THE RENAISSANCE OF A RUBRIC: POLITICAL CULTURE AS CONCEPT AND THEORY

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, several prominent scholars have attempted to reinvigorate political-culture theory and defend it from the challenge that rational-choice theory poses. Yet the primary threat to the 'renaissance' of political-culture theory comes not from rational-choice theory but from political culture's continued weakness as concept and theory. Even after the theoretical and empirical defenses provided in recent years, political culture remains poorly explicated along seven distinct dimensions: (1) how to define the concept; (2) how to disentangle subcultures (for example an élite political culture) from a society's overall political culture; (3) how to integrate the many individual-level orientations of which the concept is composed; (4) how to create a societal-level variable from individual-level components; (5) if the foregoing have been resolved, how to measure the concept; (6) how to derive hypotheses about individual political behavior from the subjective orientations under study; and (7) how political culture interacts with institutions and other attributes of a polity to produce a propensity for certain types of political outcomes. With these tasks left uncompleted, political culture remains no more than a rubric under which different authors focus on different individual orientations, employ different measures and different methods of aggregating the orientations, then test different propositions about the links between those individual orientations and politics.

In the late 1980s, the defenders of political culture's role in comparative politics made a determined counter-attack against the advancing battalions of rational-choice theory. The counter-attack employed both theoretical and empirical weaponry. Wildavsky (1987) laid down ground cover by sniping at the exogeneity of preferences in rational-choice theory. 'But where do people's preferences come from?' was Wildavsky's question. His answer:

'culture.' Eckstein (1988, p. 789) claimed that cultural theory is 'one of two still viable general approaches to political theory and explanation' (the other being the rational-choice perspective) and that deciding between the two is a top item on the agenda of political science. Eckstein then provided more detail on the theoretical assumptions underlying a 'culturalist' approach to politics. Neither of these authors attempted to support the culturalist approach empirically. Inglehart's (1988) argument for a 'renaissance' of political culture, by contrast, dealt little with the theoretical underpinnings of the approach, providing instead empirical support for its utility in understanding differences among Western democracies. Coming close together as they did, these three articles placed the debate about mass orientations and politics back onto the center stage it had vacated in the 1970s (for histories, see Barry 1970, Almond 1990, Brint 1991) and sparked a new wave of analysis of political cultures and their impacts (e.g. Diamond 1993*b*). Gabriel Almond, one of the founders of the approach, recently (1993) referred to these developments as a 'return to culture.'

Although citizen orientations do deserve attention from those engaged in the comparative study of politics and although survey research should continue to be an important 'technology' for measuring and analyzing citizen outlooks, conceptual and theoretical difficulties continue to confront the 'renaissance of' or the 'return to' political culture. Those who rode out in the late 1980s to save political-culture theory fought bravely and did score points against simplistic rational-choice propositions. Certainly, given the many disagreements about basic postulates that remain among rational-choice modellers, these authors make a convincing case that cross-national differences in mass political orientations can be ignored only at great peril. Yet in promoting political culture as a concept with attendant theory, they failed to provide a clear set of tools for those who would like to measure and comparatively analyze the mass-level political cultures of different societies. The main threat to political culture, in other words, comes not from a rival approach but from behind its defenders' own lines. For the culturalist approach to aspire to being a viable general approach to political theory and explanation, its proponents must shore up both the concept of political culture and the theory that links political culture to political processes. I seek, therefore, to specify seven intellectual tasks, the completion of which would shore up political culture as a concept and the cultural approach as a means to acquire knowledge. With these tasks left uncompleted, political culture remains no more than a rubric under which different authors focus on different individual orientations, employ different measures and different methods of aggregating the orientations, then test different propositions about the links between those individual orientations and politics.

POLITICAL CULTURE'S CRITICS AND DEFENDERS

Most of political culture's recent defenders (Wildavsky 1987 is a noteworthy exception: Thompson *et al.* 1990) fall within the individual-oriented, survey-based approach that excludes behavior and institutions from the definition of culture—the approach that grew largely from the work of Gabriel Almond.[1] Throughout this article, I direct my attention to this mainstream understanding. The research that this approach generated has been influential. Few textbooks on politics or comparative politics lack a chapter or section discussing it. Yet several problems with the Almondian conception of political culture and its usage in the major early works gained prominence in the 1970s and early 1980s (Barry 1970, Pateman 1971, Almond and Verba 1980, Patrick 1984). In one of the best-known critiques, Barry (1970, p. 88) focused on three difficulties: in definition, in formulation of hypotheses and in providing evidence of causality.[2] Some saw the arguments made in the pathbreaking study, Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture* (1963), as implying that there was only a single path of political development—the Anglo–American one—and as thus cloaking an ideological argument in quasi-theoretical language (e.g. Brown 1979, p. 3).

As these criticisms emerged, the argument that each society has a 'political culture' shaping its politics began to vie with theories of rational choice to serve as the dominant conceptual framework for the comparative study of politics (see, for example, Rogowski 1974, Almond and Verba 1980, Eckstein 1988). Political culturalists claim that political science ought to benefit from psychology, sociology and anthropology as well as (or more than) from economics. For them, two societies sharing all the same institutional and structural conditions could nevertheless differ in their political dynamics if their political cultures differed significantly. For instance, the Spanish transition to democracy in the

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[1] It is important to note that a 'political culture,' as that term is used by its proponents within mainstream political science and as I use it here, corresponds only imperfectly to what anthropologists would call a culture (though they have a multiplicity of definitions of the term). 'Culture,' for anthropologists, usually incorporates behavior patterns as well as subjective orientations. Anthropologists are less likely to separate culture from structure or from institutions than are the political scientists employing the Almondian sense of political culture. Though a few political scientists argue in favor of incorporating political behavior into our understandings of political culture, most agree that using political culture to explain political behavior is a primary goal, and thus they must not conflate the two. Also, of course, the 'culture' in political culture does not refer to popular culture (literature, film, music) even though the latter influences politics and political attitudes.

[2] Almond (1990) includes in his list of the four major attacks on political-culture theory the claim that political-culture theory is determinist in attributing causality from culture to behavior or institutions. He mentions Barry and Pateman as theorists who have raised this issue. Almond dismisses this as a straw-man polemic and states specifically that political culture is generally agreed by its users to both influence and be influenced by structure and performance. 'The causal arrow goes both ways.' Almond is correct to discount that charge as a valid critique of the political culture approach. Yet it is ironic that Almond neglects entirely a damaging and less easily dismissed critique (the one that actually seems to have been Barry's point): merely to present correlations between subjective orientations and a dependent variable (such as stable democracy) says *nothing at all* about causality.

late 1970s and early 1980s is likely to have only partial applicability to the
transition in, say, Poland because of those countries' cultural differences.
Inglehart (1988, p. 1228) threw down the gauntlet colorfully, 'Both social analysis
and social policy would be much simpler if people from different societies were
interchangeable robots. But a large body of evidence indicates they are not.
The peoples of given societies tend to be characterized by durable cultural
attributes that sometimes have major political and economic consequences.'
Moreover, theorists of political culture assert that cultural differences across
societies are neither idiosyncratic nor unknowable. They argue that they have
derived theoretical expectations as to which specific aspects of any society's
political culture influence its political dynamics. Thus, certain key cultural
differences specified ahead of time can be employed to explain cross-society
differences rather than making the task of cross-society research seem futile.

   In part, the sharp contrast between the rational–choice approach and the
political culture approach (à la Eckstein) has been overstated. Barry (1970,
pp. 180–2) points out in his critical comparison of the two approaches that one
can posit culturally derived values as underlying a rational actor's preference
ranking (see also Elkins and Simeon 1979, Lane 1992). Still, the differing
emphases mentioned above carry theoretical import. For example, Eckstein
argues that actors must have general predispositions to act in certain ways in
certain situations and that, without such dispositions, their actions would be
'erratic: patternless, anomic.' A rational–choice theorist would likely chuckle at
such melodrama and reply that human beings are quite capable of deciding
how to act in response to the nature of the situation itself. Eckstein (1988,
pp. 790 and 792), in turn, provides a reply to the effect that decision costs
become overwhelming if people must calculate their response to every situation.

   In the 1970s, political culture experienced a decline in popularity. Still, the
original rationale for the study of political cultures remained: how can scholars
satisfactorily explain cross-national differences in politics without attending to
the subjective orientations of the societies' members? By the late 1980s, a
reaction to the criticisms had set in: perhaps political culture could be defended
from its attackers and its popularity restored? As noted, significant efforts came
from Eckstein, Inglehart and Almond. Eckstein (1988) focuses on spelling out
the social–psychological assumptions on which an understanding of political
culture can rest, assumptions which can accommodate certain types of cultural
change. Inglehart (1988 and 1990) analyzes time series data for each of nine or
more Western democracies—the type of dataset not available to students of
political culture in the 1960s—and shows significant continuities over time in
countries' differing mean scores for life satisfaction (which he views as an
operationalization of 'diffuse support for democratic institutions'), interpersonal
trust and non-support for revolutionary change. He defines a democratic political

culture with these orientations. Almond (1990, pp. 144–5) raises and dismisses four critiques of political-culture theory: the argument that it is deterministic, the claim that class structure determines attitudes, the argument for adding behavior to the definition, and the argument that rational behavior can explain cross-cultural differences. He also defends the political culture approach, first, by citing its ancient antecedents and, second, by showing the breadth of sophisticated empirical research to which political culture arguments have given rise in the last few decades.

WHY THE COUNTER-ATTACK FELL SHORT

These articles, and the re-thinking of political culture they present, are important contributions to the discipline. They provide answers to several important critiques. They are most convincing in underscoring the importance to comparative politics of cross-national differences in the patterns of citizen outlooks. They nicely reiterate the theoretical rationale for measuring and analyzing such individual outlooks as tolerance, willingness to compromise, self-efficacy, propensity to participate and interpersonal trust.

It is a short and convenient step from there to placing such values under the *rubric* of 'political culture.' A rubric provides a useful title for referring to a class of objects without the assumption that the objects together constitute a unified whole. For example, Inglehart's (1988, p. 1218; 1990, p. 44) use of interpersonal trust, life satisfaction and support for revolutionary change as three variables grouped together under the label of 'civic culture' seems to be using culture as a rubric. The important variables are the three individual values. Inglehart does not deal with how they might together form a single concept called '[civic] culture.' (Neither Inglehart's 1988 article nor the slightly revised chapter in his 1990 book clarifies how the three variables are analyzed in the LISREL model, whether as three separate variables or as a single index created somehow out of the three variables). Of course, Inglehart's work makes a genuine contribution by advancing the debate about the nature and impact of comparative patterns of individual political values. The very significance of his findings make it harder to see the need for claims about there being a larger, more complex 'culture' at work.

Nevertheless, few advocates of the study of political culture accept it as a rubric that provides simplicity of wording when referring to the cross-national study of values. The recent defenders assert that political culture can serve as a concept in comparative empirical, usually survey-based, research. The *raisons d'être* of employing the term political culture require this. First, its purpose is to be an attribute of an entire society: each unit in a comparative study has one and only one political culture, however depicted. Second, this attribute of a

given society or social grouping—its culture—must be comparable to the cultures of other societies or social groupings. (This could mean comparing the culture of one society to that of another at the same time or comparing a society's culture at one time to its culture at a different time). The results of the comparisons—cross-society similarities and differences in cultures, whether explicit or implicit—must lend insight into political processes or outcomes. Defenders of the culturalist approach to comparative politics assert that political culture already can serve these purposes. They assert, in other words, that it is possible to make and defend statements of the following type: 'Russia's political culture is of the X type. Because this makes it different from Spain's political culture, which is of the Y type, the otherwise very similar institutions and level of economic development will produce different political outcomes in Russia than in Spain.' (Alternatively, the statement might be that 'Russia's political culture falls at this point along the spectrum of political cultures, while Spain's . . . .') It is in sustaining these more ambitious claims that the recent defenders fail. The need remains to strengthen the concept itself and the scholarly approach of which it is the centerpiece.

What would characterize an ideal scholarly study in which political culture was more than a rubric for the study of values? It would, I argue, meet seven straightforward—but in practice extremely challenging—requirements. The first five requirements listed below focus on political culture as an empirically grounded concept. Meeting these five requirement would solve the three problems that Sartori (1984, pp. 28–35) argues a definition must solve: the border problem (to be settled by denotative definitions), the membership problem (precising definitions) and the measurability problem (operational definitions which generally hinge on the search for valid indicators). The final two requirements I discuss deal with the concept's place in any theory of politics.

An ideal culturalist study would, first, clearly and specifically define political culture (using terms generalizable to many settings). Second, the author would specify the population to which the concept applies (masses vs. activists vs. élites, for example) and how sub-cultures relate conceptually to the overall societal culture. Third, the author would indicate and justify how, if the concept were defined as having multiple components, he or she had combined the various components into a single concept. Fourth, the author would detail the means by which he or she employed individual-level attributes, such as political values, to construct something that applies to a society, namely its political culture. Fifth, this exemplary piece would explain which research techniques are appropriate for measuring a society's political culture as the author defines it and why. Sixth, the author would make explicit the hypothesized link between culture and individual behavior. Seventh and finally, if the author intends to

use the concept to explain some aspect of political outcomes—such as whether democracy takes root—he or she would explicate his or her assumptions about how a society's political culture relates to other politically relevant features of the society, including the development and functioning of political institutions. Ideally, this contribution, to have the postulated impact, should find its approach, especially its definition of the term political culture, widely accepted so that research could thereafter cumulate.

DEFINITIONS

One clear difficulty is that political culture has almost as many definitions as authors who employ it (see Patrick 1984, Lane 1992, p. 363). Almond and Verba (1963, p. 13) defined a society's political culture as the set of 'attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system' held by its members. Their book and its definition were widely influential, yet, strangely, not even those accepting this general definitional approach wanted to adopt precisely the same definition. This included one of *The Civic Culture's* co-authors, Sydney Verba! In a later essay, Verba (1965, p. 513) defined political culture as 'the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which define the situation in which political actions takes place.' Verba's definition illustrates one of the problems that scholars found early on with the Almond and Verba definition: the term 'attitudes' is too limiting for characterizing the components of a political culture. Yet those providing definitions substituted alternative words—beliefs, values, orientations, expectations, symbols, perceptions, knowledge, affect, norms—too freely, often without considering the implications for the concept.[3]

This profusion of definitions does not worry all scholars. Certainly much of the variety of definitions can be explained as a discussion among scholars about how best to define the term to give it general applicability. So, some see the lack of an agreed-upon definition as a sign of creative application. Yet the ability to modify the meaning of the concept according to one's research parameters poses problems as well (on this point, see also Lane 1992). It amounts to what Sartori (1984, p. 35) has called 'collective ambiguity' about a concept, which can reach the point of 'destroying a discipline as a cumulative fabric of knowledge.' It also, ipso facto, reduces the accumulation of findings by making

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[3] Despite the different ways that culturalists formulate the term, they tend to agree that it ought to refer to something more deep-seated than public opinion. The latter typically indicates orientations toward *contemporary* issues, actors and events in civic life. Political culture, by contrast, is reserved for orientations toward the fundamental institutions and processes of the political system (Rosenbaum 1972, ch. 5). As Wildavsky (1987) notes, this is one strength of the culturalist approach, because it makes the formation of preferences an object of study, which rational-choice theory does not. It does, however, raise the stakes involved in defining and measuring political culture.

it difficult to contrast results from different research projects. Thus, any 'renaissance' of political culture should rest on more widespread definitional agreement than found among the concept's pioneers.

How do those seeking to rehabilitate political culture deal with definitional issues? Inglehart (1988), intent on examining empirical evidence, provides no explicit definition. He implies that he is following the Almond and Verba understanding of the concept. Yet he is quite casual about it, for he actually departs from their definition when he describes the political-culture approach as dealing with 'certain supportive *habits* and attitudes among the general public' (Inglehart 1988, p. 1204, italics added). If by 'habits,' Inglehart refers to forms of behavior, habits would be, strictly speaking, excluded from Almond and Verba's definition. In his 1990 book-length study (p. 18), Inglehart defines culture as 'a system of attitudes, values and knowledge that is widely shared within a society and transmitted from generation to generation.'

Eckstein, despite arguing that the major challenge for culturalists is conceptualization and theory development, never actually defines political culture. He is laudably clear on defining the *components* of a political culture:

Orientations are not 'attitudes': the latter are specific, the former *general*, dispositions. Attitudes themselves derive from and express orientations; though attitudes may, through their patterning, help us to find orientations. If orientations frequently occur in collectivities they may be called 'culture themes,' . . . It is conventional to regard orientations as having three components: cognitive elements that, so to speak, decode experience (give it meaning); affective elements that invest cognition with feelings that 'move' actors to act; and evaluative elements that provide goals towards which actors are moved to act (1988, pp. 790–1, italics in original).

The only evidence that Eckstein presents about how orientations or predispositions relate to political culture comes when he mentions 'culture themes' and when he summarizes (p. 792) by saying that 'the patterns of such predispositions vary from society to society.' Nor is it clear what to make of such things as 'frequently occurring orientations' or 'patterns.'

Almond (1990, pp. 143–4) sums up what political culturalists (of this school) accept about the term:

Political culture theory defines political culture in this four-fold way: (1) It consists of the set of subjective orientations to politics in a national population or subset of a national population. (2) It has cognitive, affective and evaluative components; it includes knowledge and beliefs about political reality, feelings with respect to politics, and commitments to political values. (3) The content of political culture is the result of childhood socialization, education, media exposure, and adult experiences with governmental, social and economic performance. (4) Political culture affects political and governmental structure and performance—constrains it, but surely does not

determine it. The causal arrows between culture and structure and performance go both ways.

Almond's definition (points 1 and 2) is extremely broad. One might therefore imagine all culturalists of this school accepting Almond's wording as a single working definition to improve comparability. Yet, a definition so general actually increases the challenges of producing a workable empirical conceptualization. It will likely fall short of Sartori's (1984, p. 56) standard that a concept's empirical definition contain enough characteristics to identify the referents and their boundaries and that it include no non-essential property among the necessary, defining properties. Notice also that Almond and others use the term 'set' of orientations while Eckstein mentions the 'patterns.' The former are defining a society's culture as all the orientations taken somehow together as a whole. Eckstein's wording emphasizes not the whole but relationships among the parts. Verba's (1965, p. 513) and Inglehart's (1990, p. 18) 'the system of' adds its own wrinkle, though it would seem to be closer to Eckstein's 'patterns' than to 'sets.' These differences are not trivial; they have important ramifications for the third challenge discussed below as well as for the conduct of research. (The mathematics of 'sets' and that of 'systems' are quite distinct, for example). So, while common adoption of Almond's general depiction might be helpful, further specification of an empirical definition remains a task facing political culture theorists.

WHOSE CULTURE IS BEING STUDIED?

The concept of political culture must be clear about the populations to which its definition allows it to apply. 'Students of culture who wish to refine its utility as an explanatory concept must develop precise means of identifying the culture-bearing unit in different situations' (Elkins and Simeon 1979, p. 129). For example, an important element of recent debates over processes of democratization has been whether élites alone must have democratic values or whether the mass public must also have (or come to have) such values (for a review, see Diamond 1993a, pp. 2–7). Defenders of political culture are quite willing to admit that sub-cultures, including the élite sub-culture, are important in most countries. They point to the potential increase in theoretical leverage to be gained by exploring how political subcultures relate to one another. The ability to examine such subcultural clashes is an advantage of political-culture theory. (For recent defenses of the benefits of analyzing the political culture of subnational groups, see Wildavsky (1987) and Lane (1992). Note, however, that both Wildavsky and Lane are explicit in rejecting the mainstream focus on individual orientations in favor of using the group as a unit of analysis).

Yet acknowledging that élites differ from non-élites in attitudes, in the sophistication of their world view, and in much else does not by itself justify distinguishing between élite and mass political cultures. The élite must be *culturally* distinct from the rest of society. And, if such is the case, then it undercuts the existence of a political culture characterizing the larger society of which they are part. If, for example, one argues that members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union shared a distinct political culture, that suggests that there was no single Soviet political culture but at least two. Similarly, to contrast the Ukrainian subculture and the Russian subculture within the Ukrainian state is worthwhile, but, if one demonstrates the existence of two different cultures, additional theoretical steps will be needed to characterize the political culture of the entire Ukrainian society. To the extent that the object of study is some form of a culture, it must refer to an entire social grouping. If one argues that ethnically Lithuanian and ethnically Polish citizens of Lithuania have distinct political cultures, one must maintain that separation throughout the analysis. Yet for many research questions, such as democratization, the nation-state is the proper unit of analysis. How to take the reality of multiple political cultures within a political state into account in cross-national studies remains an unanswered question, one which would depend on, among other things, the definition of culture that had been adopted.

AGGREGATING ORIENTATIONS FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL

Any time one employs a concept as a single variable with multiple components (orientations, values or whatever), one must clarify and defend the means by which the components were merged. In many cases, this is a straightforward methodological problem to resolve: an indexing task. The scholar would specify and defend particular weights and additive techniques. Identifying and agreeing upon techniques for aggregating separate orientations would facilitate cumulative discussions of the political influence of different political cultures.

In the case of an individual's subjective orientations, however, indexing may be inappropriate. One school of political psychology has been at work examining how different types of subjective orientations inter-relate. This work is generally referred to as the study of schemata (Conover and Feldman 1984, Hamill *et al.* 1985, Miller *et al.* 1986, Kuklinski *et al.* 1991, Lodge *et al.* 1991). The essence of this literature is that one cannot understand the impact of individuals' attitudes or evaluations unless one knows the cognitive processes by which the brain relates different types of information to one another. If this school carries weight, it certainly raises yet another hurdle for the political culture researcher: to provide a theoretical rationale for the cognitive relations among the subjective orientations under study. If schema are at work in individuals, then atheoretical

index building would confuse more than it would enlighten. The conceptual movement from individual to society is unlikely to be successful if one cannot correctly move from type of cognition to individual. Wildavsky's work (1987, Thompson *et al.* 1990) takes an approach that avoids the problem of aggregating components by arguing that 'culture' is in fact the unifier, the shaper of cognitions. Culture is not comprised of attitudes, orientations, etc. but produces them. This approach may have difficulty finding common acceptance, however, since it makes secondary the analysis of survey data on levels of trust, life satisfaction and other commonly studied orientations.

The challenge of weaving many different psychological orientations together is heightened by the nature of the definitions of political culture. In line with their intent to use political culture as a systemic variable, scholars have defined it in comprehensive terms, e.g. as *'all* the important ways in which a person is oriented' (Rosenbaum 1972, p. 4, italics added). Measuring such a complex construct for a single individual seems daunting. In practice, of course, empirical analyses rarely incorporate more than a few aspects of any definition of political culture and therefore can shed only partial light on this multifaceted phenomenon.

Almond and Powell (1992, pp. 39–43) have suggested a modification of Almond's understanding of political culture that recognizes the need to aggregate the multiple components included in his definition of the term. They argue that each individual's orientations fall into three categories: orientations toward the political system, the political process and the policy outputs of the system. Instead of discussing how one could form these into a general political culture, they assert that each society therefore has a system culture, a process culture and a policy culture. This tack naturally leaves the question of aggregation or indexing open: determining how various orientations combine to produce a single system culture, process culture or policy culture poses the same challenge as figuring out how to measure a society's political culture.

AGGREGATING INDIVIDUALS' ORIENTATIONS ACROSS A SOCIETY

Repeatedly when attempting to determine the meaning and scope of political culture, difficulties crop up with the fourth aspect of a satisfactory conceptualization: constructing a societal-level or group-level variable out of individual attributes. The emphasis that political culture is more than numerous distributions of individual orientations was particularly important to those developing the term. They saw political culture as a way to overcome the excessive individualism of behavioral political analysis by linking individual attributes to the 'total political system' (Pye 1965, p. 9). In Pye's (1965, p. 7) words: 'The notion of political culture assumes that the attitudes, sentiments

and cognitions that inform and govern political behavior in any society are not just random congeries but represent coherent patterns which fit together and are mutually reinforcing.' Dittmer (1983, p. 23) stresses that '[P]olitical culture is not just a haphazard collection of beliefs and values, but a system in which the various parts must bear an integral relationship with one another.' Almost every standard treatment of the topic makes references to political culture as a whole. In the words of Elkins and Simeon (1979, p. 129): 'Political culture is the property of a collectivity—nation, region, class, ethnic community, formal organization, party or whatever. Individuals have beliefs, values and attitudes but they do not have cultures.'

The proponents of political culture, then, clearly intended to create a unified concept. That is, when comparing the politics of various societies, culturalists seek to explain similarities and differences in part by employing a single variable entitled 'political culture,' the values of which differ across those societies. However, in setting out to conceive and then measure such a societal variable, political culturalists examine attributes of individual human beings. This is the great attraction of the approach and the source of a good deal of its richness. In Verba's (1965, p. 517) words, 'although the political behavior of individuals and groups is of course affected by acts of government officials, wars, election campaigns and the like, it is even more affected by the meanings that are assigned those events by observers. This is to say no more than that people respond to what they perceive of politics and how they interpret what they see.' Who could disagree with such a proposition?

Yet how can we, in practice, create a concept that applies to a collectivity of thousands or millions of people out of hypotheses about individuals? How can we, for instance, treat a society's political culture as a '*system* of control' (Verba 1965, p. 517)? Creating a societal concept out of individual orientations is logically possible, but it presents daunting definitional and practical problems. The challenge is to overcome the 'individualist fallacy'—the fallacy of deriving conclusions about a higher level of aggregation from data on individuals *without a theoretical rationale that links the two levels* (Simon 1962, Scheuch 1969, Webster 1973, Mayer 1989, p. 201, Hannan 1991). This issue was cogently presented over two decades ago by a leading light, Lucian Pye (1972), yet no one has met the challenge. Interestingly, none of the recent defenses of a cultural approach even cite Pye's article. Moreover, as noted above, theorists use different formulations to characterize the link between individuals and society, including 'the set of,' 'the pattern of,' 'a syndrome of' and 'the system of.'

In cross-national empirical work, analysts have too frequently been willing to characterize an entire society with a single number without providing a theoretical rationale linking the individual level of analysis to the societal. When this occurs, political culture becomes hard to distinguish from the nemesis its

proponents originally sought to vanquish: national character. Culturalists (e.g. Almond and Verba 1963, Pye 1965, Inglehart 1990, p. 17) have derided those who spoke of a country's national character because they were simplistically characterizing an entire, complex society with a single label. Yet reaching cross-national conclusions based solely on a measure of central tendency veers close to this. Dittmer (1983, p. 10) and Mayer (1989, pp. 181–2) refer to this as creating a 'modal personality.' Hannan (1991, p. 6) put it as follows: 'unless the addition operation corresponds to some social phenomenon, the group level concept has no meaning other than as a kind of "aggregate" psychological concept.'

The lack of theoretical guides for creating society-wide numbers has implications for measurement strategies as well. Virtually anything that a researcher would like to measure as an individual value, attitude or other type of orientation will vary in the intensity with which individuals hold it. For instance, in seeking to determine whether a society is characterized by 'greater' inter-personal trust than other societies, the analyst needs to distinguish between 'more heart-felt' trust and 'more citizens who fall into the "trusting" category.' When a survey item can take on only two values, the respondents' intensity of preference is ignored altogether. The resulting mean reflects a proportion, not an average. Even when respondents can select from a larger number of categories and thereby indicate the intensity with which they hold the value, assumptions have to be made about the meaning of the numbers assigned to the categories in order to employ the answers as quantitative data (Tufte 1969, Lodge and Tursky 1979, 1981). Two societies with quite different patterns of inter-personal trust could produce the same mean. Some authors employ both the mean of a variable and the proportion of respondents falling into one of two collapsed categories at different times. For example, when Inglehart (1988) examines cross-national and over-time data on responses about people's satisfaction with their life as a whole, his first figure presents the proportion who select 'very satisfied,' while his second figure switches to mean scores.

I raise this point about the difference between a mean and a proportion not to argue that multiple categories must always be used so that differences in the distribution of intensities can be determined. It might well be appropriate to look at how many are or are not trustful, satisfied with their life, intolerant, efficacious or whatever. The point is that one needs a theoretical rationale for why a particular way of summarizing a large number of individual responses is appropriate. Political culture theorists rarely spell out such a rationale. Inglehart's strategy of displaying how many fall into the 'very satisfied' category is fine if one hypothesizes that life satisfaction contributes to stable democracy in a particular fashion: when individuals feel themselves to be very satisfied, their politically relevant thoughts and actions are qualitatively different from others

in the same society who are only partially satisfied or are dissatisfied and, furthermore, the more such very satisfied people there are in a society, the more support for democracy will be forthcoming (in a linear fashion). One might, by contrast, prefer to assume: (a) that life satisfaction has a range of intensities, perhaps adequately captured by five categories, perhaps requiring more categories or some form of magnitude scaling, and therefore that the differences between a partially satisfied citizen and a highly dissatisfied citizen are as important as the difference between a very satisfied citizen and a partially satisfied citizen; (b) that the relationship between life satisfaction and stable democracy is not purely linear but rather that (i) stable democracy only requires that a majority be somewhat or more satisfied; (ii) stable democracy will be threatened when more than a small minority feel themselves to be very dissatisfied even if many others are very satisfied; and (iii) that the number of satisfied citizens must be weighted by the political clout of different citizens (education, wealth, efficacy, etc.). A researcher who wants to assume any of these would not want to measure life satisfaction as Inglehart does.

Theory could provide a variety of ways out of the levels-of-analysis difficulty. Verba (1965, p. 525) mentions the anthropological approach of defining a culture as the orientations that are (100 percent) shared by and (100 percent) distinctive to the members of a given group. He rightly points out how limiting such a definition would be. An alternative—and, for political-culture theory, preferable—route would be to spell out the theoretical links between the complex patterns of subjective orientations that characterize the members of a society and some construct characterizing the entire society. These links have been called 'laws of composition' (Simon 1962) or 'auxiliary theories' (Elkins and Simeon 1979). The more precise and measurable these links, the better.

One approach that implicitly provides a link between individuals and society stresses the importance of the degree to which the members of a society *share* certain values, even if there is not 100 percent unanimity (Verba 1965, pp. 525–6, Elkins and Simeon 1979). Again, if the value or orientation under study can take on more than two values, measurement issues arise. Although it is not clear what statistic measures 'sharedness,' or consensus, when a value has different intensities, devising such a statistic is not the major hurdle. One possibility might be a variant of the indices of 'concentration of power' that have been developed for the study of multi-polar systems in international politics (Ray and Singer 1973). Employing such a measure, however, means that the 'sharedness,' or degree of consensus, of the subjective orientation—not the orientation itself—becomes the explanatory element.

A second possible way to overcome the levels of analysis problem is to redefine political culture such that it incorporates only societal-level attributes. A good example is to define political culture as a given society's symbols (e.g.

Elkins and Simeon 1979, Dittmer 1983, Welch 1987, p. 498). Symbols, by definition, are shared among many people, indeed, among most or all of those constituting the social group in which the symbols exist. Verba's (1965, p. 513) definition includes the term symbols as a component of political culture, though it also incorporates individual-level beliefs. A focus on rituals is a related approach (Lane 1991). Similarly, some authors discuss culture as norms that set standards of behavior (and attendant punishments for violations) common to all members of a society. Laitin (Laitin and Wildavsky 1988) argues that culture instills 'points of concern to be debated,' not values.

Focusing only on such societal concepts ensures that political culture will be treated as a societal attribute, but it siphons out of the concept what many saw as its richness and greatest potential: the ability to model individual human psychology interacting with its environment. Also, identifying symbols, rituals, norms or other non-individualistic phenomena is more difficult to study through survey research (at least of the standard type) (Elkins and Simeon 1979, Welch 1987, Laitin and Wildavsky 1988).

MEASUREMENT

Almond has noted that the development of sophisticated survey-research techniques was central to the blossoming of political-culture theory in recent decades. Yet as Laitin (Laitin and Wildavsky 1988, p. 592) points out, a respondent is unlikely to be fully aware of his or her deep-seated orientations (cf. Almond 1990). Even honest respondents might give answers that are misleading about very basic orientations. Of course, survey researchers now have a good deal of experience in resolving such problems. They must know what they are looking for, though. The problem for political-culture theory is the lack of specification of (or agreement about) what exactly is involved. If a researcher has satisfactorily dealt with the issues of definition discussed above, then justifying the use of particular survey techniques, by themselves or together with additional techniques, will be easy.

The five challenges discussed above focus on conceptual issues. Meeting these challenges requires scholars to define and measure political culture within the context of a theory of comparative politics. Not only does the larger theory provide the framework for conceptualizing political culture, the political culture approach seeks to go beyond description and *explain* political outcomes. Although political culture theories are generally better developed than the concept itself, more explicit attention to the place of political culture within the political system must characterize those conducting research. Two links in particular need to be clarified: the hypothesized link between individual orientations and

individual political behavior, and the link between individual behavior and the political outcomes of interest.

EMPLOYING POLITICAL CULTURE TO EXPLAIN INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR

What does an individual with a particular type of outlook do (or avoid doing) that an individual with a different outlook would not (or would) do? For a few salient orientations, the behavior that is expected to result has been posited clearly. A good example is interpersonal trust. A citizen who trusts other members of society is hypothesized to be more disposed to form and join secondary associations and to accept political losses without challenging the democratic order (Inglehart 1988, p. 1204). For most other orientations, the links to behavior have received little if any attention. Naturally, linking a political culture to behavior is, given the challenges discussed above, even more complex since one must link the balance among numerous orientations to behavior.

Moreover, empirical efforts to connect orientations and behavior require more than just posing and testing bivariate relationships between certain orientations and a propensity to some form of action or inaction. The presence or absence of individual behaviors might well reflect individual outlooks less than they reflect that polity's incentives for and restrictions on political behavior. A good deal of the work that examined political culture in Communist systems dealt with the issue of the link between orientations and behavior (e.g. Tucker 1973, 1987). It was an extremely difficult question. Mass protest against the regimes in Eastern Europe and the USSR did occur, but they were sporadic, flaring up and (prior to 1989) dying away in a different manner each time. Culturalist approaches that stressed the antipathy of, say, Polish culture toward Soviet-style rule could explain why large-scale protest was a potential outcome but not why it happened when it did. Those who saw in Russian political culture certain elements that produced relatively high support for Communist rule could not explain the protests of the late 1980s without saying that changes had been going on for some time. If so, why did the protests not begin earlier? Through one or another comparative technique, an analysis must attempt to control for participatory channels and other aspects of a political system when testing a hypothesized link between culture and individual behavior.

POLITICAL CULTURE AND THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

This leads into the seventh and final challenge facing those who would employ political culture: spelling out what they see as the connections between political culture and other aspects of a political system (or to undertake to discover such connections). It is not unfair to set this requirement before political-culture

theory. From the beginning, a society's political culture has been seen as a key component of the entire political system. Also, the recent defenses of political culture have explicitly sought to revive it not as mid-range theory but as grand theory. (Recall Eckstein's 'one of two still viable general approaches to political theory and explanation.').

One aspect of this task is to decide whether non-élites matter and, if so, how. If some people's behavior counts more than others', a measure of political culture based upon the entire mass public of a society will not suffice. Numerous studies show that élites hold quite different beliefs and orientations than non-élites in the same society. Moreover, equally strong evidence indicates that élites act upon their beliefs more often and more effectively than non-élites; this is, indeed, a definition of a member of the élite (Verba *et al.* 1978). In his recent defense of political-culture theory, Diamond (1993*a*, pp. 2–7) makes a strong case for the importance of élite values in the successful 'crafting' of democratic institutions. Having done this, however, Diamond does not discuss whether élite values might not be the same as those comprising the mass political culture and what impact, if any, the mass public's political culture is likely to have.

This lack of attention to the link between mass values and political outcomes has contributed to a popular argument that political-culture theory is of little relevance to recent democratizations. Not everyone believes that 'It is obvious ... that the emergence and persistence of a democratic government among a group of people depends in some way on their *beliefs*' (Dahl 1989, p. 30). A prominent group of scholars, sometimes dubbed the 'élitist school' of democracy, has been contesting this view for some time (Schumpeter 1942, Schattschneider 1960, Lijphart 1968, Rustow 1970, O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, Przeworski 1986, di Palma 1990). They propose that democracy depends to a much greater degree upon the attitudes and behaviors of élites than upon those of mass publics. Of course, extreme élitist perspectives are rarely tenable. To focus only on élites and to ignore the societal bases of their power would be as misleading as to look only from the bottom up. What the élitist school's arguments do highlight is the lack of convincing arguments from political culture theorists about the conceptual links between orientations and behavior, first, and subsequently between individual behavior and the larger political system. Élitists have consequently been more attracted to rational-choice models than to cultural explanations of élite behavior (Przeworski 1986, 1991), though Karl (1991) argues that élite and mass approaches should be reconciled.

In addition to the issue of how the mass public and the élite interact is the need to relate mass political culture to political institutions, which must mediate between political culture and political outcomes. The original argument in *The Civic Culture* was that congruence or incongruence between the political

institutions and the political culture helps explain democratic stability (see Verba 1965, p. 513, Patrick 1984, pp. 302–4, Almond and Powell 1992). Almond and Verba argued that neither analyses of political institutions (e.g. presidential vs. parliamentary forms) nor measures of the distribution of individual orientations could by themselves explain democratic stability. Eckstein (1969) developed the argument further by linking democratic stability to 'congruence' between culture and structure. The problem has been that the power of survey research methodology placed the emphasis squarely on measuring value distributions. For example, after Pye (1965, pp. 9–10 and 16) stressed the importance of treating the historical development of the entire system—'the evolution of the institutions and value patterns'—he goes on to describe the sole means of studying mass political culture as 'advanced techniques of survey research' without offering any ideas about how to use survey data in tandem with information on institutional evolution. Warwick (1990, p. 174) made the point in the following way: 'The lack of precision in defining the independent variable [political culture] carries through to the hypothesis: terms such as *congruence* and *conduciveness* often hide an uncertainty over the nature or even the direction of the causal connection between culture and system structure or performance, an uncertainty that cross-sectional survey findings can scarcely hope to address.' In the practice of empirical researchers, then, the tendency has been to shift away from the original focus on *congruence* to a focus on the existence and levels of certain values.

Some theorists, adopting a sufficiently long time perspective, can place institutions as an endogenous variable—the form that institutions take in a particular country is a function of the political culture of that country. Verba (1965, p. 519), for example, has argued that fundamental political beliefs 'play a major role in guiding the ways in which institutions develop and change.' He does not explain whether he means the fundamental political beliefs of the relatively small number of powerful political actors in a society at a given time or the beliefs of the entire society, aggregated in some form or other. His discussion suggests, though, that he has the latter in mind. It would not, however, always be desirable to play down institutional rules in this manner. If one is interested in shorter-term political outcomes, the exogenous impact of institutions and the interplay between culture and institutions will need direct examination. Moreover, a number of recent works highlight the centrality of institutional practices for regime change and other longer-term political phenomena (Elster 1988, March and Olsen 1989, Shepsle 1989, Easton 1990, Warwick 1990, Thelen and Steinmo 1992, Stepan and Skach 1993, Weaver and Rockman 1993). By the same token, recent efforts to rehabilitate political culture convincingly criticize those instutionalists who treat political culture as endogenous, largely shaped by institutions (Diamond 1993a, p. 7). As the

majority of both culturalists and institutionalists stress, the critical matter is the interplay between structure and culture (see, e.g., Elkins and Simeon 1979, p. 143, Inglehart 1990, p. 14).

For this reason, the process of placing a study of political culture in a satisfactory theoretical framework must involve providing assumptions about the ways in which cross-national differences in culture, when taking into account cross-national institutional differences, will shape outcomes. The cultural approach will not draw additional adherents by ignoring this. Still, the recent defenders of the political culture approach remain vague in specifying the relationship between culture and institutions. Eckstein (1988) sticks to clarifying the link between orientations and individual behavior. Inglehart (1990) hypotheses an interactive and changing relationship between values and democratic institutions (and between values and economic growth) but only discusses this in a long-term evolutionary sense. Given his interest in understanding the existence of stable democracies in some societies but not others, he does not discuss how culture relates to institutions at a particular time nor how one could compare this relationship cross-nationally. Almond (1990) pays the most attention to the issue, first criticizing those who attribute cultural determination to his and others' views of political culture. He then discusses the perspective that he developed with Powell (Almond and Powell 1992). They see political culture as the medium through which the inputs and outputs of the political system travel: policies emerge from structures and processes and are interpreted through the lens of political culture, as are society's responses. With more concrete specification of their theoretical expectations (not possible in a textbook), the Almond and Powell perspective could be useful, though other scholars might reject Almond and Powell's systems perspective.

CONCLUSIONS

Recent defenders of political-culture theory would have us believe that anyone acknowledging the crucial political role of individual values must also accept that the political culture approach is valid. Clearly, to discount the impact of individuals and their political orientations is to fly in the face of a good deal of evidence. Yet making such a case is not enough. Even rational-choice theorists acknowledge the importance of popular beliefs, norms, values, etc. Rational-choice theorists claim instead that a rational-choice approach is of greater theoretical utility because of the clarity of its postulates and the relative parsimony of its models. To offer up political culture as one of the two dominant approaches in the field and a potential rival to rational-choice theory requires that political culture be defended as a useful and usable concept embedded in a workable theory.

Seven distinct challenges face a scholar who would conduct a comparative empirical study relating political culture in the mainstream (Almondian) sense to patterns of political outcomes. The challenges are to define the term, to disentangle subcultures from a society's overall political culture, to integrate the many individual-level orientations of which the concept is composed, to create a societal-level variable from individual-level components, to develop techniques of measuring the resulting concept, to derive hypotheses about individual political behavior from the subjective orientations under study and to theorize how political culture interacts with institutions and other attributes of a polity to produce political outcomes. No single study in this tradition has dealt with all seven, and for none of the seven has a generally accepted resolution been found. Thinking about the development of political-culture theory in terms of these seven challenges makes clear why, in Diamond's (1993a, p. 15) view, the following questions

... loom large in the literature: How broadly must these beliefs and values be shared across various groups and strata of a nation's citizenry? How soon after the inauguration of democracy must they develop? How important are they to democracy, relative to other types of conditions? Which elements of political culture are most important? What determines the evolution and transformation of political culture over time? What specific consequences for democracy can we attribute to various elements of political culture?

Despite noting the absence of answers, Diamond chooses to stress the promise of the political culture perspective. I place greater emphasis on the dangers of neglecting further conceptual and theoretical development.

For example, as researchers investigate political values and attitudes within societies seeking to democratize, they must be wary of replicating unquestioningly the methods and assumptions of political-culture theory. From the beginning, the study of political culture has most frequently been undertaken to illuminate the prospects for democracy in one or more societies. Inglehart's (1988; 1990, ch. 1) attempt to resuscitate political-culture theory by using better data rests in part on relating attitudes to the number of years a country has experienced democratic governance. Furthermore, much of the rekindled interest in political culture in recent years stems from the collapse of authoritarian regimes, in particular the formerly Communist regimes of Eastern Europe and the USSR. As Barry (1970, p. 52) has noted, a natural test of political culture's impact is to compare values before and after a regime change. A series of studies has examined mass values and attitudes in societies formerly under authoritarian rule in order to advance hypotheses about how these countries' 'political cultures' influence their prospects to consolidate democracy (e.g. Brown 1989, Diamond et al. 1989, Catterberg 1991, Gibson et al. 1992, Gibson and Duch 1993).

These analyses of political attitudes and values in democratizing societies are enlightening and a boon to those studying the government and politics of these societies. Yet none seriously questions the political culture approach they adopt. Moreover, most of these researchers are actually investigating a few select orientations. Their use of political-culture theory comes in general discussions before and after the analyses. Those who seriously intend to analyze the connections between one or more societies' political cultures and their political changes—and thereby pose an alternative to rational choice models of regime change—must attend to all seven conceptual and theoretical poblems discussed above.

By identifying the remaining tasks standing before the 'renaissance' of political culture, I have sought to facilitate the theoretical reinvigoration of the general approach. Yet in the short run, we need to accept political culture as a *rubric* not a concept. Admitting that researchers focus almost exclusively on a few significant orientations—whose relationships to a society's culture becomes a separate issue—could actually facilitate scholarly analyses of cross-national value differences by eliminating the daunting task of reifying those orientations. Much clarity would be gained by admitting that, primarily, we want and need to know more about such matters as popular support for the political system, the willingness of people to engage in different types of political behavior, and evaluations of governmental performance. Why confuse the issue by claiming to depict some grandiose phenomenon which is so defined that no one can really measure it? Moreover, taking this approach would release the scholar from the obligation to spell out a model of the entire political system. While one cannot study political culture without attending to its place in the political system, investigations of mass orientations are of interest for their own sake.

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