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Analysis of the Unconventional Political Action Scale: Results in Spain

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Citizens usually participate in two ways in politics: conventional and unconventional political action. The latter type covers a wide range of behaviors that do not conform to the rules defined under a specific regime. Among the most significant unconventional expressions are the signing of petitions, boycotts, legal demonstrations, illegal strikes, and the occupation of buildings. In this article, the psychometric properties of a scale to measure unconventional political action in Spain are assessed. This scale was included in the last World Values Survey (of 1995–1996). The sample used in that survey contained 6,920 persons in Spain. The data from Spain are analyzed for the country as a whole and by region. Reliability, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha, is acceptable, and construct validity (tested with a principal components analysis, a differential study, and a correlational study) supports the use of the scale to differentiate persons in unconventional political action.

Keywords: *unconventional political action; Unconventional Political Action Scale; postmaterialism; reliability; validity*

It is common to distinguish between two modes of political action, conventional and unconventional. Interest in different modes of political action arose in connection with comparative studies of political culture in countries where a significant level of democratic maturity and development had been achieved (e.g., Barnes and Kaase 1979; Tarrow 1988; Pierce and Converse 1990; Gibson 1997). Above all, interest in this area has been associated with research on new social movements and their methods of political mobilization (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Offe 1985, 1990).

Conventional political action is composed of a range of behaviors for political participation established by the laws and rules of a country. The most common conventional behavior, of course, is voting, and the most visible institutions for mobilizing this action are political parties (Finkel and Opp 1991). By contrast, unconventional political action covers a wide range of behaviors that do not conform to the rules of a specific regime. Among the

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most significant expressions of this kind of action are petitions, sit-ins, blockages (of work places, of roads, etc.), unauthorized media campaigns, demonstrations, acts of sabotage, marches, and acts of civil disobedience. These actions are most common in new social movements such as those representing the interests of feminists, ecologists, or pacifists (Rucht 1990).

Melucci (1996) referred to methods for collective resistance or intervention that involve minimal organization and the absence of association with formal institutions as "direct action." These actions are different from the usual political actions because they may include transgressions of rules within the political game, although their aim is neither to undermine the foundations of the game nor to change the system of social power relationships. They do not usually involve a deliberate and continuous use of violence, but this may occur. They should not be considered expressive actions, but instrumental ones, since they always have a strategic dimension that calculates public effects and costs versus benefits. In short, different modes of direct action are an alternative participation experience and, in a certain way, the exercise of direct democracy. Historically, political protest, direct action, or unconventional political participation arose from frustration and privation among socially disadvantaged groups, repressed minorities, or groups alienated by the established political order. Since the 1970s, protests and other forms of direct action have included a broadening range of social and political participants, including people from the highest cultural and educational strata. That is, direct action has moved from the ghettos and the slums to universities and middle- or upper-class quarters (Dalton 1988). The various waves of protest in Western societies (including university students, pacifists, ecologists, etc.) and their different methods of collective action drew the attention of social and political researchers who tried not only to understand and conceptualize this phenomenon but also to measure it.

Marsh (1977) developed a conceptual pattern of types of political participation, placing them along a unique continuum from the least to the most extreme. This continuum was marked by four boundaries. The first set the transition from conventional to unconventional politics, the second represented the shift toward direct action methods such as boycotts, the third involved a shift to illegal but nonviolent political actions, and the fourth involved violent actions.

Over the years, there have been significant national and transnational studies of civic culture and unconventional political behavior. These included, for example, the Study of Civic Culture, directed by Almond and Verba in 1959; the Study of Political Action, carried out by Barnes and Kaase in 1979; the European Values Survey, undertaken by the Gallup Institute in

1981; and the series known as the European Community Surveys/ Eurobarometers, fostered by the Commission of the European Communities and coordinated by Rabier and Inglehart since 1970. A number of analyses have been done of these surveys. Of particular note is Dalton's (1988) *Citizen Politics in Western Democracies*. Dalton distinguished clearly between conventional and unconventional political action of citizens in Western democracies, and this distinction is reaffirmed in all the aforementioned studies. Unconventional political action, then, has become a social and political category for a sociological analysis.

Spain was not included in the early studies because of its poor standing in Europe until the end of the Franco regime in 1975. With the transition to democracy, interest in political culture was reflected in the studies of Spain's Centre for Sociological Research (<http://www.cis.es>), which began providing information about unconventional political action on three major dimensions: the legitimacy given to protest activities, the efficiency of these activities, and the behaviors (either actual or considered) practiced (Morán and Benedicto 1995). In 1981, Spain joined the series of studies known as the World Values Surveys. These cross-sectional, transnational studies, conducted in 1981, 1991, and 1996, have used the same questionnaire in each iteration (including questions related to political behaviors), allowing comparison, follow-up, and contextualization. Finally, in the 1990s, Spain's Centre for Research on Social Reality began providing annual data on Spanish political and economic culture (Centre for Research on Social Reality 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995). It is in these data that political protest behaviors are recorded.

In the rest of this article, we focus on the reliability and validity of one scale that has been used in these studies in Spain, the Unconventional Political Action Scale (UPAS).

METHOD

Sample

Our sample comprises the 6,920 people who answered the most recent World Values Survey in Spain (Análisis Sociológico Económico y Político 1999). This sample includes 1,211 people selected from across all seventeen *comunidades autónomas*, or regions of the country, and subsamples from four of those regions, including Andalusia (1,803); Valencia (501); País Vasco, or Basque Country (2,205); and Galicia (1,200).

Materials

The five items that make up the UPAS correspond to variables 242, 243, 244, 245, and 246 of the World Values Survey (e.g., Inglehart 1997). The items have a scale format of three points: 3 = *have done*, 2 = *might do*, and 1 = *would never do*. An example of this scale is shown in the appendix.

Another scale used in the 1995–1996 survey is Inglehart's Post-materialism Scale (Inglehart 1990, 1997), which was developed to measure attitudes that range from those related to material welfare (such as maintaining a high economic level, fighting against crime, keeping good armed forces, etc.) to those related to nonmaterial conditions (such as freedom of speech, higher democratization, and the development of a more humanitarian society).

RESULTS

Scores in the Scale

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations on the UPAS for the national sample and for the four regional samples. These scores range between 7.205 (out of a possible score of 15) for the national sample and 9.452 for the sample in the Basque Country. (As a reminder, the scale runs from 1–5, with 5 representing the lower UPAS score.)

Table 2 shows the distribution of the UPAS scores across the five samples, from a possible low of 5 to a high of 15.

Internal Consistency

The reliability of the UPAS was tested with Cronbach's alpha. The scores for these tests, along with the item-total correlations, are shown in Table 3.

Alpha coefficients range from .761 for the Valencia sample to .814 for the Andalusian sample. This indicates acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally 1978), taking into account that five items make up the test.

The item-total correlation coefficients in Table 3 are all statistically significant, ranging from $r = .453$ for item 1 in the sample for Valencia to $r = .655$ for item 4 in the sample for Galicia.

Construct Validity

We applied two different methods to test construct validity: evidence of internal structure and evidence of relations with other variables.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics of Unconventional Political Action Scale Scores

<i>Sample</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>n</i>
Spain	7.205	2.309	1,023
Basque Country	9.452	2.736	1,738
Andalusia Region	7.365	2.484	1,502
Region of Galicia	8.820	2.622	1,086
Region of Valencia	8.007	2.323	.423

TABLE 2
Frequency and Percentage of Unconventional Political Action Scale Scores

<i>Score</i>	<i>Spain</i>		<i>Basque Country</i>		<i>Andalusia</i>		<i>Galicia</i>		<i>Valencia</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
	5	354	34.6	152	8.7	543	36.2	111	10.2	51
6	110	10.8	126	7.2	138	9.2	99	9.1	78	18.4
7	180	17.6	191	11.0	220	14.6	195	18.0	83	19.6
8	128	12.5	216	12.4	151	10.1	150	13.8	62	14.7
9	81	7.9	228	13.1	136	9.1	133	12.2	49	11.6
10	55	5.4	203	11.7	121	8.1	113	10.4	30	7.1
11	55	5.4	184	10.6	87	5.8	85	7.8	26	6.1
12	25	2.7	163	9.4	45	3.2	87	8.0	23	5.4
13	17	1.7	120	6.9	25	1.7	50	4.6	13	3.1
14	9	0.9	97	5.6	16	1.1	37	3.4	5	1.2
15	6	0.6	57	3.3	17	1.1	26	2.4	3	0.7
Total	1,023	100	1,738	100	1,502	100	1,086	100	423	100

Evidence based on internal structure. One test of internal validity is the unidimensionality of a scale. Some studies already indicate that the UPAS is unidimensional. Rojas (1999) applied the rating scale model (Andrich 1978a, 1978b; Masters 1980; Wright and Masters 1982) to evaluate the unidimensionality of the UPAS for Spain as a whole ($n = 1,211$). This item response theory, polytomous model is a stochastic parameterization of Guttman-pattern data (Wright and Linacre 1992). Results for the rating scale model showed an appropriate fit, indicating the possibility of locating persons and items on a unidimensional continuum.

TABLE 3
Item-Total Correlations and Cronbach's alpha Coefficients (α)

Item	Item-Total Correlation				
	Spain	Basque Country	Andalusia Region	Region of Galicia	Region of Valencia
1	.593	.517	.624	.498	.453
2	.620	.632	.632	.608	.548
3	.649	.564	.652	.609	.590
4	.583	.652	.618	.655	.623
5	.497	.604	.581	.591	.509
α	.791	.806	.814	.804	.761

We carried out a principal components analysis to further test the internal validity of the UPAS. We began by calculating Bartlett's sphericity test and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index for all samples. The former allows us to test the hypothesis that there are no correlations between items. Values for the sphericity tests were as follows: Spain = 1,654.53, Basque Country = 2,799.10, Andalusia = 2,698.72, Galicia = 1,702.14, and Valencia = 526.30 ($p < .001$ for all). This shows that we can, in fact, reject the null hypothesis. The values from the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index (Spain = 0.772, Basque Country = 0.796, Andalusia = 0.800, Galicia = 0.799, and Valencia = 0.800) were acceptable, indicating that the correlations between pairs of items may be explained by the remaining items (Kaiser 1974).

Table 4 shows the results of the principal components analysis. The first factor explains between 53% (for Valencia) and 59% (for Andalusia) of the variance across the five samples.

The communalities of the items range from 0.380 for item 1 in the Valencia sample to 0.661 for item 4 in the Galicia sample. The factor loading for all items in the first factor is quite high, ranging from 0.62 for item 1 in the Valencia sample to 0.80 for item 4 in the Valencia sample. All loadings for all variables are greater than 0.60 on the first factor. These data favor a unidimensional interpretation of the construct being measured (Carmines and Zeller 1979; Reckase 1979).

Evidence based on relations with other variables. We applied two methods for this type of evidence. First, we did a correlational study, testing the relation between scores on the UPAS and scores from Inglehart's Postmaterialism Scale (Inglehart 1990; Abramson and Inglehart 1995). This

TABLE 4
Eigenvalues, Percentages of Explained Variance, Communalities, and Factorial Loadings of Items in Samples

	<i>Spain</i>		<i>Basque Country</i>		<i>Andalusia Region</i>		<i>Region of Galicia</i>		<i>Region of Valencia</i>	
	<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Percentage of Explained Variance</i>	<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Percentage of Explained Variance</i>	<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Percentage of Explained Variance</i>	<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Percentage of Explained Variance</i>	<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Percentage of Explained Variance</i>
Factors										
1	2.814	56.3	2.838	56.8	2.961	59.2	2.835	56.7	2.645	52.89
2	0.881		0.822		0.779		0.780		0.823	
3	0.518		0.534		0.511		0.571		0.568	
4	0.430		0.454		0.376		0.441		0.524	
5	0.357		0.353		0.372		0.373		0.440	
	<i>Spain</i>		<i>Basque Country</i>		<i>Andalusia Region</i>		<i>Region of Galicia</i>		<i>Region of Valencia</i>	
	<i>Communality</i>	<i>Factorial Loading</i>	<i>Communality</i>	<i>Factorial Loading</i>	<i>Communality</i>	<i>Factorial Loading</i>	<i>Communality</i>	<i>Factorial Loading</i>	<i>Communality</i>	<i>Factorial Loading</i>
Items										
1	0.532	0.730	0.453	0.673	0.565	0.752	0.433	0.658	0.380	0.616
2	0.603	0.777	0.619	0.787	0.607	0.779	0.588	0.767	0.548	0.740
3	0.607	0.779	0.516	0.718	0.605	0.778	0.575	0.758	0.568	0.753
4	0.594	0.771	0.659	0.812	0.617	0.785	0.661	0.813	0.646	0.804
5	0.477	0.691	0.592	0.769	0.567	0.753	0.580	0.761	0.504	0.710

scale was also included in the World Values Survey from 1995–1996. Second, we studied differences among the scores of the persons from the various samples in the survey.

The Postmaterialism Scale was developed in the 1970s to detect changes in culture and values in Western societies. Inglehart (1977) referred to those changes as a “silent revolution.” The American political scientist was inspired by Maslow’s (1954) needs hierarchy (which states that as lower-level needs are satisfied, higher and higher ones are pursued) and by Almond and Verba’s (1963, 1990) transnational studies (which highlighted the role of civic and political values and behaviors in the development and maturity of democracies. Inglehart (1990) found that values change from the pursuit of material aims and needs (economic and physical security) to the pursuit of postmaterialistic aims and needs (sense of membership, self-esteem, intellectual needs, and aesthetic needs). Analysis of data from the World Values Survey of 1991, for about fifty countries, shows that this change in values is manifest in the political field by an increase in participation in unconventional political activities and actions (Inglehart, Basáñez, and Moreno 1998).

We used the twelve-point Postmaterialism Scale from the 1995–1996 iteration of the World Values Survey (*Análisis Sociológico Económico y Político* 1999). The correlations obtained between the UPAS and the Postmaterialism Scale are Spain = .433, Basque Country = .433, Andalusia = .305, Galicia = .462, and Valencia = .345 ($p < .001$ for all). These results agree with the initial hypothesis, derived from theory, that as populations achieve democracy, their political values evolve from material to postmaterial and their political behavior becomes more unconventional.

Specifically, in the research on values in the Basque Country and Navarra within the World Values Survey, the ideology-driven voters of the radical nationalist political party, Herri Batasuna, stand out. This group has the highest percentage justifying political violence and the use of all modes of action—including illegal ones—for a political fight (Garmendia, Larrañaga, and Buenetxea 1996). Radical nationalism has significant weight among the population’s electoral preferences in these provinces, showing up in social agitation and other forms of direct action. We should expect, then, that the Basque Country will show higher values on the UPAS than will the population of Spain generally or the population of regions such as Andalusia or Valencia. If this were the case, it would lend support for use of the UPAS.

Table 5 shows the results of an analysis of variance on differences among the means of the UPAS across the five samples.

Overall, the results are clearly significant. Results show statistically significant differences between UPAS averages in the different samples. A mul-

TABLE 5
Analysis of Variance: Unconventional Political Action Scale Scores by Samples

<i>Source</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of Freedom</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F Ratio</i>	<i>Probability</i>
Between groups	5,175.230	4	1,293.807	199.273	.000
Within groups	37,443.097	5,767	6.493		
Total	42,618.326	5,771			

multiple comparison analysis, using Tukey's honestly significant difference test, confirms the statistically significant differences found between the mean pairs of samples ($p < .001$), except for the averages of Andalusia and Spain ($p \geq .533$). These results provide further support for the hypothesis that the Basque Country will have the highest average UPAS score, while Andalusia and Spain as a whole will have the lowest average scores (see Table 2).

CONCLUSIONS

A study was done of the psychometric properties of the UPAS used in Spain in the 1995–1996 World Values Survey. The internal consistency of the scores shows that the scale performed well across five samples, including one for Spain as a whole and four for regions of the country. Results of validity tests provide reasonably strong assurance that the scale scores are a measure of unconventional political actions. Furthermore, we conclude that the scale is measuring a unidimensional construct, meaning that one may add a person's answers to the five items in the scale to obtain a total score for a person on their participation in unconventional political actions.

Future studies can improve the UPAS by including other unconventional political actions, such as sit-ins, violence against people and things, and so forth. Future work with the scale should include testing the relation of UPAS scores with various social and demographic variables and with dimensions of political culture such as level of political competition, participation in voluntary associations and new social movements, confidence in different institutions, and so on. Finally, further work with the UPAS should involve comparison of the results from Spain with results from other countries.

APPENDIX

Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it.

	<i>Have Done</i>	<i>Might Do</i>	<i>Would Never Do</i>	<i>Do Not Know</i>
1. Signing a petition	1	2	3	9
2. Joining in boycotts	1	2	3	9
3. Attending lawful demonstrations	1	2	3	9
4. Joining unofficial strikes	1	2	3	9
5. Occupying buildings or factories	1	2	3	9

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