aim is to categorize the moral culture of South Korea using Schwartz's 10 values using latent class analysis.[3]

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[3] Vaisey and Miles (2014) said that there are affinities between Schwartz's values and the moral

Using a typological approach offers several advantages. First, this approach allows us to assess the similarity of the distribution of value classes in South Korea with European countries. By referring to the study conducted by Magun et al. (2016), which utilized a typological approach to compare the value classes of Western and Eastern Europe, we can indirectly determine which region of Europe shares similarities with South Korea. This offers valuable insights for cross-cultural comparisons.

Second, by classifying individuals into specific locations within a two-dimensional value space, we can consider both value axes concurrently. When treating each value type or category as a separate variable, it becomes challenging to analyze all four value areas simultaneously. For example, if we find the effect of social capital on the values of Self-Transcendence and Conservation, we can conclude that social capital is associated with an emphasis on Social Focus values. However, from this result, it is hard to explain the relationship between social capital and the Growth-Self-Protection value, which pertains to coping with anxiety.

Lastly, the typological approach allows for the analysis of within-country value heterogeneity of populations. Latent class analysis affirms the location of individuals within a group by sorting them into the value class that closely aligns with their values in relation to the whole. This analysis emphasizes individual relations rather than the relationships between variables (Marsh et al. 2009), allowing for the consideration of the values of other community members together.

Culture versus economic structure

An individual's economic situation affects his/her probability of being classified into a certain category among moral value classes. Magun et al. (2016) described that probability of membership in the Growth, Strong Social Focus, Weak Social Focus, and Strong Personal Focus classes across countries is influenced by gross national income (GNI) per capita. Among the four value classes, the Growth class shows the greatest variation across countries by significant correlation with GNI per capita. Specifically, there is a positive correlation between an individual's GNI per capita and his/her probability of being a member of the Growth class. This pattern can be explained by the scarcity hypothesis (Inglehart 1997), which posits that once basic needs are fulfilled, individuals tend to pursue higher-level needs and post-materialistic

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typologies offered in Bellah et al. (2007) and Lamont (1992).

values. In this context, the Security value corresponds to materialistic values, while Self-Direction value aligns with post-materialistic values (Vaisey and Miles 2014). Given that a high GNI leads to satisfaction of basic needs, countries with a higher GNI per capita tend to exhibit higher post-materialistic values and a greater probability of membership in Growth class. Although South Korea may not have fully embraced post-materialism compared to Western industrialized nations (Park and Kang 2012), the rapid economic growth in South Korea has effectively addressed the basic needs of its population. Therefore, it is predicted that the probability of membership in the Growth class is high in South Korea.

The influence of cultural differences is also considered. Eastern European countries, such as Turkey and Russia, present a low probability of membership in the Growth class (Magun et al. 2016). In those countries, there is a blend of Eastern and Western cultures, which suggests that this finding is attributed to the influence of Oriental culture. Seok and Chang (2016) demonstrated that cultural disposition can impact morality. Eastern countries, such as India, tend to emphasize interpersonal morality and social obligations, while Western countries, such as the United States, tend to develop individually oriented morality (Miller 1994). That is, specific cultural contexts can influence moral values. We sought to find the primary factor contributing to the composition of value classes. If the configuration of value classes in South Korea closely resembles that of industrialized Western countries, we could attribute economic structure as the most significant factor in determining value classes. However, if the composition of value classes in South Korea is similar to that in Eastern European countries, we could consider cultural disposition as the most important factor.

Connection between social capital and values

Personal values are generally considered to be stable once they are formed (Schwartz 1992). Therefore, much of the existing research has focused on the development of values during childhood and adolescence (Kiley and Vaisey 2020). However, this does not mean that values are entirely fixed throughout a person's entire lifetime. Adults can also undergo changes in their values through their life course (Lersch 2023), such as secondary socialization and resocialization (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Moreover, previous studies have provided substantial evidence on the influence of social networks on personal values (Amato 1990; Inglehart 1997; Kim and Lee 2024; Lee and Choi 2011; Lee, Park, and Jeon 2008; Smith 1999). These studies highlight

that even as adults, individual values can be influenced and potentially changed by social capital in their society.

Previous studies have examined the correlation between social capital and human value at the individual level (e.g., Vaisey and Lizardo 2010). However, conducting a collective-level study on the relationship between value and social capital is also important. For example, trust not only serves as the foundation for collaboration between individuals but also plays a crucial role in fostering cooperation at the national level (Uslaner 2002). In particular, even in the presence of a prosocial culture, cooperation becomes challenging in the absence of trust. Hence, it becomes crucial to examine the relationship between social capital and moral culture at the collective level. We anticipate that Conservation values will be strongly linked to closed social capital. Even if our study is unable to measure the strength of ties due to data limitations, we hypothesize the existence of a significant correlation between other social capital and post-materialism values. That is, individual who have experienced exposure to social trust are more likely to be open to embracing change. In addition, being part of social support networks enhances the likelihood of individuals being receptive to change. Consequently, the main objectives of this study are to classify moral culture of South Korea using Schwartz's values, then to investigate the relationship between moral culture and social capital.

Method

Data

To classify moral culture and reveal the relationship between value classes and social capital, we used data from the 2021 Korean General Social Survey (KGSS). The KGSS has been conducted since 2003 and is the Korean version of the General Social Survey (Smith et al. 2006). The survey targets adults aged 18 and older across the nation, employing a multi-stage area probability sampling method. For our study, it was essential to use nationally representative survey data. The final data consisted of 1,179 respondents, after excluding those who did not respond to the Portrait Values Questionnaire utilized in this study (2.16% of the initial sample). In cases of missing values in other variables, mean substitution was employed.

Measurement

Moral values were measured using 21 items of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz 2001). The questionnaire consists of each question representing 10 value items suggested by Schwartz's research. The question briefly describes a hypothetical person and asks respondents to assess how similar the person is to oneself. The variables are comprised of a six-point scale: (6) "very much like me," (5) "like me," (4) "somewhat like me," (3) "a little like me," (2) "not the same as me," and (1) "not the same as me at all."

To address potential biases such as social desirability or demand effect on the value questions (Schwartz et al. 2012), we employed the following procedures. First, a centering variable was generated by calculating the average scores for all 21 value items. Second, the centering variable was subtracted from each value type score. Third, dummy variables were created: less than or equal to zero (0) and greater than zero (1). These steps aimed to address potential biases and to facilitate further analyses.

Personal social capital was assessed using two items: degree of social trust and social support network. The degree of general social trust was measured by asking respondents, "Generally, how trustful do you perceive this society to be?" The response options are measured on a 10-point scale, ranging from (0) "hardly trustful" to (10) "very trustful." The social support network items assessed the presence or absence of individuals within the respondent's social network who listened to their concerns. The questionnaire constructed by five binary items that were responded to with either 0 or 1. The categories included family members, relatives, co-workers, neighbors, and friends. The scale captures the extent of social support available to the respondent, with higher scores indicating a larger social support network.

For demographic controls, we include gender, age, marital status, employment, educational attainment, income, subjective social class, political identity, and religion. Gender was coded as a dummy variable: 0 for "female" and 1 for "male." Age was treated as a continuous variable. Marital status was asked as a categorical variable. Employment status was also coded as a dummy variable based on the respondent's employment status. Education level, income, and subjective class were recorded in ascending order, with higher values indicating higher levels. Political identity was recoded in a way that higher values represented a more conservative leaning. Religion was recoded as a binary variable, with "having a religion" represented by 1 and "not having a religion" represented by 0.

Analysis schemes

This study used latent class analysis (LCA) to categorize the values of South Korea into four groups. LCA is a statistical method used to identify exclusive and discrete latent classes or subgroups (Lazarsfeld and Henry 1968; McCutcheon 1987). It shares similarities with traditional clustering methods but offers the advantage of providing statistical evidence for determining the appropriate number of subgroups (Magidson and Vermunt 2002). Furthermore, it enables researchers to obtain more comprehensive insights beyond comparing national averages alone. For instance, it allows for comparisons with studies that categorize value classes in European countries using the same analysis technique (e.g., Magun et al. 2016). Subsequently, multinomial logistic regression was utilized to examine the impact of moral culture. Latent classes were estimated using R with the poLCA package (Linzer and Lewis 2011), and other analyses were conducted using Stata 17.1.

Results

Typology of Korean values

To decide the best-fit model of LCA, we considered several variable indicators (Table 2). First, the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) is commonly used to assess the goodness of fit of models and determine the appropriate number of classes in LCA. The model with the lowest BIC value is considered the best-fit model (Schwartz 1978). Secondly, we consider the Lo-Mendell-Rubin (LMR) likelihood ratio test. This test examines which class number is more suitable between k and k-1. Finally, meaningful comparisons can be made between the classes when sample sizes of 5% or more are present in each class (Masyn 2013).

LMR likelihood ratio tests indicate that a higher fitness level is associated with more classes. The changes in BIC indicate an improvement in model fit as the number of classes are decreased until the transition from one to six-class models, and then increases in the seven-class model. This suggests that that the six-class model is the most suitable. However, the smallest class group in the six classes is less than 5%. The five-class model also includes only 3.48% of the sample in the smallest class. Therefore, the optimal solution

TABLE 2

MODEL FITS SUMMARY OF LATENT CLASS ANALYSIS

Number of classes	Log likelihood	AIC	BIC	Entropy R^2	LMR LR	Percent of smallest class
1	-16971.04	33984.08	34090.60	-	-	-
2	-16352.59	32791.19	33009.30	0.71	1181.22***	37.21
3	-16191.54	32513.08	32842.79	0.72	307.61***	11.93
4	-16087.42	32348.83	32790.13	0.66	198.87 ***	16.37
5	-15986.71	32191.41	32744.31	0.72	192.35***	3.48
6	-15906.37	32074.73	32739.22	0.71	153.45***	3.56
7	-15856.53	32019.07	32795.15	0.72	95.18***	2.63

Note: Entropy R^2 was calculated based on Boeschoten, Oberski, and de Waal (2017).

is to have four classes.[4] In the four-class model, the distribution of respondents in each class is as follows and each class includes more the 5% of sample: 295 (22%), 193 (16%), 265 (25%), and 426 (36%).

Figure 2 displays the average scores of the 21 value items for each class. In order to interpret the value categories on both axes, we referred to Figure 1. Class 1 exhibits low responses across all value types. Kim (2017) referred to this group as a "mixed group," which possesses more ambivalent and implicit values. The label for this class will be assigned after considering its relative position in relation to the other classes. This class can be viewed as a value-neutral class because the motivation for action decreases when values from distant points in the value circle are shared simultaneously (Schwartz 2006). In Class 2, Self-Direction values related to creativity and independent decision-making are low. This class demonstrates higher Self-Transcendence values compared to Self-Enhancement values, although the difference between value categories is relatively small. Therefore, we label this class as "Weak Social Focus." Class 3 exhibits high overall scores on personal values, thus earning the label "Personal Focus." Lastly, Class 4 comprises a high percentage of respondents with high scores on all value types. This class has relatively fewer respondents claiming similarity to themselves in value types associated with Self-Enhancement and Openness to Change. Consequently, we label this class as "Strong Social Focus."

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[4] The five classes and six classes are located on a diagonal line, similar to four class in the two-dimensional Schwartz value space.
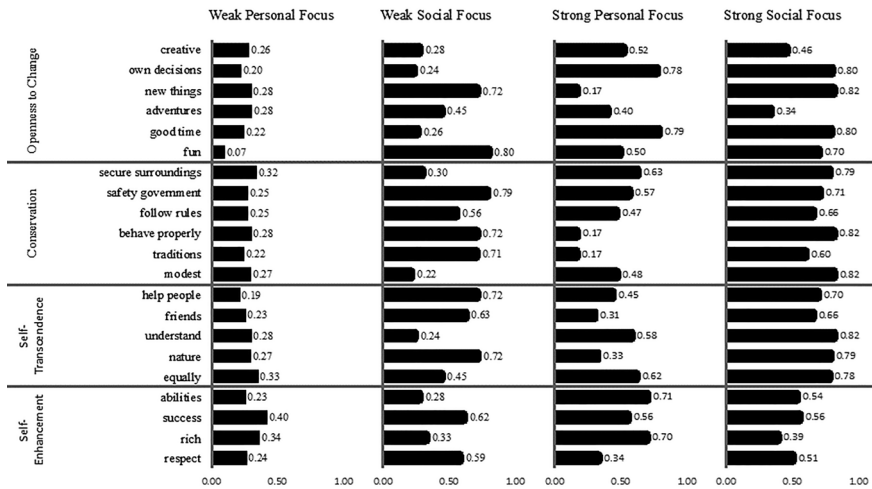
Fig. 2.—Mean scores of the value items for the four latent classes.

Figure 3 illustrates the positions of the four classes within the two-dimensional Schwartz value space. The two axes represent the mean average scores on each value type, which are considered continuous variables (Magun et al. 2016). Considering that adjacent value types motivate specific action together, while opposing values restrain action, values can be categorized into two bipolar dimensions that underlie them (e.g., Miles 2015).

The value classes are distributed diagonally. Both the Strong Social Focus class and Weak Social Focus class are located in the upper part of the value map, but they differ in the extent of Self-Enhancement values. Class 1 is positioned diagonally within the Social Focus classes and is situated close to zero on both axes, indicating a value-neutral orientation. Therefore, we have renamed this class as "Weak Personal Focus." Additionally, we have renamed the original Personal Focus (Class 4) as "Strong Personal Focus."

The distribution of the population across the classes is as follows: Social Focus (52%) and Personal Focus (47%). Although there may be variations in variable measurement and analysis methods, similar value patterns have been observed in Mediterranean countries and post-communist countries (Magun et al. 2016). It is posited that the observed similarity can be attributed to the significant influence of Oriental culture on both regions. We can know from this result that culture exerts a more substantial influence on shaping values compared to economic structure.
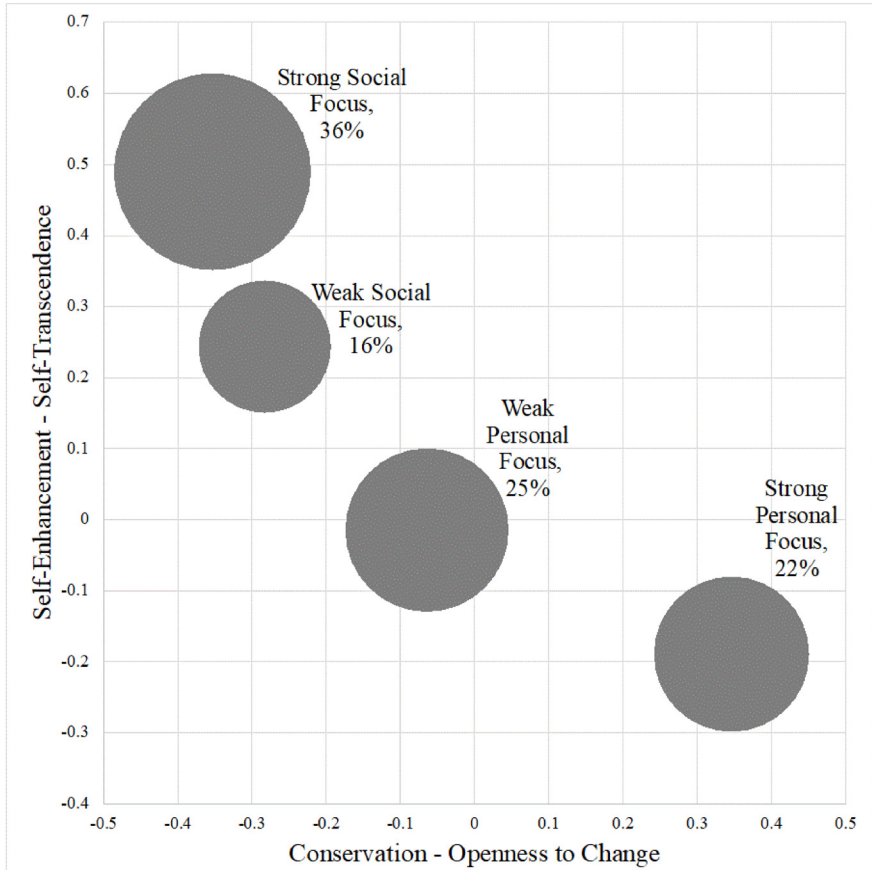
FIG. 3.—FOUR LATENT CLASSES IN THE TWO-DIMENSIONAL SCHWARTZ VALUE
SPACE.

Social capital and value class

To examine our hypothesis that social capital correlates with moral culture, we conducted multinomial logistic regression analysis. This method allowed us to evaluate the influence of individual social capital on the likelihood of belonging to specific value classes. The value-neutral group (Weak Personal Focus), representing various value classes and location in the center of value space, was used as the baseline comparison group. The regression results are summarized in Table 3.

The analysis revealed that individuals identifying as Protestant had a

	Weak Social Focus		Strong Personal Focus		Strong Social Focus	
	Coef.	(S.E.)	Coef.	(S.E.)	Coef.	(S.E.)
Gender (Male)						
Female	0.156	(0.205)	-0.119	(0.186)	-0.196	(0.164)
Marriage (Single)						
Having spouse	-0.142	(0.328)	-0.166	(0.272)	-0.222	(0.253)
Separation	0.109	(0.411)	0.163	(0.374)	0.085	(0.328)
Employment (Unemployed)						
Employed	-0.071	(0.215)	0.162	(0.194)	-0.080	(0.175)
Religion (Irreligion)						
Buddhist	0.285	(0.293)	0.341	(0.298)	0.459+	(0.256)
Protestant	-0.199	(0.424)	0.867*	(0.352)	0.200	(0.343)
Catholic	-0.304	(0.228)	0.179	(0.225)	0.154	(0.192)
Age	0.020*	(0.009)	-0.010+	(0.008)	0.017*	(0.007)
Educational gge	-0.027	(0.029)	0.002	(0.029)	0.000	(0.025)
Income	0.023	(0.024)	0.010	(0.022)	0.013	(0.020)
Subjective class	-0.039	(0.069)	0.101	(0.064)	-0.033	(0.056)
Political leaning	-0.059	(0.101)	0.032	(0.095)	-0.064	(0.083)
Social trust	-0.092	(0.108)	-0.408***	(0.098)	-0.207*	(0.088)
Support network	0.128	(0.089)	0.138+	(0.081)	0.152*	(0.073)
Constant	-0.820	(0.821)	0.453	(0.739)	0.216	(0.660)

$+p < 0.1, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001$
Notes: Versus Weak Personal Focus; $N = 1{,}179$.

higher probability of membership in the Strong Personal Focus class compared to the Weak Personal Focus class. This suggests a relationship between Protestantism and individualistic cultural values and is consistent with the arguments from the founding fathers of sociology (Durkheim 2005; Weber 2013). Conversely, individuals practicing Buddhism exhibited a higher probability of membership in the Strong Social Focus class. This finding aligns with the general idea that the religious ethic of Buddhism is associated with values related to Self-Transcendence and Conservation.

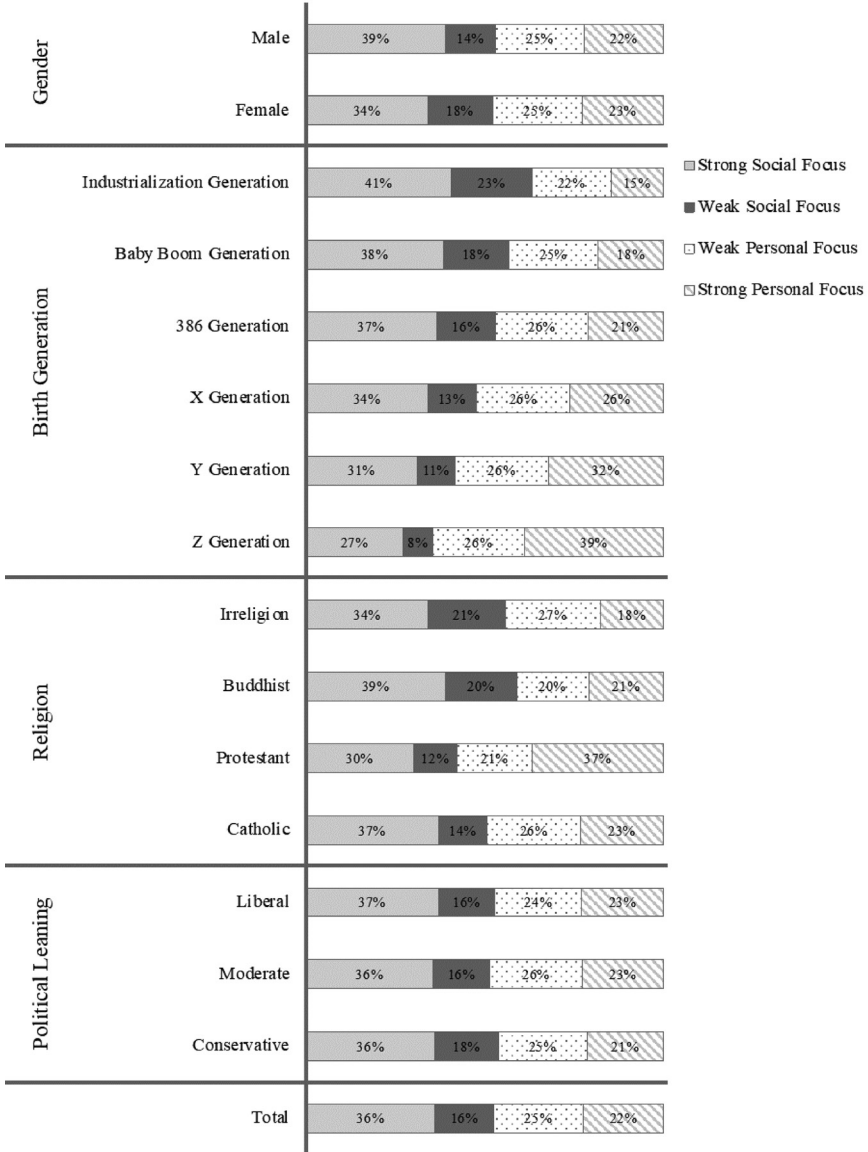Average age of members in Social Focus class is older than the value-

Fig. 4.—Estimated probabilities for socio-demographic features to be a member of a certain value class

neutral class, and there are two contradicting interpretations of this finding. First, it could be attributed to the "aging effect," which suggests that as individuals age, their value structure undergoes changes, increasing the degree of importance in certain values. Suh and Chong (2012) provided evidence supporting the differentiation of value types with age. Moreover, recent research indicates that mean-level personal values can change over time (Cieciuch, Davidov, and Algesheimer 2016; Daniel and Benish-Weisman 2019; Vecchione et al. 2020). For example, during adolescence, individuals may experience a transition from Personal Focus values to Social Focus values. The second interpretation pertains to the "cohort effect," wherein personal culture undergoes updates during an early period and remains relatively stable in subsequent periods (Kiley and Vaisey 2020). Na and Cha (2010) presented evidence of value changes in South Korea based on survey data from 1979, 1998, and 2010, highlighting the presence of cohort effects. Additionally, Kim and Lee (2021) confirmed the cohort replacement effect of moral culture in South Korea following the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s. Since it is not the main objective of this research to explain the effect of age on value class, we do not conclude which logic is more persuasive but suggest the possible explanations.

In terms of social capital, individuals with high levels of social trust are less likely to belong to classes at the extreme of the two-dimensional Schwartz value spaces: Strong Personal Focus and Strong Social Focus. This is because when individuals trust in society, they tend to have a broad egocentric network, which in turn leads them to not solely rely on the values of a particular group. Conversely, individuals with extensive social support networks are more likely to belong to the Strong Personal Focus and Strong Social Focus classes, rather than the other classes. These findings suggest that the presence of diverse social support networks plays a role in shaping moral culture within those networks. Social support networks may contribute to the socialization of moral values, influencing individuals to prioritize certain values.

Figure 4 presents the estimated probabilities of socio-demographic features. It illustrates a higher likelihood for younger generations to be associated with the Personal Focus classes than Social Focus classes. Furthermore, as individuals grow older, the probability of belonging to the value-neutral class decreases, leading to the emergence of more distinct values. Like the assertions of classical sociologists, Protestants display a greater inclination towards the Personal Focus class in comparison to Catholics.

Conclusion

This study aims to classify the value groups of South Korea in order to ascertain the distribution of value culture. Furthermore, we examined the association between value classes and social capital. The findings detailed above are summarized as follows.

First, Korean society mainly consists of Social Focus and Personal Focus classes, while the Growth class did not appear. We suggest that this is because of the collectivist culture in South Korea. Interestingly, the probabilities of class membership in Korea align closely with those observed in Russia and Turkey.

Next, we can know that age influences moral culture, as reflected in the higher membership of older individuals in the Social Focus class. This observation aligns with the notion that older individuals tend to hold more conservative views regarding societal change and place significant importance on community values. However, due to the limitations of the data, it remains unclear whether this difference indicates a cohort effect or an aging effect.

Finally, we have empirically confirmed the impact of social capital on moral culture. Social trust acts as a deterrent against individuals leaning towards specific values. Conversely, the presence of numerous social support networks is likely to amplify the significance of certain values.

This study has several limitations. Firstly, due to the utilization of cross-sectional data, it is challenging to determine whether there are changes in value classes over time. Thus, future studies employing longitudinal data are necessary to address this issue. Secondly, we cannot accurately identify differences between countries. While this study used a typological approach to classify value classes in South Korea and made comparisons with previous European research (Magun et al. 2016), direct comparisons are impossible by differences in questionnaire design and sampling methods between the two studies. Lastly, a traditional survey methodology poses limitations for effectively distinguishing between implicit and explicit cognitive processes (Kim and Kim 2022; Miles et al. 2019).

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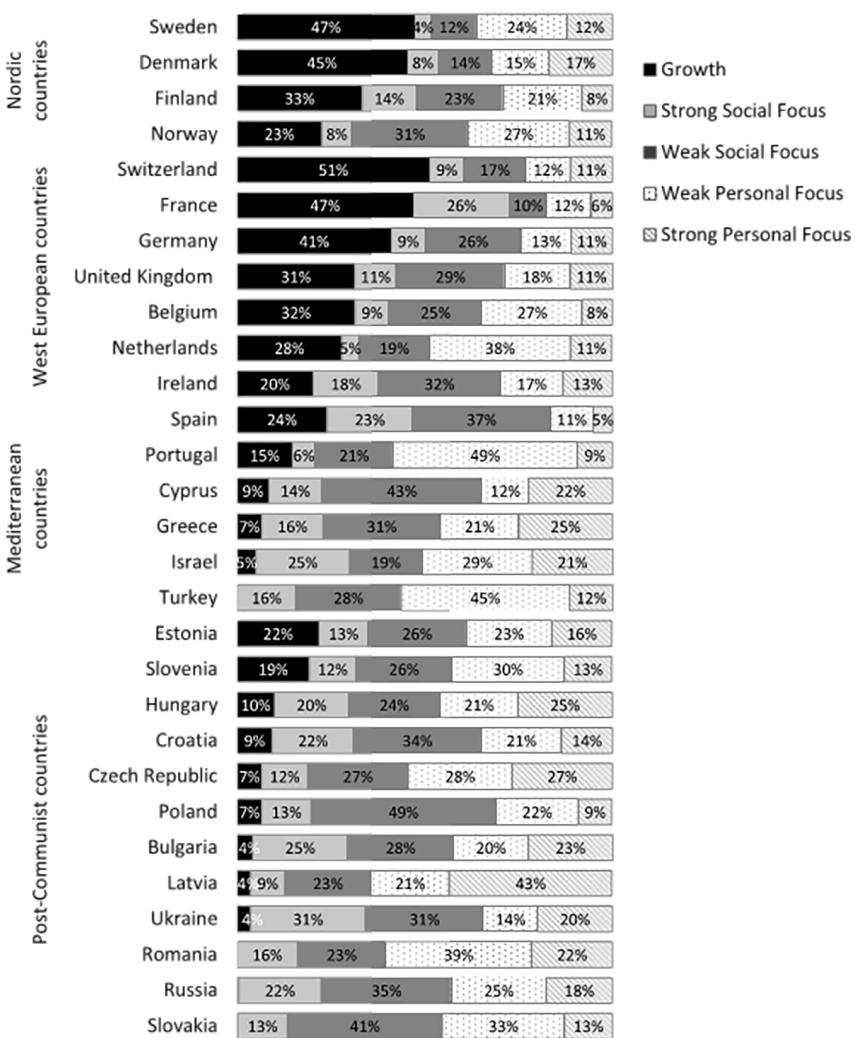
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Appendix

Group	Country	Growth	Strong Social Focus	Weak Social Focus	Weak Personal Focus	Strong Personal Focus
Nordic countries	Sweden	47%	4%	12%	24%	12%
	Denmark	45%	8%	14%	15%	17%
	Finland	33%	14%	23%	21%	8%
	Norway	23%	8%	31%	27%	11%
West European countries	Switzerland	51%	9%	17%	12%	11%
	France	47%		26%	10% 12%	6%
	Germany	41%	9%	26%	13%	11%
	United Kingdom	31%	11%	29%	18%	11%
	Belgium	32%	9%	25%	27%	8%
	Netherlands	28%	5%	19%	38%	11%
	Ireland	20%	18%	32%	17%	13%
Mediterranean countries	Spain	24%	23%	37%	11%	5%
	Portugal	15%	6% 21%		49%	9%
	Cyprus	9%	14%	43%	12%	22%
	Greece	7%	16%	31%	21%	25%
	Israel	5%	25%	19%	29%	21%
	Turkey		16%	28%	45%	12%
Post-Communist countries	Estonia	22%	13%	26%	23%	16%
	Slovenia	19%	12%	26%	30%	13%
	Hungary	10%	20%	24%	21%	25%
	Croatia	9%	22%	34%	21%	14%
	Czech Republic	7%	12% 27%		28%	27%
	Poland	7%	13%	49%	22%	9%
	Bulgaria	4%	25%	28%	20%	23%
	Latvia	4%	9% 23%		21%	43%
	Ukraine	4%	31%	31%	14%	20%
	Romania		16%	23%	39%	22%
	Russia		22%	35%	25%	18%
	Slovakia		13%	41%	33%	13%

ESTIMATED PROBABILITIES FOR A COUNTRY RESIDENT TO BE A MEMBER OF A CERTAIN VALUE CLASS

Sources: Magun et al. 2016.