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Peer Review

Review of: "Universalism and Innovation: The Influence of Impartiality and Inclusiveness on National Innovativeness"

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The theme is very interesting. However, for publication, it is necessary to deepen the theoretical foundations.

General evaluation of the paper:

The paper quotes authors deploying an undue generalization on each of their perspectives. Are universalism and particularism the same phenomena in different authors? Is it possible to transform the moral philosophy involved in in-group and out-group perspectives into operational concepts in innovation research? Which are the relevant antecedents of innovation, and how would they empirically be related to the constructs derived from those broad concepts? The theoretical research unduly mingles quite different theories and perspectives and generalizes its meanings under undefined terms such as universalism and particularism, without exploring their meaning in the thought of each author. In the present paper, it overly simplifies a quite complex discussion.

Note that quantitative cultural research eliminates the complexity of culture as a phenomenon to create measurable dimensions. For the sake of reduction, authors group things under labels that may mean different things in empirical reality.

It is important to define what particularism and universalism mean for each author. Eliminate taken-for-granted and ethnocentric causality (e.g., Is it true that “A greater emphasis on conservative values strengthens the social cohesion of a group but runs the risk of degenerating into a society of particularized and mutually exclusive groups of individuals unable to cooperate” – how can we explain

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innovativeness in Asian countries? How is the following accomplished? “A universalistic society must therefore not completely lose its touch with its ingroup, as also Haidt[49] argues. At least, the data about national innovativeness suggest that the ingroup should not be played off against the outgroup, but that trust and impartiality should apply equally to both” – is it suggesting a sort of cultural engineering? Or is it thinking about a specific country?

Innovative capacity – what do you mean by that, and which authors support your perspective?

Economic development - what do you mean by that, and which authors support your perspective?

Please quote the literature you mention addressing cultural and moral factors and their relationship to innovation. Please mention how this paper contributes to these studies.

Many of the classic authors quoted in the literature review are not concerned with innovation. Which authors and researchers connect those views with the antecedents of innovation? The authors quote thinkers of highly heterogeneous philosophical traditions as if they easily dialogue among themselves.

On the empirical results

The mathematics works. However, there are several empirical flaws in the argument: China is the country with the largest number of patents and innovations. Japan and Korea are among the top 5 innovators according to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). They are collectivist according to Geert Hofstede´s Cultural Comparison and according to The Globe Study. As far as anthropological research shows, they are not inclusive nations. Moral inclusiveness is not part of their culture. How would the authors explain this fact? On the other hand, Brazil is very open to out-group people, favors immigration, includes diversity of national origins, and is very low in innovation. It is a country with clearly observable relativism. However, its excessive relativism translates into unforeseeability and the perception of uncertainty and produces low trust in society.

North European countries have Christian values that favor universalism; however, in practice, they have issues with immigration and inclusion.

The paper may have found correlation. However, the theoretical discussion in the search for causality fails because it is too broad and vague to allow for an observable empirical cause.

To advance with research, it may be interesting to look at:

Zak, P.J., Knack, S., 2001. Trust and Growth. Econ. J. 111 (470), 295–321.

They reduce the complexity to one operational concept that can address causality across cultures. Trust is not the same thing in all cultures, and the role of institutions in defining "trust for what purpose" is quite varied. Studies on trust show that more homogeneous and economically more equal nations exhibit the highest propensity to trust. Trust is the most relevant antecedent of cooperation and innovation according to recent research.

The paper has a clear European cultural bias. It may be worth reviewing a classic book to understand the ethnocentric view in this analysis:

Parekh, B., 2000. Rethinking Multiculturalism. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

As an example of causal analysis between national culture/values and empirical research, there is this paper:

Migueles, C.; Zanini, M.T. The effects of national culture on safety: insights from a multi-case study. Safety Science 173 (2024)

It shows how a general, quantitative category such as power-distance may represent a culturally specific phenomenon in different cultures.

General evaluation of the paper:

The paper quotes authors from varied traditions. However, it deploys an undue generalization of each of their perspectives. Are universalism and particularism the same phenomena in different authors? Is it possible to transform the moral philosophy involved in in-group and out-group perspectives into operational concepts in innovation research? What are the relevant antecedents of innovation, and how would they, empirically, be related to the constructs derived from those broad concepts?

The theoretical research unduly mingles quite different theories and perspectives and generalizes meanings under undefined terms such as universalism and particularism, without exploring their meaning in the thought of each author. It overly simplifies a very complex discussion.

Note that quantitative cultural research eliminates the complexity of culture as a phenomenon in order to create measurable dimensions. For the sake of reduction, they group things under labels that may mean different things in empirical reality. The authors acknowledge this in their methodology.

It is important to define what particularism and universalism mean for each author. Eliminate taken-for-granted and ethnocentric causality (e.g., is it true that "A greater emphasis on conservative values strengthens social cohesion of a group but runs the risk of degenerating into a society of particularized

and mutually exclusive groups of individuals unable to cooperate"? How can we explain innovativeness in Asian countries?).

How is the following accomplished? "A universalistic society must therefore not completely lose its touch with its ingroup, as also Haidt [49] argues. At least, the data about national innovativeness suggest that the ingroup should not be played off against the outgroup, but that trust and impartiality should apply equally to both." Is it suggesting a sort of cultural engineering? Or is it thinking about a specific country?

Innovative capacity – what do you mean by that, and which authors support your perspective?

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Many of the classic authors quoted in the literature review are not concerned with innovation. Which authors and researchers connect those views with the antecedents of innovation? The authors quote thinkers from highly heterogeneous philosophical traditions as if they easily dialogue with one another – grouping their thought on superficial concepts (as if, for example, universalism named an easy-to-understand social fact).

On the empirical results

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On the other hand, Brazil is very open to out-group people, favors immigration, includes diversity, and is very low in innovation. It is a country with clearly and broadly observed relativism. However, its excessive relativism translates into unpredictability and the perception of uncertainty, producing low trust in society.

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Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.