monographs

Ljubomir Hristić

# SOCIAL CULTURE

## REEVALUATING THE PARADIGM

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# SOCIAL CULTURE:
# REEVALUATING THE PARADIGM

**Published by**
Institute of Social Sciences,
Belgrade, 2018

**Publisher**
Dr Goran Bašić

**Reviewers**
Dr Zoran Lutovac,
Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade
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**Graphic design and layout**
Milorad Mitić

**Printed by**
Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy of
the University of Belgrade, Development and
Research Centre of graphic engineering

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# SOCIAL CULTURE: REEVALUATING THE PARADIGM

series monographs

Institute of Social Sciences,
Belgrade, 2018

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## A different perspective on social culture: remodeling the outlook

The preceding book was designed to show that the elucidation in the empirical study of social culture and it's values has been destabilized by a specific set of problems, and that these problems were effectively built into the concept in its early development.[1]

We can consider values as culturally objectified, abstract ideas of phenomena. Such ideas are of lasting significance to the satisfaction of needs of political subjects. These ideas are a subjective reflection of the objective needs of social subjects; they express the subject's attitude toward its own needs. Therefore, it seems right to call values ideas of needs. All values, whether they are ideas (models) of activities, or ideas of social relations, or abstract ideas, or specific objects which are needs in themselves, are according to this approach, ideas of needs. The last are ideas of needs in the strictest sense of the word. Therefore, they may be called primary values, for they serve an essential motivating function. The remaining types of ideas (of activities, of the desired type of social relations, and so on) also result from a recognition of certain needs (Karwat, 198).

From Almond and Verba's pioneering study in the early 1960s to Inglehart's work into the 1990s, the theory and methodology of this set of approaches to social culture study have served to

[1] The following book was written as part of the project "Social Transformations in the European Integration Process: A Multidisciplinary Approach", III 47010, financed by Republic of Serbia. Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development.

emphasize certain aspects of social actuality and to obscure others, generating partial (in both senses) explanation that is, at best, only weakly circumstantial, and, at worst, contrived. The purpose is to summarize and analyze the features of social culture study that have left it so vulnerable to criticism - and indeed, that have led numerous social scientists to rebuff the concept outright. Here I present, initially, a debate of practical problems, and then a debate on the conjectural problems of social culture approaches.

## Structural challenges

The methodological problems afflicting empirical social culture studies fall into three broad and interrelated categories: problems with the data and their origination or derivation, misuse of statistical methods, and overreliance on weak inference. The very definition of social (specifically political) practice prompts an affirmative answer. Political practice embraces political goals that express needs of a society-wide significance, political activities, and the sociofunctional or dysfunctional effects of those activities. Political activities are pursued with political goals in view which determine their specific character, and this characteristic governs political practice. Thus arises the question of where this differentia specifica of strictly political values inheres. Sometimes political values are distinguished by pointing to their supraindividual character. This is a sound criterion, providing this supraindividual character is described with sufficient precision. Very broadly conceived, all values, as a consequence of their nature as cultural phenomena and products, are of a supraindividual character (supraindividual origin, function, and content). They express needs that go beyond the experiences of individuals. Moreover, Marxism assumes that the ultimate and proper subjects of aesthetic, moral, or cognitive values are also supraindividual subjects (compare, for instance, the group subject of scientific cognition). Values function in the awareness of individuals due to their internalization. It can be seen that the "subjectship" criterion of distinguishing political values reaches further, beyond the surface of phenomena revealed by description ("relation to the existence and operation of large social groups and their institutions") (Karwat, 199).

Let me begin with a methodological critique of The Civic Culture and Culture Shift, each of which, in its era, represents what passes for cutting-edge methodology in the field, after which I will address the three problem areas in general terms.

My critique of those works may be said to reveal a methodological process that is closer to the traditions of augury, divination, and reading tea leaves than that of the scientific method from which they have borrowed terminology. Through lengthy and unsustainable chains of inference, culturists in this vein rely on data that cannot support the explanatory and interpretative demands placed on them; they employ variables which, quite simply, do not measure what the researchers claim they measure. On the basis of such data, weak correlations are routinely interpreted as strong evidence of causal direction and magnitude, when in fact neither the data nor the mathematics can bear such conclusions. Although earlier work was (justifiably) statistically unsophisticated, later work employing more advanced statistical methods frequently misuse the methods (e.g., Inglehart's use of factor analysis), and present the results as "proof."

More generally, I think the critique reveals the researchers' deep faith in their hypotheses, combined with either, or both of, a naive understanding of or a fundamental indifference to the quality and the meaning of the data and the data's incarnation as calculated statistics. At times the researchers appear to be lost in a terrain the contours of which they are able to discern with great clarity in a topographical map of another region entirely. In this brand of study, the researchers do not actually supply linkages between social cultures and data: the data deployed as proof tend to lie somewhere beyond the model. I will elaborate on this below, in the section on "inference," after the following sections on survey data and on statistical distributions.

***Survey Data.*** Survey data comprise the ground upon which empirical social culture stands. As I showed in my critiques, survey data cannot be pressed into service as [2] evidence of social cultural

[2] The social science literature is rife with this sort of error, but there is appears to be little incentive to eliminate it. Indeed, as Gary King has remarked, "Mistakes are often made but rarely noticed." Moreover, "These

phenomena without a great deal of vigorous induction. Although survey data certainly have a place in the social sciences, including in social culture research, their use must be confined to their intrinsic limits.

Because survey research generates quantifiable data - actual numbers which may then be converted into all manner of "statistics" far removed from the all-too-human respondent - it is apparently easy to lose sight of where the data came from; it is even easier to forget that the data *themselves are not inherently scientific* - though their numerical incarnation may be manipulated scientifically. Because of the fuzzy nature of survey data, their reliability has been debated for decades, and the "scientific" question that seems to have emerged among social scientists is that of just *how* unreliable they are - which usually misses the point. We would hardly attempt to measure temperature with a tape measure, nor weight with a thermometer. Yet social scientists seem intent on "measuring" people's beliefs, attitudes, and feelings by asking them questions and recording their answers. Though it seems rather obvious, the point cannot be overstated that instruments of measurement can produce measurements only of what they are capable of measuring, and only within the bounds of the accuracy of their calibration - and even then, only if properly used. Because survey data comprise one of the very few forms of quantitative data available to social scientists, and one of the only forms of data that may provide us with insights into what people believe, think, or feel, they are remarkably resistant to meaningful criticism; or rather, criticism is generated, circulated in journals, discussed in seminars, summarized in textbooks, but then is "kept in mind" in terms of "the pitfalls of survey research" - and in the end the same fundamental errors are reproduced, again and again and again.

To be skeptical of the face value of responses to survey questions is not contingent on cynicism or misanthropy. For example, one simple and obvious fact of human culture and communication is that there are predictable, patterned responses to certain sets of questions. Except among intimates, one cannot even extract a frank answer to the question "How are you," for it is already

problems are more than technical flaws; they often represent important theoretical and conceptual misunderstandings" (King, 1986: 666).

bound to a relatively small set of culturally correct answers - in the United States:"Fine, thank you," and the like. Going into further detail implies an entirely different mode of interacting. To a spouse, one might elaborate with an account some good or bad event of the day; to a doctor, perhaps a detailed account of the timing and location of a recurring lower abdominal pain.

Within their contexts, these are predictable responses. I suspect that the same may hold, albeit through complexity less predictable, for interactions between surveyors and respondents. To what extent do the various and interrelated contexts of surveying respondents condition the responses, or establish or elicit "suitable" (culturally, socially, or otherwise) sets of responses to questions?[3] In the mind of the respondent, consciously or unconsciously, are there "right" answers to survey questions? Consider the structure of the lengthy, in-home interview (e.g., Almond and Verba's 1963 study). After the interviewer (a stranger who is probably well-educated) has arrived at the home of a respondent, after each has discharged the formal exercise of reporting to the other that he or she is doing "fine, thank you," after the clipboard and pen have been raised and poised, then another formal exercise begins: the interviewer reads questions from behind the clipboard. The questions themselves, whatever their content, have the command of some unknown institution of potentially vast - or potentially meaningless - authority behind them, and are posed to the respondent through the official agency of the interviewer.[4] How to respond? What are the cues? Is the interviewer bespectacled? Bearded? Wearing a tie? A skirt? Sandals? Attractive? Indifferent? Solicitous? Middle class? Using the formal "you" in languages other than English?

Does one admit that one did not vote in the last election? In some countries it is required by law to vote; in the United States,

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[3] More generally, it is now well-known that even very slight differences in the phrasing of survey questions may elicit very different results. This and a large number of other survey phenomena are illustrated and discussed thoroughly in a volume entitled *Questions about Questions*, edited by Judith Tanur (1992).

[4] Indeed, in the case of *The Civic Culture,* interviewers were instructed to begin with the following statement:

grade school training makes clear that voting is a civic duty; for many, not voting is shirking duty. Does one admit to having voted for the candidate who lost, or for the candidate who won, but is now suffering in popularity?[5] [6] Would it be more suitable to exaggerate one's potential influence with government, or to minimize it? To parrot the civics texts? To express profound cynicism in order to appear indifferent to an apparently indifferent government? To express profound optimism in order not to appear to feel socially impotent or bitter? Is the respondent accustomed to delivering social opinions?

Revealing social attitudes? Do some of the questions elicit opinion where none had previously existed?[7]

In any event, as the above implies, the exchange between interviewer and respondent is not an equal one. The respondent is compelled to make admission after admission, which the interviewer absorbs and records, offering nothing in exchange. Is the respondent being judged? Can adopting a certain attitude reduce the risk of a negative judgment?

Or does the seriousness with which questions are being asked make the respondent feel important, feel elevated as somehow a part of whatever institution is behind all these questions, or as a part of the nation's social universe, or at least as someone whose opinions are worth soliciting?

All of these questions are legitimate and meaningful, and yet none can be answered definitively. We simply do not know, and

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[5] My name is : I work for the [name of a nationally-based research institute]. We are doing a survey for a large university in order to find out how people in different countries feel about their government and about social affairs (1963: 526; Appendix B).

[6] 0r does one actually forget having voted for one candidate and now claim, apparently in all sincerely, to have voted for another? One of Robert Lane's subjects, in his intensive study of 15 American men, appears to have done just that (Lane, 1962; see also Lane and Sears, 1964, chapter 8).

[7] Robert Hardgrave (1969) cited the opinion-generation problem specifically in terms of social culture research; his own solution, which may or may not be recognized today as rather dated, was to employ the Thematic Apperception Test, in order to cut right through to the essence of a person's beliefs.

cannot know, what will be the various bases or motivations for the responses that individuals in a sample provide to survey questions. Nor have we any basis for the assumption that there is any motivation for respondents to attempt to be as truthful as possible. Recall the case of "reticent" Italy, which again provides a powerful illustration. Sani asks:

> Can a "reticent" culture be adequately studied by using the standard survey techniques? Is it not conceivable that the respondents' reluctance to speak openly might affect the findings? (1980:283) .

Of course the findings will be affected - and of course we have no empirical knowledge of respondents' motivations to answer, or to deceive, or to clam up, or to claim (through an intermediary, of course) to be dead. Moreover, we cannot legitimately dismiss this problem by asserting that such artefacts will balance one another out in the aggregate, providing, on a sample-wide basis, an accurate data set, for that is simply untrue.

What we are left with, then, and what we can assert with scientific certainty, is that *survey data amount to no more than people's responses to survey questions.* Alone, the statement is a truism and somewhat tautological; but with qualifications, its importance becomes clearer. My point is that what survey questionnaires actually measure is *only* what people say in response to survey questions, and hence that the data they generate can inform us with certainty *only* about how people respond to survey questions; any other "information" we draw from them is purely inferential. We simply have no reason to expect that what people say in surveys is, or is equivalent to, their beliefs, their attitudes, or their feelings.

We may be able legitimately to assume that what people say in response to survey questions is *related* to their beliefs or attitudes, or *reflects* their beliefs or attitudes, or *has some basis in* their beliefs or attitudes, but we cannot legitimately assume that it *mirrors* their beliefs or attitudes, or measures them as a thermometer measures temperature. In other words, we have absolutely no way of knowing *the degree to which* responses to survey questions

reflect respondents' beliefs or attitudes. Methodologians may quickly point out that there are techniques that enable us to minimize this very obvious problem, but a cursory examination of these techniques will reveal precisely the same shortcomings. The fact remains that the distance from thought, belief, attitude, or feeling to verbal articulation is vast, and its terrain multidimensional and highly conditional.

I went to great lengths to show that many variables selected from survey data for specific deductive, inferential, and interpretive purposes are too ambiguous, or even invalid, for those purposes, and earlier in this section I raised the more general question of whether the variables selected by culturist researchers are valid for the purpose of representing "social culture." If social culture may be defined in summary as "the subjective orientation to politics and social objects," then the survey data employed in culturist studies can represent only a small part of social culture, and even then, only if we were to consider the data themselves to be valid. Consider, for example, Almond and Verba's treatment of variables such as "national pride" or "trust in others:" not only do their measurements lack valid empirical bases to begin with, but also the national differences the authors detect in these variables are played off of the differences the authors themselves detect subjectively in the national social climates of the different countries. In short, survey data are manipulated in order to substantiate assumptions. In the end, even after the culturist assembles a relatively large number of ill-fitting variables into a crude mosaic, verisimilitude in the resulting portraits of social cultures relies more on the adhesive force of rhetoric than on facts.

***Statistical distributions.*** These social cultural portraits, then, are often presented in terms of statistical distributions (mostly from survey data) cobbled together with much explanatory, interpretive, and rhetorical text.

In Almond and Verba's 1963 ideal of a statistical rendering of "the particular distribution of patterns of orientation to social objects" in a society, and just as much in Inglehart's 1990 flip-book, stepwise, moving-picture hop through generational change over two decades (with ample - and imperative - reference to the half-century preceding them), statistical

distributions are thrust into the narrative forefront as the basis and the authority for the text that separates one table or graph from the next.

However - and this is crucial - statistics, by themselves, even arranged in cleverly named, labeled, and sorted tables and graphs, could not make much of a picture. There is no mathematical index or composite of social culture that can be presented in tabular format.

Indeed, in most social cultural studies in which statistics are deployed, the numbers, which refer to a very small number and variety of real phenomena to begin with, are fairly sparse in absolute terms, and are very far outnumbered by words; the ratio of text to tables is exceedingly high. Obviously, this is natural and necessary, words being our principal medium of communication in the social sciences. But even where numbers play the starring role - just as much in pronouncements such as "four out of five dentists" as in Inglehart's tabulated expressions of a cohort's survey priorities - words are required not only to explain the numbers, but also to interpret them. And in the social culture literature, if we remove the interpretation, we are left with very little indeed.

In other words, the statistical distributions presented in the literature as the basis, the authority, or the proof of the interpretations of reality to which the reader is treated in the text, can stand neither alone nor on their merit. The social cultural mosaic is pressed into shape by narrative that springs from sources other than statistical data, running along a continuum from national stereotypes at one end, to legitimate and sophisticated interpretive gleanings from an intensive and well-informed study of the population under scrutiny at the other.

Hovering just beneath the surface in this approach is the admission (or at least the recognition) that the "measurable" empirical data are, in fact, skimpy. Also hovering just beneath the surface, though, are various tacit expressions of confidence that one day soon there will be *more* data, *more* variables, *more* numbers - and hence statistical distributions more capable of standing on their own as delineations of social cultures. But this is a vain hope; an *actual* "social culture" - say, a "real" one - insofar as it can be said

to exist, is too complex, too fluid, and too contingent on forces which are themselves fluid, to be rendered legitimately in statistical distributions. The social culture implied in the quantitative data of empirical social culture studies, on the other hand (very different from the ideal of an actual social culture) is typically a reification of marginally relevant and highly interpreted statistical distributions - which brings us to the problem of inference in the conventional approach.

***Inference.*** Factual material itself has proven to be elusive in social cultural analysis, largely because culture itself is an exceedingly nebulous phenomenon, nearly impossible to define on the basis solely of facts.

Certainly, scholars can point to historical forces comprised of agreed-upon facts; and, of course, economic, demographic, and election data are usually accepted as "factual," even if they are acknowledged not to be absolutely so. But the material employed to characterize social cultures is far less solid, far more conjectural than what we think of as "hard" data, and culturists have had therefore to rely heavily on inference in their analyses.

The overreliance on inference in empirical social culture studies condemns them to exceedingly shaky foundations - and indeed, fragile inferential structures penetrate more deeply into such studies than I have yet implied. In my discussions of Almond and Verba and of Inglehart, I illustrated several typical inferential patterns, tracing isolated false steps to their concatenation into unfounded causal chains. But a close inspection of such examples (and of such studies in general), reveals that *the location of social culture itself* in the operative model of the studies is unclear.

Its evanescent nature is inconspicuous, for social culture tends to figure prominently in the authors* discussions and in their presentation of the conception itself, but it is consistently situated beyond the operative model, as assumption, as unseen agency - its ubiquity inferred and confirmed only by our shared faith or by our willing suspension of disbelief. No real "social culture" actually emerges *from the data* in social culture studies. Definitions notwithstanding, what these studies actually achieve is a gathering together of a few clues, a few signs that can be said to *point towards* the existence of social cultures which are presumed to exist;

but the presumption of their existence is based on tendencies in social behavior and discourse perceptible more to the researcher's apprehensive capabilities (and prejudices) than to survey instruments or to the dissection of data.

In the conventional operative model of social culture studies, then, social culture is no more than an assumption, itself contingent on numerous other assumptions. If we follow the linkage of a variable through inferential transformation towards its putative component in social culture - as I did repeatedly in my critiques - we come to the border of the model, and must squint beyond it, imagining (each in our own way) how this tenuous component fits in with the others to make up the "social culture" in question. Almond and Verba*s mixtures of parochial, subject, and participant; or Inglehart's mixtures of materialist and postmaterialist; or, once the variables of Thompson et *al*. have been determined and "measured," mixtures of individualist, egalitarian, hierarchist, and fatalist - although all of these are said to comprise "social cultures," the distance between variable and social culture is enormous.

This distance itself need not really be a problem, either for the study of social culture or for social science in general; after all, inference has carried human thought a long way indeed, and not always with bad results. The problem in what I have described, though, lies in the reification of a variable, or of a link in an inferential chain, or of the idea at the end of that chain; here conjecture and reality lose their distinction in an unbecoming rhetorical commingling. The goal of social science research, namely developing an understanding of how society operates, is thus subverted by the sociologically interesting, but intellectually profligate, goal of selling ideas (the marketplace of which is thus marked by methods of persuasion usually associated with automotive sales).

In the end, what I find objectionable in such studies is the cloak of scientific, empirical methodology wrapped around a largely interpretive exercise, for when *faulty* scientific method is deployed as the sole basis for empirical rigor in interpretation, empirical rigor is sacrificed completely, and there remains no check on preconceptions, prejudices, and the elevation of coincidence to correlation.

But let me be clear: the slim likelihood of our being able to render social culture in the precise terms of a positivist approach to "science" does not mean that we should abandon the empirical quest; on the contrary, adding a strong empirical component to well-executed social cultural interpretations promises solid advances in our understanding of how politics works. In this context, in order to avoid the serious errors that I have discussed, we must be very careful about how we use and present data in support of our interpretive analyses. The presentation of survey data as scientific truth, as well as representing "bad science," places on the critical reader the unfair burden of building up independently a mental catalogue of what components of the argument are empirically valid, and carting it through a discursive terrain in which it apparently has little value.

More important, we need more data, more kinds of data; survey data, properly used, do not carry us very far. My position is that we can and should use survey data as a guide, as a source of propositions and ideas about the relationships among politics, people, and government, and even to some extent as a check on our ideas and propositions. But I cannot overemphasize the fact that while it is legitimate and desirable to use survey data to poke and prod at hypotheses, and to employ them as *support* for hypotheses, it is not legitimate to present them as *proof* of any phenomenon outside of the survey universe. Finally, when survey data are presented as supportive to our hypotheses, sound methodological practice demands that the precise nature of that support - in all its tentativeness - be made explicit. As for other data, the model that I outline and discuss in the chapters following this one is designed to accommodate a variety of empirical data.

## Social sciences

All of these methodological issues are, of course, intertwined with theoretical issues, which are the subject of the remainder of this chapter. Several theoretical problems stand out in social culture modeling to date. 1) There has been, from the start, some confusion in the distinction between culture and social culture. 2) The assumption that social culture is a determinative

agency in the operation of politics in a society relies on the assumption that there is (cultural) continuity in social culture; this has made it difficult even to discuss change within the social cultural framework - change both in social culture itself and in the operation of politics. 3) Structure, power, politics, and individual rationality have all been neglected, sometimes completely, in social culture studies. In this section, I will address each of these theoretical problems in turn.

## Culture and Social Culture

Each of the studies examined in the previous chapters illustrates conceptual ambiguities in the relationship between culture and social culture. Even while statistics are deployed in full scientific dress, a certain conceptual fuzziness seems to have gained acquiescence over time.[8] Social culture is understood by many students of politics, roughly, to be a subset of the broader culture - either a part of it, or the result of broader cultural factors; for social culturists there often are no clear delimitations between culture and social culture.[9] Indeed, social culturists' explanations typically amount to *cultural explanations of politics* - explaining politics in terms of "cultural factors" - such that, say, the unfolding of French politics is in some significant measure the result of the French being French. The task that social culturists set for themselves, then, all too often, is to discern in available data what the salient features of the French themselves are; these features, in turn, are treated as culture, and from the broad pool of culture are selected any and all

[8] There are several indicators of this trend. One is that culturists' explicit efforts to draw distinctions between the two have slackened. Moreover, as I have noted, Eckstein and Inglehart use the terms interchangeably; and while both scholars supply definitions of culture, neither offers a definition of social culture (perhaps we are tacitly advised simply to go to the seminal works for definitions).

[9] The theoretical discussion in Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's *Culture Theory* is a partial exception to this generalization, and is considered in this context below.

convenient elements that seem to be related to politics. As a result, it is not unusual for "culture" - theoretically at least - broadly and often indiscriminately to encompass a great deal of social reality without the benefit of sorting out politics, power, structure, and culture; recall, for example, Eckstein's assertion that French bureaucratic institutions are an example of "cultural inertia," or Almond and Verba's understanding of Italian and Mexican social attitudes in terms more of cultural factors than of certain significant structural-institutional factors of which they themselves took passing note (Hristić: 25).

In social culture studies in which theoretical aspects of the field are addressed and/or developed, we usually find explicit accounts of the relationship between culture and social culture, often included in definitional descriptions; and we may also usually find implicit accounts, sometimes between the definitional lines, and sometimes in the unfolding of research and explanation. Pye (1972) finds that the early definitions (including his own) "imply that the social realm is to some degree distinct and separate from the general culture" (1972: 288). While this is true, what we find in general is a tradition of light footing on shifting ground.

In his 1956 article, Almond has social culture encapsulated inside culture - in it, but to some extent insulated from it.

> [T]he social culture is not the same thing as the general culture, although it is related to it. Because social orientation involves cognition, intellection, and adaptation to external situations, as well as the standards and values of the general culture, it is a *differentiated part of the culture and has a certain autonomy*.
> Indeed, it is the failure to give proper weight to the cognitive and evaluative factors, and to the consequent autonomy of social culture, that has been responsible for the exaggerations and oversimplifications of the "national character" literature of recent years (1956: 396; my emphasis).

The conceptual mixture here illustrates nicely the difficulty in distinguishing the social cultural from the cultural. The "autonomy" of a "differentiated" social culture "related to" the general

culture is conceptually appealing, but it is also diffuse. Almond's definition holds that the relationship between culture and social culture lies in the fact (or assumption) that "social orientation" (which is part of the definition of social culture) "involves ... the standards and values of the general culture." As worded, this suggests that social culture is a part of the general culture only because the latter affects the former. Although Almond's conception of the relationship may well be more complex than implied in his definition, the relationship remains inadequately defined; after all, we cannot assume that everything *affected* by the general culture is a *part of* the general culture. Because it can be argued that everything in human endeavor is touched to one degree or another by the general culture, it may be that, for Almond, subsumption into the category of general culture is a matter of degree; it is clear that in Almond's definition the effects of the general culture on social culture are meant to be understood as significant rather than incidental. However, the question of what exactly is this "general culture" is not addressed.

Social culture, in Almond's account, "has a certain autonomy" because of the "cognitive and evaluative factors" that affect it.[10] From the context of Almond's definition, then, we can assume: 1) that the autonomy to which he refers is indeed the autonomy of social culture from the general culture; 2) that the cognitive and evaluative factors affecting social culture are significant, playing a determinative role the maintenance of a social culture; and 3) that the cognition and evaluation that inhere in a social culture are themselves in some way different from those that inhere in the general culture.

Although Almond's seminal article left many aspects of the concept of social culture unaddressed, some progress is made in the theoretical discussion in *The Civic Culture* (1963: chapter 1, especially pp. 12-15). As far as the relationship between culture and social culture is concerned, Almond and Verba's elaboration fills in a few gaps, but also creates a few more. The emphasis on the

[10] Tucker reports, on the basis of a conversation in 1970, that Almond "wanted, among other things, particularly to underline the 'certain autonomy' of a society's social culture" (1973: 175).

differentiation and autonomy of social culture from the general culture is now absorbed in assumption, for the former is no longer even defined in terms of the latter; indeed, "culture" figures in their discussion as a concept with analytical advantages, rather than as a discernible phenomenon in society, and their definition of "social culture" itself implies its autonomy. They note that the concept of culture is used in many ways, and that they "are in danger of importing its ambiguities as well as its advantages."

> Here we can only stress that we employ the concept of culture in only one of its many meanings: that *of psychological orientation toward social objects (1963: 14; emphasis in original).*

In other words, in *The Civic Culture,* the concept of social culture is *modeled* on that of culture, but independent of the cultural model. In addition, the phenomena to which they refer are independent of one another, although only analytically; indeed, nonsocial sources of social culture are crucial to their argument.

> If we are to ascertain the relations between social and nonsocial attitudes and development patterns, we have to separate the former from the latter even though the boundary between them is not as sharp as our terminology would suggest. The term social culture thus
> refers to the specifically social orientations - attitudes toward the social system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system. We speak of a social culture just as we can speak of an economic culture or a religious culture. It is a set of orientations toward a special set of social objects and processes (1963: 13).

The appeal of this approach is high indeed, for in employing it, we do not have to concern ourselves with the complexities of culture, or even of its definition, and our research may be narrowed to conform to the basis of Almond and Verba's definition of social culture - "the particular distribution of patterns of orientations toward social objects."

However, culture looms large, though indefinitely, in their operative conception of social culture. Their chapter on "Social Relations and Civic Cooperation" is a veritable culturophilic orgy, coupling culture and social culture in manifold and sometimes bizarre ways, ending with an operatic singing the praises of that "buzz' of group activity" in Anglo-American ways. As I quoted earlier:

> That people can so easily cooperate with each other in social activities is based on the fact that, despite social differences, they are tied to their fellow citizens by a set of interpersonal values, and these values overarch the social and nonsocial aspects of the system (1962: 299).

It must be pointed out, of course, that Almond and Verba might not agree that they are referring here to the general culture, for in their theoretical framework, the concept itself of culture is deflected into psychology and sociology - "the *psychological* orientation to *social objects*."

Having selected specifically this "one of many" definitions of culture, and having presented this definition only as the model on which their conception of *social* culture is based, they have, it appears, self-consciously attempted to exclude general cultural sources of social culture.[11] They did not succeed, however, for in trawling the nonsocial world for factors affecting social culture (and finding there the elements whose "fusion" with social elements turns out to be *the decisive factor* in their presentation the "civic culture"), they find their booty in precisely the territory they defined as culture: "the psychological orientation to *social* objects" - interpersonal trust, primary groups, willingness to discuss politics with others, informal communications networks, etc. In other words, they were

[11] It may be that in *The Civic Culture* Almond and Verba choose to view the "general culture" as a distinct entity, but that any interaction it has with ***social*** culture is viewed in psychological and sociological terms, and not in cultural terms. This might be consistent with their efforts toward both "scientific" social studies and a "scientific theory of democracy," for at that time psychology and sociology had made greater strides in adopting the trappings of scientific methodology than had anthropology.

unable to describe the "civic culture" without pressing well past the strictures defined in their initial formulation of social culture - "the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward *social objects* among the members of a nation."

What this epistemological foray reveals is that the theoretical relationship between culture and social culture in *The Civic Culture* is tangled and uncertain, and that the general culture, definitions notwithstanding, remains crucial. Two years later, Verba confirms this in a section subtitled "Culture and Social Culture" in his theoretical essay in *Social Culture and Social Development.*

> The distinction between social culture and the more general cultural system of a society is an analytical one. *Social culture is an integral aspect of more general culture,* the set of social beliefs an individual holds, being of course part of the totality of beliefs he holds. *Furthermore the basic belief and value patterns of a culture - those general values that have no reference to specific social objects - usually play a major role in the structuring of social culture....* The focus on the relationship between basic belief structure and social beliefs is of great use in determining what social attitudes are important to consider in describing a social culture (1965: 521-522; my emphasis).

The analytical relationship is different here from what it was in his work with Almond. In eschewing any attempt theoretically to submerge culture into the pools of psychology and sociology, Verba admits and embraces some ofthe ambiguities both of culture and of a looser approach to social culture.[12] At the same time, in situating social culture squarely inside the broader

[12] As I noted in chapter 2, Verba's departure from the approach in ***The Civic Culture*** may be in part because the goals and methodologies of the two studies are fundamentally different. In ***The Civic Culture,*** Almond and Verba use quantitative data to work toward a scientific theory of democracy. In ***Social Culture and Social Development,*** the goal is rather to explore the utility of the concept of social culture in the comparative study of development, for which Verba and his coauthors employ a more permissive definition of the concept.

culture, he establishes a general approach in which the former is defined at least partially in terms of the latter. The latitude in Verba's definition accommodates conceptions that assume social culture to be a part of the broader culture, as well as conceptions in which the broader culture is seen merely to "affect" social culture. Although in both cases the question of the relationship between the culture and social culture is "settled," neither addresses that of which values and beliefs are independently cultural, and which might be contingent on other factors - e.g., the structures and processes of politics.

Verba confronts some of these issues directly in a section subtitled "The Social Culture Approach" (1965: 513-517), which comprises a judicious mixture of definition, *caveat,* operator's manual, and suggested uses. Noting that the concept of social culture can be used (and abused) in a wide variety of ways, he suggests that the point of the social cultural approach is to focus attention on aspectsof society which may have important effects on the way politics works (and hence, in the context of the 1965 volume, on social development). The primary focus, he indicates, is on the meanings people assign to events, andhow events are thus interpreted. He emphasizes, however, that the cultural determinants of meaning and interpretation of politics cannot be viewed as absolute: "An event will be interpreted in terms of previously held beliefs; butpreconceptions can only go so far in affecting interpretation" (1965: 517).

In the introductory essay to the same volume, Pye's discussion essentially concurs with Verba's. He emphasizes that not all social attitudes and beliefs are necessarily part of the social culture, and that many nonsocial attitudes may contribute a great deal to social culture.

> This is so because the social culture consists of only those critical but widely shared beliefs and sentiments that form the "particular patterns of orientation" that give order and form to the social process. In sum, the social culture provides structure and meaning to the social sphere in the same manner as culture in general gives coherence and integration to social life (1965: 8).

Here we can discern culture both as a conceptual analogue to a phenomenologically distinct social culture, and as a likely source or partial determinant of social culture.

Robert Tucker's treatment of the relationship between culture and social culture (1973, 1974) raises several questions. His perspective, although not entirely incompatible with Verba's and Pye's definitions, is driven by both a different conception of culture and a different research object. He suggests that "a cultural approach to politics could, presumably, be viewed as one of the alternatives to the system approach" that is dominant in comparative politics.

> *Social culture, politics as a form of culture, and politics as an activity related to the larger culture of a society,* might in other words be taken as the central subject matter of the discipline. Instead of treating social culture as an attribute of a social system, we would then view *the social system of society in cultural terms,* i.e. as a complex of real and ideal cultural patterns, including social roles and their interrelations, social structures, and so on (1973: 182; my emphasis).

"Politics as a form of culture" is highly suggestive and intriguing, but leaves us again with the question - which Tucker asks in a later article - "What do we mean by 'culture'?" He provides a fairly broad, and fairly standard definition of what he calls the "anthropological, macro" approach to culture: "...in short, the total complex of [a society's] relatively enduring ways of thought, feeling, and action" (1974: 240). Although many scholars have found Almond's "more narrow and limited concept of 'social culture'" to be better suited to communist studies because it is more researchable, the broader, anthropological approach to culture offers significant advantages:

> [T]hose of us who opt for the "macro" approach contend that a concept does not have to explain something in order to be useful in science; it is important enough if it helps simply to fix the subject matter in our minds and to sensitize us to what we are, or ought to be, thinking about and studying (1974: 240-241; restated from 1973: 179).

This approach, as Tucker's work itself illustrates, does appear to well-suited to interpretive area-studies scholarship. In purposely maintaining a broad diffuseness in the concept of social culture, and in keeping open its relationship with culture, nothing is systematically excluded; in the hands of area specialists whose knowledge and interpretive capacities are high, the diffuse version can generate very rich studies in which, perhaps, nothing is "proved," but much is illuminated.[11] On the other hand, that scholars taking this approach actually do is to make a case for certain culturally oriented explanations, arguing implicitly that their explanation is the most plausible, but usually accepting that nothing can actually be proved. This may have seemed appropriate in the Soviet studies of the past several decades, where the usual objects of social science were often either veiled or inaccessible, but the [13] latitude afforded by mystery also invited interpretations that would not have made sense in less loaded atmospheres.

Edward Lehman (1972), in a "theoretical reassessment"of social culture, devotes a section to the relationship between social culture and the general culture. Although he is not entirely clear on how culture and social culture are best conceived, he seems to favor confining the focus of both to the realm of symbols:

> The relationship of the general culture and the social culture is analogous to the relationship of society to its social subsystem: the symbols which characterize the social sector (i.e., the social culture) and the other sectors of society are encompassed by a more general symbol system (i.e., the general culture), in such a way that the latter sets some limits of *[sic]* the variance in the former (1972: 364).

[13] Tn his 1974 article, Tucker suggests that for comparative purposes it may be fruitful to explore communism itself as a cultural phenomenon. The different ways in which Marxist and Leninist tenets are adopted, adapted, and implemented in Communist states tend to comprise, to some degree, each nation's own "national road to socialism," taking a form that is at least compatible with the national culture, and often is molded from the national culture, lending each communist country its distinct style of communism. I would argue, however, that because the national styles of communism tend to be orchestrated from above, the "causal" relationship between broader culture and national version of communism is spurious.

The general cultural system is a "higher order" symbolic system, in a sense hovering above the other systems and delineating "the acceptable range of content for the social symbols," but also being integrated with them in a somewhat reciprocal relationship (1972: 364, 365). In short: The general culture encompasses and is on a higher level than the social culture. But it is relevant for the study of social culture insofar as it sets limits within which the social culture can vary and defines what human activities are indeed "social" (1972: 369).

While Lehman's approach makes important distinctions b tween general and social culture, his analysis highlights the antagonism between theoretical cohesion and potential empirical verification in the conventional approach to social culture.[14] In its relatively high level of abstraction, his basic model draws a credible distinction between the nevertheless overlapping and interacting general and social cultures, but it does not provide promising avenues for empirical research, especially if our understanding of "culture" is to be confined to the world of symbols.[15] In the end, the "social culture" of symbols that remains after Lehman's vigorous pruning with Ockham's razor is not the one that the term tends to evoke.[16]

Thompson et *al.*, as I have noted, also consign the distinction between culture and social culture to cultural phenomena; the cultural biases of a "way of life" generate definitions of what is valid as social within that way of life. Illuminating though it is in its suggestion that

[14] Indeed, he concludes that if we cannot specify social culture in coherent theoretical terms which, moreover, distinguish it from individual attitudes and from social structure, then the concept should be jettisoned (1972: 369).

[15] Lowell Dittmer has proposed a conception of social culture based on the symbolic and on communications theory.
I will outline his model later on, in chapter 9, which addresses the interactions between people and politics.

[16] It appears nevertheless that a broader conception is evoked in Lehman's own imagination, for his analysis reaches constantly past symbols to include concrete phenomena to which symbols might be related, but which are not themselves necessarily the referents of symbols. For example, in discussing social culture, he makes numerous references to power relations, legitimacy, values, institutions, and behavior.

what determines the boundaries of the social is a complex and dynamic matter, this approach explicitly (and perhaps stealthily) lays the responsibility of definition at the doorstep of culture, its parentage only hinted at. This treatment is, of course, important and distinct in social culture theory for its rejection of national or regional culture as the basis or source of social culture, but, as do other, more conventional treatments, it nevertheless situates social culture within culture, the former as a derivative subset of the latter (Hristić: 28).. In the model of Thompson et *al.*, the problem of distinction is exacerbated by their reliance on a materially based conception of culture, effectively excluding other structural factors which may well be decisive in the formation, maintenance, and mutation of social cultures.

## Ascertaining the social millieux

It may not seem immediately obvious that conceptual ambiguity and overlap between culture and social culture comprise a theoretical problem. Indeed, for students whose conception of social culture can be summarized as "the socially relevant features of culture," the problems of distinction, overlap, and ambiguity remain adrift in the vast and murky seas of culture: if we assume that we know what "culture" is, and that we know its boundaries, then studying "social culture" would seem to require only that we believe ourselves capable of discerning in turn what "social" is. Culture itself, however, is hardly an unambiguous concept; not only have social scientists produced dozens upon dozens of different definitions for it, but also such definitions almost invariably defy operationalization. What we are left with in studying "culture" is a methodology quite like Justice Potter Stewart's in distinguishing pornography from nudity: "I know it when I see it."

Of course, we do know culture when we see it; moreover, we generally have a common understanding of it. But perhaps following a variant of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, the contours of culture recede under our gaze; the closer we look, the further into our peripheral vision are thrust culture's definitive features. The rented cummerbund encircling the American groom's nervous

abdomen is as much "culture" as are the religious, social, legal, economic, and institutional aspects of marriage. But how does each contribute to the ritual? And how is the ritual related to the institution? Even a cursory attempt to trace function back from its contemporary manifestation in cultural form easily raises clouds of uncertainty, for the original function has often faded into oblivion, into vestigia, or into new, different, subsidiary functions, while the form itself persists, usually altered, but sometimes not; more important, the *meanings* carried and conveyed by cultural forms inevitably change as the structure of society changes and as the importance of various functions changes relative to that of others.

The breadth and the flexibility of a taxonomy are determinative factors in its utility, attractiveness, and plausibility. Large societies contain many different "cultures" (sometimes overlapping and sometimes widely divergent) in which formal and functional characteristics (sometimes together and sometimes independently) evolve under the influence of innumerable interrelated factors.[17] In the study of social culture, the categories nominated have necessarily been exceedingly broad and exceedingly flexible. Although Verba (1965) may be correct in suggesting a distinction between elite and mass social cultures, a closer look always seems to uncover a far greater number of differentiations. Even the survey data collected for *The Civic Culture* reveal numerous forms of responses, which themselves can be organized into different "cultural" types; differences appear in terms of age, class, education, and ethnic, religious, regional, and occupational groupings. When social culture researchers insist on maintaining a national focus, or on admitting only elite and mass social cultures into their levels-of-analysis, then they are engaging in an exercise both normative and Procrustean, as unrealistic as it is unproductive.[18]

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[17] Consider an example from popular culture. The cultures discernible at a folk concert and a rap concert are fundamentally different from one another, in both form and function. Yet few observers would hesitate to place the two together in the "popular music" cultural category, or into the broader category of "popular entertainment" - or even the "social communication" category.

[18] This point has been made occasionally over the years, but most forcefully

Some of the difficulty in managing culture theoretically and empirically comes of its collective properties, which only some culturists emphasize. For example, according to Elkins and Simeon:

> Social culture is the property of a collectivity - nation, religion, class, ethnic community, formal organization, party, or whatever. Individuals have beliefs, values, and attitudes, but they do not have cultures (1979: 129) .

Although Elkins and Simeon do not concern themselves with what this might imply about cultural research based entirely on survey data which purport to "measure" just those properties of individuals that they list - beliefs, values, attitudes (since the purpose of their article lies in more fundamental theoretical issues), others have noticed this problem in social cultural research,[19] but no solutions have surfaced.

If culture is properly viewed as a collective phenomenon, as more than the sum of its parts - and I suspect that it is - then our efforts to identify it are necessarily derailed by available methodologies. Culture does not rely on specific concrete footing in reality. The foundation on which it rests is not seated in actual individuals, for culture refers not to something that may occur in or be contained in several individuals, but rather to something that they share. Its perpetuation and means of transmission cannot be viewed as analogous to that of microbes, motile or windborne; the subtle substance of culture, having no corporeal form, no

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by Kim, (1964), Elkins and Simeon (1979) and Lane (1992).

[19] For example, Lehman points out that "cultural items have been conceptualized as essentially ***supramembership*** in nature so that their analytical status does not flow directly from the properties of individual actors" (1972: 362). In ***The Civic Culture Revisited*** Kavanagh remarks on the "individualistic fallacy" - making assumptions about the whole (culture) on the basis of information derived from its parts (individuals) (1980: 163). In the same volume, Lijphart unconvincingly defends Almond and Verba's work from the charge that they committed this fallacy (1980: 45-47). Pye (1972) discusses the problem specifically in its theoretical context. Finally, Mann (1970) is frequently cited by critics of social culture as having shown that the sort of value consensus implied in social culture studies does not exist.

boundaries, and no objective basis, can rather be likened to Descartes' aether. Culture is not so much "carried" by people as it "hovers" about our "collective." The most powerful means we have for researching culture, then, is the interpretive method, which, for all its powers of generating propositions, hypotheses, and sometimes highly cogent and plausible accounts of cultures, tends to be weak empirically.

The operative assumptions guiding quantitative empirical social culture studies are that this culture - shared values and attitudes - is "patterned," and that these patterns will be manifested in survey data as sums or averages of values and attitudes that are either reported explicitly by respondents or derived from such data (e.g., either in the form of an index, in assuming one attitude to be equivalent to another, or in the Rube Goldberg logic we find in some sections of *The Civic Culture*). "Patterns" revealed in survey data are thus presented as the concrete link between concept and reality, as well as between peopleand culture. But as Kim pointed out in the very early days of social culture research, the emphasis on *shared* elements of national culture, equivalent to defining a "common denominator," is pointless, for large societies tend to have a number of subcultures rather than a single, "national" culture, which presents us with the question of what "shared" even means.

> Even in a highly industrialized country like the United States subcultures are not completely leveled, so that understanding of social behavior with reference solely to the national common core would be impossible, for most shared elements have a special meaning in each subculture, and the impact of the shared elements on behavior is confined to or varies with the subcultures within a society (1964: 335).

The substantial body of social cultural research that has been produced since that time invites this criticism into more stern service. Do *distributions of survey values* imply *shared values,* at a *cultural* level? Not necessarily; as I showed in the preceding chapters, neither the theory nor the data which are meant to test it are equipped to handle the conversion. Moreover, neither data

distribution (in one- shot studies) nor data consistency over time (as in Inglehart's analysis) is the same as *cultural patterns*. The leap from feebly expressed data patterns of co-occurring survey values to deeply rooted shared-value culture patterns is a leap of faith, its span limited only by the researcher's enthusiasm.

Because culture is very difficult to identify and classify, culture itself is problematic, and because culture is problematic, both its role in social culture research and the use of the term social culture have been problematic. I will return to this issue in the next chapter, and move now to a second general aspect of social culture theory that has presented problems, namely the assumption of continuity.

## Dialectics of social linearity

The word and the concept of "culture" in "social culture" were appropriated (and quickly adopted) in part because social scientists believed that research into cultural explanations of politics would be fruitful; in part because many had an intuitive sense of a (perhaps independent) social culture; and, finally, in part to indicate that the object of study is something that is widespread or somehow general within a society, that is specific to that society, that is persistent, and that is perpetuated through example and learning (and therefore not biologically innate). Culture was already understood to be a phenomenon characterized by continuity, a feature which may lend it predictive qualities; if the much simpler, more narrowly defined world of social culture could yield not only explanation, but also predictive capabilities, then social science would advance substantially. In the event, however, the social cultural approach has not contributed to prediction. Not only have culture and social culture themselves remained too wooly to support any extension into the future, but also social cultural continuity and change have not complied sufficiently with theoretical expectations. As I have noted, the variables that have been used in defining social culture empirically are linked too weakly to the phenomena they are supposed to explain: "social culture" is not sufficiently

contingent on the variables that define it to be extrapolated into the future. Secondly, continuity and change seem to obtain at rates which themselves seem tobelie any linkage with social culture or the variables which ostensibly represent it.

In Eckstein's theoretical sketch, he attempts to address explicitly and directly the very inconvenient question of social cultural change by drawing out the implicit assumptions of social culture theory and delineating what might be our expectations if these assumptions are made explicit. He finds that:

> The assumptions of culturalist theory manifestly lead to an expectation of continuity, *even in cases of changes in the objective contexts of social actions* (1988: 792; my emphasis).

Culture is thus a force unto itself: culturalist theory includes "the assumption that orientations are not superstructural reflections of objective structures, but themselves invest structures and behavior with cognitive and normative meaning." Two other assumptions bolster substantially the expectation of continuity in culturalist theory: 1) "the assumption that orientations are formed through the processes of socialization," which suggests at least generational attitudinal continuity; and 2) "the assumption of orientational cumulativeness, namely, that earlier learning conditions later learning," which implies some resistance to attitudinal change at the individual level (1988: 792-793).

The expectation - the assumption, rather - of cultural continuity is what endows the concept of social culture with its explanatory allure. As social events and conditions unfold, whether their course is one of predictable regularity or of bewilderingly rapid turns and convolutions, social culture is presumed to remain in character, to remain much as it has been - to maintain its distinct patterns even as the objects with which it is interlinked change, and to manifest any transformation only after a long time (for example, through intergenerational differences in experience and socialization). Social culture is not only presumed to remain largely as it is, but is also presumed to affect (as an intervening and/or as an independent variable) objective reality (e.g., social institutions) such that change will obtain in ways consistent with the social culture.

The limitations thus built into social culture theory are far-reaching. I have noted, for example, that Eckstein's making explicit the assumptions of culture theory leads him to conclude (tentatively, for again, his exercise may be read as a test of those assumptions) that the most likely result of very rapid change is breakdown - "cultural discontinuity."[20] If "culture" were believed to be highly malleable, then its apparent value as an explanatory variable would be markedly diminished; if the concept of "cultural adaptation" seemed to refer more to cultural changes in response to changes in reality than to culture's absorbing new conditions - on its own terms, so to speak - then the study of culture would be useful more for its (very likely distorted, but nonetheless somehow systematic) *reflections* of objective reality than for its capacity to shape it. Social culture would then comprise a potentially interesting dependent variable, but one which would be ancillary and marginal in its explanatory utility. Treated as a stable phenomenon, however, culture can be conceived at least as an intervening variable, and even as an independent variable. In other words, the conventional conception of social culture is, in fact, heavily dependent upon the assumption of continuity.

Of course, the assumption of continuity to which culturists must cling in theory is not absolute, for it coexists, somewhat paradoxically, with an ardent, empirical research interest in change. In the 1960s, when the concept of social culture was rapidly gaining currency, the newly independent former colonies presented a large set of important cases for which the question of change, and especially social cultural change, was geosocially critical. In addition, social scientists' interest in understanding the fascism of the 1930s remained strong, and their interest in communism, now in the context of growing Cold War competition, was broadening and linking itself tightly with an interest in the fate of the Third World. Typically, then, social cultural change was considered in terms of building and maintaining stable democracy, an approach which in turn served to mold the overarching goal of social cultural research in terms of policy: What sorts of things could be done to foster

[20] This conception on Eckstein's part is to be distinguished from that of modern society's flexibility, more about which below.

democratic social cultures (i.e., to make others "more like us")? How can the social culture approach help us to predict stability and change in other countries?[21]

The theoretical paradox of continuity and change acquires another dimension in the companion tendency of early social culturists to treat Anglo-American social culture as stable (and thus as an exemplar), while viewing many others, especially in the former colonies and in those European nations that had been drawn to fascism or communism, as volatile, subject to rapid change - and, of course, undesirable. Almond and Verba's theoretical treatment of social culture may seem to provide a solution to this paradox, but it is not a durable one. They posit multiple bases for the stability of the "civic culture," depicting a broad and solid foundation for it (Hristić: 36).

For one thing, they insist that this civic culture is characterized by a fusion between certain social norms and social orientations; because the civic culture is embedded in and supported by social norms, stability is *built in*. This culture presumably could not undergo much in the way of change unless there were first significant changes both in social relations and in politics. Secondly, their notion of "congruence" between social culture and social system broadens the foundation for stability; their assertion that a participatory culture and a democratic system are congruent (i.e., are nicely suited to one another) itself provides additional foundation, but in their elaboration they further undergird their portrait of stability with a highly engineered structure: the civic culture is a tripartite "mixed" culture, an alloy forged of citizen, subject, and parochial social orientations, tempered by a belief in the democratic myth, anchored by inertia, buttressed by attenuated partisanship, with expert elites at the helm. The most important result of this complex system is, of course, stability; it generates, maintains, and perpetuates "a balanced social culture in which social activity,

[21] Welch (1987) suggests that the tendency "to link the study of social culture with that of social development or modernization" is the very reason that social culture "went out of fashion" after its initial popularity; works like *The Civic Culture* were weakened by the criticism both of developmentalist thought and of the operative social cultural model.

involvement, and rationality exist but are balanced by passivity, traditionality, and commitment to parochial values" (1963: 32).

The assumption of stable Anglo-American social cultures, ahistorical to begin with, was undermined by events that unfolded after *The Civic Culture* was written.

In *The Civic Culture Revisited* we learn that the passage of fifteen or so years has revealed significant changes in the social cultures of each of the countries in the original study - which raises several questions. The first, of course, is that of the paradox of continuity and change:

Can the mutability of social culture be reconciled with its service as an explanatory variable? The answer at this point, plainly, is that no, it cannot - but the question suggests another: Is there at least a *component* of social cultures that remains stable over time - a core that truly does characterize a national social culture? Although here the answer is not so plain, part of it would be that, yes, there is a core, but this core probably does not *meaningfully* characterize a national social culture. As Kim (quoted above) suggested, if such a "core" can be detected, it amounts essentially to a narrow common denominator with uncertain significance among diverse subcultures within a society; moreover, it may be that, because different subcultures might assign different meanings to the same objects, what appears in the data as a common denominator may not be that at all. Underlying these questions, then, remain the more fundamental ones concerning the scope and meaning of the concept of social culture as it is being applied in a particular study, and the validity of the variables that are being used to take its measure; if these aspects of the study are not satisfactory, then the question of a core social culture that persists as other aspects change is rather moot.

In attempting to have it both ways, then, social culture researchers have been able to keep their research voluminous, but in doing so have frustrated the emergence of any consistent meaning; in treating social culture as a stable, measurable, and relatively predictable force, all the while insisting that change is to be expected,[22] they built into the concept a contradiction that has

[22] Alan Abramowitz's comment in his chapter on the United States in ***The***

helped to prevent explanation from attaining clarity. Recall, for example, that Almond and Verba at one point characterize their "study [as] but a snapshot in a *rapidly changing* world" (1963: vii; my emphasis); and yet, on the basis of that very snapshot-study, they construct an elaborate model of *stability* for the "civic culture."[23] Inglehart, who attempts to assemble a series of snapshots into a moving picture, winds up with rather a blur. As I noted in my critique, the *intra*-cohort variation in his eighteen-year time frame is the most volatile; but then, cutting through wildly fluctuating measurements of survey values, he calculates the (basically irrelevant) difference between the start date and the end date, and finding that there is a slight increase in "postmaterialist" values, declares support for his hypothesis. Recall, too, that the significant social cultural change found by all of the authors of the country studies in *The Civic Culture Revisited* accrued relatively rapidly, within twenty years after the original study.

All of this must be put into epistemological perspective, however. First, it may well be that more stayed the same than changed; but if much of what was "measured" seems to have changed, then the conclusion that significant change has accrued - correct or otherwise - is inescapable. And if the measurements taken truly are measurements of social culture, then it must be concluded that social culture has changed. On the other hand, as I have argued at length, there is little in the way of logic or evidence to support the use of the variables in these studies as measurements of social culture - in which case what we might well have in quantitative social culture studies is just sound and fury.

Secondly, that the common conception of change underlying social cultural thought is inconsistent and variable likely indicates systematic theoretical error, the source of which is worth pursuing. If such research has, in fact, revealed significant, statistically meaningful

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***Civic Culture Revisited*** is typical in reflecting the ***actual*** expectation of change: It would be remarkable if the description of American social culture contained in ***The Civic Culture*** did not need some modification fifteen or so years later" (1980: 188-189).

[23] Again, however, "stability" had first to be assumed as a basic feature of the Anglo-American social systems.

social culture change over the course of eighteen or twenty years, then the assumption of continuity has been seriously undermined. In cultural terms, a couple of decades is but a brief period; and yet social culturists hardly seem to be baffled by the obvious changes they have seen during that period - indeed, change seems (in hindsight at least) to have been expected (though perhaps not to the degree obtained). That this dualism exists in social cultural thought may be the result of several distinct, but related, epistemological convolutions. On the one hand - and this hypothesis has some support in my critiques in the previous chapters - a certain kind of slight-of-hand may be required to generate the illusion of social culture as a real phenomenon actually being studied and "measured." Some self-deception - in the need mentally to compartmentalize the constituent components of the model - may be required to accept and engage in such research; thus while we "expect continuity," we are not surprised by change, and remain quite prepared to provide explanations (usually ad *hoc)* for whatever change we find over time.[24]

On the other hand, the dualism reveals another, usually implicit and never closely examined, assumption in social cultural thought. The rate of cultural change (and hence of social cultural change) is not really believed to be constant: culture is seen to undergo change much more rapidly in the modern era than previously. Although most culturists make no mention of this assumption (because it tends to contradict the assumption of continuity), some do. Almond and Verba implied it in referring to their "snapshot of a *rapidly changing* world." Tucker mentions it in passing, noting that cultures "are relatively persistent through time, though they do undergo continual change, especially in modern times" (1974: 241).

Eckstein makes some intriguing suggestions along these lines in his 1988 theoretical exercise upon which I touched in my

[24] There may even be an implicit understanding on the part of social culturists that cultural explanation is, in fact, highly resistant to quantitative research, let alone to verification. The underlying attitude that soft data compiled into weak statistical relationships are nevertheless worth generating and assembling into social cultural portraits may well stem from strong (and perhaps often well-informed) preconceptions about the nature of the social culture being studied.

critique. He notes that "highly modern societies have traits that make it especially likely that actors and aggregates of actors will frequently confront novel situations," and that "situational and structural change tend to occur with great frequency and rapidity in modern societies;" modernization, then, must be characterized by a shift toward greater flexibility. However, because the culturalist assumption of continuity would lead us to expect that there are limits to flexibility in relevant *orientations*, we should expect rather "that the rigidity of cultural prescription will relax, so that culture can accommodate much social fluidity." The elements of culture thus "increasingly become 'forms' that can subsume a variety of 'contents."' Pushed further, this proposition suggests that "highly modern society ... may be intrinsically acultural and, for that reason, transitory or susceptible to *surrogates for* culture - including cults and dogmas" (1988: 794-795; emphasis in original). Although the latter suggestion may press a bit too far by defining culture out of itself, the question of form and content is a provocative one, and its application in research would likely generate a high yield in the study of contemporary popular culture.[25]

However, because the universe of social objects is highly circumscribed, it seems unlikely that social culture has reached a point at which it would have acquired adaptive strategies of this complexity (Hristić: 56), and so I would not expect the conception to be useful in social culture research.[26] [27] In any event, going back

[25] Form, content, continuity, and change in popular culture assume a different configuration in what critic Michiko Kakatuni has called "recycling" in art, fashion, film, etc., which we can characterize as the use of the content of the past century's art in forms derived of today's technologies. Kakatuni characterizes it as "a self- conscious repudiation of originality, a bemused preference for style over content and a boundless faith in the creative possibilities for irony and spin" *(New York Times* "Week in (continued...)

[26] (...continued)
Review", October 30, 1994, p. E4). Of course, ten years ago this phenomenon was called "nostalgia."

[27] In contemporary American popular culture, for example, manufacturing labels were moved to the outside of clothing, and a decade later undergarments themselves moved to the outside; here, the question of form and content may be a provocative one (especially, perhaps, vis-à-vis what might

to the previous layer of Eckstein's exposition, the rate of "change" is seen to be inherently different in modern societies from what it is in no-so- modern contemporary societies, as well as in the pre-modern history of what are now modern societies. What this means to the assumption of continuity is merely this: continuity *can* be assumed, but we may have to bend over backwards to find it.

Thirdly, the conceptual elision of culture and social culture, explored in the previous section, has obscured the question of what sorts of change can and should be expected, which in turn is inextricably bound to the rate of change we might expect under certain circumstances. *Culture,* writ large, does seem to be relatively stable, predictable, and slow to change. Whether or not forms persist by accommodating a variety of contents, the elements and dynamics of culture often lose their linkages over time with the objective conditions that led to their creation, but are perpetuated through shared understanding, the requirements of community membership, and the limits of socially acceptable ways of being and doing. Although the initial impulse to study social culture may have been rooted in a desire to uncover just such elements in the world of politics, to isolate the social and socially relevant aspects of culture - or else to reproduce in the abstract a model of politics based on that of culture - the concept of social culture has, from the start, been structured quite differently from that of culture, for cultural and social cultural objects are substantially different structurally from one another. While the objects of culture *tend* to persist and to remain stable, when they do change, the specific cultural forms that may now refer to different or changing objects tend nevertheless to remain sufficiently interwoven with the fabric of daily life that their own persistence is sustained in turn. The tenor of "rapid change" that characterizes the modern era in advanced industrial societies may be largely the result of *additions* to the aggregate of cultural objects rather than replacements; the

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come next). But the analogues in politics - perhaps a much less complex set of phenomena than fashion - are scant indeed, able only to leap out of politics and into popular media culture: the ***brand*** (Dior) of Nancy Reagan'souter clothing; the ***color*** (red) of Manuel Noriega's underpants; and the type (boxer) of Bill Clinton's underpants.

communications and transportation industries, along with population growth, have expanded dramatically the range and variety of cultural references within a society, which are rapidly assimilated into the cultural lexicon.

The world of politics, however, is one very different from that of the broader culture. The objects of politics are qualitatively and substantively different from those of the broader culture (intersections and overlappings notwithstanding), and the effects wrought on politics by the innovations of the modern era have themselves differed significantly from those on culture. Moreover, despite a dramatic expansion over the last century, and despite fistulae from the broader culture, the range of admissible social objects remains highly circumscribed, its elements remain distinct from those of culture, and the integration of politics and culture remains limited to a realm of symbolic action and communication.[28]

What I argue, then, is that while cultural forms persist because of their integration in the quotidian affairs of ordinary people, *social* culture does not; rather, it represents a more direct reflection of, and dependence on, the objects to which it refers, without absorbing their forms and integrating them into the broader cultural system. In other words, generally speaking, as a social object fades, so does its social cultural component.[29]

Finally, the most consequential epistemological distortion affecting the culturist conception of change, intimately related to those described above, lies in how the causes of change are treated. Typically, change is fairly reasonably explained in terms of economic, social, and demographic conditions, to which change is a response; in short, contextual changes in politics and society create cultural changes. But as long as the principal focus remains on cultural explanations, and as long as the internally contradictory assumption of continuity (to a large extent *required* for cultural

[28] I would not argue that the symbolic is not significant. On the contrary, its role both in actual politics and in social culture is important, but, as I will argue later, its effects both highly localized and unpredictable.

[29] There are overlapping areas. Fourth of July parties in the United States may be thought of as cultural; going or not going to the voting booth on election day is social cultural.

explanation) remains in the theoretical construct, the accounting for change remains *ad hoc* - it cannot be explained within the social cultural model. The attempts by Eckstein, by Inglehart, and by Thompson et al. to incorporate change into social culture theory are interesting and provocative, and each has shed light on a number of deficiencies in the theory, but all are conservative in their modifications: although its profile is altered by the qualifications these authors offer, cultural continuity remains an essential feature of each of their frameworks.

Of course, cultural continuity exists, best exemplified by societies that appear *not* to have changed much over time, especially "traditional" societies. To a lesser extent, numerous forms of continuity can easily be discerned in the more complex modern societies - whether or not it is reflected in the researchers' data. But culturists do not deny that all societies adapt to contextual changes; and they believe that changes in culture and social culture figure in such adaptation as well. Where culturist theory fails in this regard is in its tacit insistence, without real evidence, that continuity in the culture or social culture of an unchanging or slowly changing society is an inherent feature of culture itself. Because neither culture nor social culture has been convincingly operationalized, such a feature cannot yet be tested. However, faced with the general body of evidence of change of all sorts, and sometimes very rapid change, it seems rather reasonable to expect that those few social cultures which have changed little simply have not been presented with much in the way of significant contextual change. But contextual change, though often addressed at length, especially in the more recent works on social culture, has been not been incorporated into theory or methodology.

## Societal framework

Context is crucial. It includes the functioning of social structures, the ways in which social power is used and distributed, and the process itself of politics - and individuals react to all of these continuously, often in a rationally-based (if not entirely rational) calculus. By leaving these aspects out of social cultural

modeling and research, culturists have been able to avoid the inconvenience that would otherwise be presented by vast tracts of social and social reality. The studies I examined in the previous chapters easily leave the impression that social culture exists in, and is disseminated throughout, a society, free of structural constraints (Hristić: 76), untouched by the distribution, structure, or exercise of power, unaffected by any aspect of the social process, and unfettered by any rational cogitation or calculation on the part of the people over whom the social culture supposedly holds sway. Although most social culture studies give at least some consideration to these factors, their significance seems to have been exchanged for that of social culture itself - again, as an intervening or an independent variable, but usually (in the discourse of the studies, at least) the latter.

The problem of social structures' potential effects on social culture is relatively well-represented in the critical literature, frequently expressed in terms of the need to incorporate into research and analysis the performance of the social system - without which no valid conclusions concerning social culture's causal role can be drawn (Barry 1970, Pateman 1971, Pye 1972). Indeed, the early definitions and some parcels of the rudimentary theory that accompanied them tended, in Pye's words, to leave open the question of "whether the social culture is related primarily to the operations of the social system or to the separate views of the population" (1972: 288).

This point is brought home rather firmly in an oft-used example from *The Civic Culture*. Italian respondents report that they expect little accommodation from government institutions or incumbents, which is said to comprise the affective component of an "alienated" social culture. Almond and Verba established the interpretive form which permits this finding to be taken to indicate that Italian *attitudes* run counter to democratic participation, assigning little importance to the cognitive basis of the expression of such "attitudes" in surveys, namely that Italian social institutions and their incumbents in fact do offer very little accommodation to ordinary citizens - which implies rather that Italians are not expressing an "attitude," they are making a statement of fact. Whether an "attitude" is inherent in such survey responses thus

represents a different question entirely. Although this is a fairly simple example (and one which, moreover, seems to owe its existence both to some of the weaknesses of survey data and to an error in judgment on the part of Almond and Verba), it carries implications that extend throughout the world of social culture theory and research. The confusion between "attitudes" that might affect the unfolding of politics on the one hand, and "structural features" of the social system itself on the other, achieves its starkest form here, raising the most basic questions concerning the *meaning* of social culture, the utility of social cultural "explanation," and the direction(s) of causality among phenomena that are considered in social cultural study. The critique, of course, indicates that structural features of a social system might be decisive determinants of aspects of what we refer to as social culture; and the next logical step of the critique is to address precisely the question of what social culture means - keeping in mind that if it cannot be convincingly differentiated from "social behavior" (Pye, 1972), or from "social structure" (Lehman, 1972), then the concept must be suspected of being redundant.

In this vein, Lehman (1972) devotes his theoretical efforts toward "maintaining the analytical distinctiveness of culture without committing us either to the position that culture is an isolated explanatory variable or that it is only the indirect manifestation of processes within the social system" (1972: 363). As I noted earlier, however, he sculpts through his analysis a concept very difficult to research, for he holds social culture aloft in the realm of symbols, endowing it with implicit and theoretically ambiguous ties to social institutions, forms of social legitimation, and regime types.[30] In

[30] Lehman's efforts seem fairly clearly devoted to what Welch (1993) calls the "comparative project." Although his outline presents a nicely balanced profile for comparative endeavor, the "sociological project," in which attempts might be made to trace actual forces and mechanisms connected with social culture, suffers tremendously.
What he does not discuss or explore, but which must be understood in his model, is that a "symbol" is an abstraction of an idea, "a shadow's shadow," which nonetheless must be presumed to be capable, when deployed, of reaching into the members of a population and in some way affecting their will. Although few would dispute the proposition that symbols can do just

sum, even though Lehman wishes to separate social structure from social culture, his analysis implies that the bond between them cannot be broken.

Elkins and Simeon (1979) consider structure in terms of "institutions," and in terms of "proportions of individuals" social classes, demographic distinctions such as ethnic groups, educational groupings, and so on (1979: 135). Although "proportions of individuals" may legitimately be understood to represent certain structural features of a social or social system (and certainly it is a convenient delineation to employ in quantitative research: Elkins and

Simeon have survey data in mind), it is not a logical one to cast into competition with cultural features. Thrown together analytically, the two lock themselves into an embrace which cannot be mistaken for an explanatory contest; indeed, Elkins and Simeon find themselves explaining the mutual attraction of the two by suggesting that where they overlap, the "culture-bearing units" for specific variables are revealed. What this means, for example (as I interpret it), is that if most respondents over fifty years of age report a sense of social optimism, while most respondents under fifty report a pessimistic outlook, then we can suppose that age-group is the culture-bearing unit of these particular forms of optimism and pessimism; from there, we can seek the underlying "cultural" explanation. Although this is a confusing approach to studying social culture, not all of the blame can be assigned to Elkins and Simeon, for the reality of what they are attempting to sort out is itself rather convoluted. However, their model does fall short in its failure to trace down social culture itself, which the authors have defined essentially as "assumptions about the social world" (1979: 127); their model is designed, rather, to herd data through certain gates in order, first, to separate the ostensibly structural from the putatively cultural, and second, to distinguish "culture bearing units" within the supposedly structural. Welch has nicely described the result as "the problems of the 'retreating cause' and of the 'retreating effect"' (1993: 67) .

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that, a model of social culture that relies on the empirically untested power of the symbolic is highly problematic. I return to this issue in the following chapter.

The examples of Lehman and of Elkins and Simeon illustrate different ways in which the critique of social culture has framed culture and structure as mutually exclusive elements of an explanatory dichotomy, and has served to channel efforts at conceptual refinement into testing the viability of a distinctive cultural explanation. What makes their efforts seem odd (and unworkable) may be that these researchers have not actually relinquished the belief that social culture and structure are separable. Whether or not this is so, the impulse to run social culture and structure together is a natural one, and even appeared in *The Civic Culture* in both causal configurations (though, again, with an overwhelming emphasis on the direction that makes the least sense). What has prevented a harmonious coexistence of culture and structure is partly, as I recounted earlier in this chapter, that overly expansive and vague conceptions of social culture (along with general culture itself) have been too much insinuated into the models, typically threatening either to overshadow structure, or to absorb it.

In addition, the concept of "structure" itself has often been left vague in the social culture literature, and hence carries multiple meanings. The broadest conception of structure is to be found in Marxist analysis, where structure can encompass the entire socioeconomic system. Here, social cultures appear to be the products of relations of production; in capitalist societies, they are the products of class relations. What is generally thought of as social culture can, in broad Marxist analysis, be reduced to components of superstructural forces - largely ideology, but also the false consciousness that ideology produces. Hence, the significant point in the Marxist critique is that culturists are focusing on an epiphenomenon of an integrated socioeconomic system that structures all significant social relations.[31] In Jerzy Wiatr's (1980) critique of *The Civic Culture,*

[31] Note that, on its face, this contradicts directly Eckstein's culturalist assumption (quoted earlier) "that orientations are not superstructural reflections of objective structures, but themselves invest structures and behavior with cognitive and normative meaning." The two views are not necessarily irreconcilable, though, for "orientations" could well be derived of objective structures ***and*** invest them with "meaning." What is difficult to investigate here is the substance, texture, and social significance of such "meaning."

he points out that even where there is an explicit ideology of democratic pluralism supported by social structures ostensibly designed to promote democracy, contradictory economic power tends to undermine the effectiveness of such social structures.[32] Although there is some room for maneuver within it, Marxist structuralism offers perhaps the most determinative conception of structure.[33]

The conceptions of structure that we find in the social culture literature, including in most of the criticism, are usually more circumscribed than this, and are typically less determinative, although they may in fact tend logically toward equally broad structural inclusiveness. Almond and Verba consider "enlisting the support of informal groups" to amount to the formation of social structures (to be fair, however, this is an aberrant view). Lijphart considers "degree of democracy" and "democratic stability" to be structural variables - and these are the only "structural" variables that he considers in a section entitled "Social Structure" (1980: 38-41).[34] Inglehart treats the "persistence of democratic institutions" (i.e., years of continuous democracy after 1905) as a structural variable, which he considers to be directly proportional to aggregates of cultural variables (1988, 1990).[35] In Elkins and Simeon's model, "structure" may refer, really, to *any social structure* - including, almost incidentally, social structures. In each of these examples, social culture is understood largely as a social phenomenon that acts upon politics, rather than as a social phenomenon which may draw some elements from the more generally social

[32] Again, Mann's critique of liberal democracy makes a similar point.

[33] I should add that Wiatr's analysis is by no means confined to this point, and, despite the title of his chapter, does not rely solely on Marxist analysis.

[34] In fact, Lijphart is not interested structure. He addresses "democratic stability" only to defend ***The Civic Culture*** from a marginal remark by Barry (1970) to the effect that Almond and Verba erred in assuming relative degrees of democracy rather than offering objective means of determining relative differences.

[35] This is a case, incidentally, of retroactive causation, for the causal cultural variables are measured in

(continued...)

realms. And each illustrates the conceptual confusion that occurs when both culture and structure are conceived with broad ambiguity (Hristić: 89).

These, then, are some of the broad methodological and theoretical problems afflicting the conventional approach to social culture. Not all such studies are equally afflicted, of course, and not all of these problems are manifested in every study. My object, however, has been specifically to catalogue these problems, both as a general argument for a new approach to social culture, and as a body of information to take into account in the construction of a new approach. The following chapter presents such a model. [36]

[36] (...continued)
time periods beginning fifty years after the "starting date" of his "persistence" variable.

## Reviewing the etalon of social conjectures

In the previous chapter I argued that the conventional approach to social culture employs only a vaguely defined concept, and that this is inevitable because its "cultural" component, treated less as an analogue than as a real and determining factor, is tenuous: a culture-bound conception of social culture has proved to be highly resistant to empirical definition and to empirical correlation with politics. Even culture's role as analogue in social culture, however, is easily overburdened; its analogical purpose is to imply both a broad commonality of values (usually on a nation-wide scale) and a strong inertia or continuity over time in such values, neither of which has been found to have coherent empirical support.

In essence, my argument comes very close to asserting that social culture, as represented in the operative conceptions that can be discerned in empirical social culture studies, does not exist; to go that far, however, would be to press positivism further than I intend. While we know that social culture exists (even if most of us must rely on little more than an intuitive sense of it) , the single most important point in the general body of criticism is that ambiguous social cultural modeling is unequipped to assume the burdens imposed on the concept; description, explanation, and causal inferences are adrift: their only connection to the model lies in the assumption that social culture exists.

Although there are a great many aspects of earlier work that have merit, my critique implies that the incorporation of at least four general elements that have hitherto been neglected,

excluded, or ignored in the conventional approach to social culture would help a great deal in generating a viable, enhanced, alternative approach. First of all, *structure,* more than anything else, represents the neglected side of social culture; ignoring social structure and the processes of politics has denuded social culture studies of much of the concept's potential, as well as its due credibility. Secondly, the importance of the *object* itself of social culture, namely the world of politics, has been diminished by its easy elision with competing causes, effects, and mere symptoms; vague, atomized objects of the broader culture, of individual psychology, and of basic social organization are accorded equal importance, whether or not their significance in the social world can plausibly be established. Thirdly, the conventional approach to social culture tends to lack a *critical perspective* of any sort. The operative assumption that social cultures, rooted deep in the past, are strongly determinative agents of politics, not only confuses cause and effect, but also draws attention away from the inherent and universal antagonism between government and people. Conflict in general, either between government and people or between groups, is either ignored, described as pathological, or diverted into the label "fragmented social culture," rather than subjected to analysis. The lack of critical perspective is manifested as well in: a) the complacent acceptance of both vague conceptions of social culture and vague characterizations of social cultures; b) the practice of conjuring convenient meaning from inconveniently empty variables; and c) the emphasis on the "comparative project" at the expense of the "sociological project" - which is accompanied by an attachment to essentially fruitless typologies.

Finally, my critique implies the need for more specific definition of the *nature,* the *scope,* and the *sources* of social culture. In order to develop an approach which is more useful to students of politics, we must recast the concept fundamentally, rather than, say, to sharpen existing aspects of current operative definitions, or to attempt to [37] synthesize a formal definition on the basis of current approaches. After all, the

[37] I will return later to the notion of fragmented social cultures.

boundaries and moorings of the concept - the assumptions in which it is embedded and the analytical scope to which it aspires - obviously have a profound effect on the way social culture is studied and understood, as well as on the findings generated by research.

## Primary objectives

What I propose is to start with the minimalist seminal definitions, but to jettison the elaborations that served to flesh out the concept, and actually to reverse a number of assumptions attached to the conventional understanding of social culture. The seminal definitions are not all the same, though. Close scrutiny of Almond's 1956 definition reveals both an inherent vagueness and the twin urges toward a taxonomic and a quantitative approach. Almond and Verba's basic definition in 1963 clears away some of the vagueness, but preserves and endorses the quantitative taxonomy: the conceptual pivot for establishing quantitatively determined types and categories resides in the words "pattern, "distribution," and "matrix." Verba's 1965 definition, however, because it was tailored for application to a broad selection of quantitatively inaccessible nations, is freed both of methodological prescription and of preset taxonomy. Once again:

> The social culture of a society consists of the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which social action takes place. It provides the subjective orientation to politics (1965: 513).

What is implied in this definition represents the starting point for my approach. As phrased, of course, it is as vague now as it was thirty years ago; it still requires elaboration to link it to a research strategy. First, though, in order to establish the very different social cultural research project that I propose, it is necessary to enumerate explicitly several assumptions which must be abandoned or reversed, and then to build a framework on the basis of a

revised set of assumptions. The following, then, are five such revisions, derived from my argument in the previous chapter; collectively, they imply a new approach to social culture.

## Deconstructing held views

Although social culture was originally conceived as a national phenomenon - and indeed, Almond had first defined it in terms of national social systems - research indicated, from the start, that the national focus was misplaced - in Ruth Lane's words, "a major error" (1992). Rather than to relinquish it, however, culturists have tended instead to overburden the concept by vaguely assuming national uniformity, thus rendering it incapable of

distinguishing force and movement in the manifold interactions between social cultures, social system, and politics. Theoretically, then, this inflated concept can absorb entirely different social cultures in a heterogeneous population as a single social culture; for example, if data show that half of a nation's population wants government to do more in general and half wants it to do less in general, then culturists are likely to conclude that the nation has a social culture that is "ambivalent" about how much government should do (hence, "social culture" is the sum or average of its parts). Similarly, quantitative tradition in social culture research has it that if 60 percent prefer a greater government role and 40 percent a lesser role, then the majority carries the culture: the nation in question has a social culture which clamors for a greater government role (hence, "social culture" defined by majorities). In both cases, it would make more sense to conclude that the data imply two different social cultures.[38]

[38] The most compelling, systematic example of this sort of error in the literature, I think, is that of "fragmented" social cultures, which I mentioned above, and to which I will return in chapter 10. Almond built this notion into the concept in his 1956 article; in his original typology, the "Continental European" social system was ***characterized by*** fragmented social cultures. For developmentalists, this version of "fragmentation" was conve-

The broader the spread of the population under study, the less socially significant will be the elements we find its members to have in common. In other words, if we mean the expression "American social culture" to refer generally to the entire population of the United States, then social culture at this level will not tell us much about the functioning of politics. To say that Americans are "liberal," for example - a general set of values widely believed to be shared by a majority of Americans - may help us to explain a great deal about why socialism never planted deep roots in the U.S., but it does not go very far in elaborating "the subjective orientation to politics," let alone in connecting the latter to the actual functioning of politics (and nor can it provide the whole explanation of socialism's failure in the U.S.). I should emphasize, however, that this is not to say that phenomena at the level of "liberal" values go nowhere in such an elaboration - only that phenomena as broad as that are likely to form only a part, and likely a small part, of a population's collective subjective orientation to *politics;* moreover, they are likely so to form the subjective orientation only [39] in a portion of the population[40] - which raises the question of which portion of the population, and in turn, that of whether, why, and how this is significant.[41]

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nient, for it emphasized a significant difference between, on the one hand, an idealized, harmonized, rational pluralism in most advanced industrialized nations, and, on

(continued...)

[39] (...continued)
the other, culturally-rooted, often "tribal," potentially violent, and frankly irrational squabbles in less modern societies; finding division to be rooted in the "cultural" world ends the search for causes before it can branch into the deeper but less definitive world of other possible causes, such as social and economic competition in environments where both power and money are scarce.

[40] 0nce again, in this context, I find Mann (1970) on liberal democracy to be convincing.

[41] Brian Girvin (1989) makes an interesting and useful set of differentiations in this regard. He considers social culture at three overlapping and interacting levels of organization. The ***macrosocial culture,*** broad and stable, "reflects the long-term certainties of the collectivity which in the modern world is usually expressed through nationalism." Although it is at this level

The notion that populations cannot be assumed to be uniform is a critical one in the model I propose: the "subjective orientation to politics" within a population displays wide variability. Equally critical in the model is the notion that the *social system is variable,* which I mean in several senses. First, the "social system," as far as social culture is concerned, includes the national and the various subnational social systems; the national social system is only a part of the whole. In this sense, the "social system" is objectively variable, for state and local governments differ from locale to locale.

What a social system "is" - or what any part of it "is" - varies according to what it "does," what it is "doing," at any given time. Form and function, deeply intertwined, compete continuously to supply the objective definition of "social system." In social culture research, then, we must attempt to reconcile an ambiguously "objective" social system with its ambiguously subjective manifestation in the minds of actual people.

The visible "surface," the "contours," the "face" of a social system, especially a national social system, is impossible to apprehend objectively. Government consists of interactions, relationships, perceptions, motivations, roles, and so on - largely invisible, immeasurable, variable, and dynamic. In a related vein, the outward manifestations of social processes are variable. For example, an election, formally, objectively, consists of citizens casting votes for certain candidates who have gained official nomination. Many students of politics, however, have taken to looking closely at the campaign that precedes the election, recognizing not only that campaigns are highly variable, but also that they are highly (Hristić: 90) determinative to the outcome of the election. Similarly, the

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that the "rules of the game" are seeded, they take root in the ***mesosocial culture***; Girvin sees this mesolevel as open to influence both from the macrolevel and the microlevel. "It is at the microlevel [hence, ***microsocial culture***] that 'normal' social activity takes place, and where change is most immediately detected" (1989: 34-36). In my model, I emphasize the microlevel and the mesolevel. In my view, macrolevel phenomena - e.g., "liberalism" - are of interest only in broadly defined, very general discussions of politics; digging into Girvin's meso- and microlevels promises to be more productive and interesting as social culture research.

implementation of a policy is subject to a wide variety of possible courses; formally and objectively, it consists of the drafting and signing of laws or regulations, perhaps accompanied by public statements. But *actual* implementation, as it percolates through bureaucracies, eventually reaching private citizens, not only may have a marked influence on the eventual essence of the policy, but also may present a variable, mobile "face" to those affected by it.[42]

As a final point, an exceedingly important point is that the appearance and the meaning of this variable social system is highly dependent on the perspective of the viewer. What this means in social cultural analysis is that the social system is a different entity to different people. The best known such differentiation, though not usually phrased this way, is that drawn between elites and masses. The long-term member of the social elite and the ignorant peasant, however, merely represent the polar ends of a linear continuum. To the linear continuum, we can add breadth (a third dimension), and thus derive more finely defined groupings. Further, we can also add the element of time (a fourth dimension), not only enriching analysis a great deal, but also rather getting to the point of social culture research. But what of the *content* of social culture?

Along with a narrowing and refining of the demographic distributions of analytical social cultural perceptions and values, our conception of the content of social culture must be narrowed and more tightly focused as well. Social culture conceived in terms of a very few broad values, attitudes, and beliefs has not shown itself to be capable of generating useful information. I propose that social culture - "the subjective orientation to politics" - be understood, rather, in terms of the assumptions and expectations that people have concerning the functioning of the relevant social systems. In my model, the concept of social culture refers directly to the world of politics, and takes into account the specific ways in which people come into contact with social systems and

[42] For example, Michael Schatzberg remarks that to ordinary people, the "face" the Zairian state is more often a snarl than a smile; and he shows that to a selection of small groups the face of the state smiles broadly indeed (1988: passim, but especially 134-144).

the structures, processes, and outputs connected with them, as well as how stakes and incentives are presented and perceived.

Social systems operate with sufficient autonomy that it makes little sense to assume that broad values, attitudes, and beliefs among the population will have significant effects on the system's actual functioning.[43] Again, this is not to say that these have no place in social cultural analysis, or for that matter, in social analysis in general (Hristić: 101). Broad, diffuse values, whether widely shared or bounded in demographic enclaves, may well have significant effects on issues, on issues- framing, and on agenda-setting; however, these aspects of politics are secondary to perceptions of the system's functioning.[44] I will go into more detail on this matter later on in this and the next two chapters.

As I argued at length in the previous chapter, conceiving of social culture a *priori* as a subset of culture has been exceedingly problematic to analysis, and hence social culture would be usefully conceived a *priori* as an entirely separate and distinct phenomenon. Obviously, the general culture likely has effects on the social culture - but insofar as it does, the relationship must be determined empirically. To define social culture as "an autonomous subset of culture" has not only failed to preserve the distinction, but also has tended to subvert any investigation of the relationship. In fact, without this distinction, the only significant difference between "social culture" and "national ethos" lies in the methodology - which has been shown repeatedly to be suspect. It would make more sense as a research strategy, then, to begin with the statement that the two are distinct, but that they may have effects on one another. Given that very few empirical findings can establish that the broader culture actually does have a determinative role in the texture of the social

[43] I will illustrate this point in my elaboration later on.

[44] As I noted in chapter 3 (footnote 24), Alasdair MacIntyre has pointed out that "The notion of social culture is secondary to and parasitic upon the notion of social practice" (1971: 261). His point is that the study of social attitudes, conducted without studying the object of those attitudes, simply makes no sense. Needless to say, I agree with his assessment.

culture, neither can reasonably be subordinated to the other.[45] Although many culturists might disagree, pointing out that in their conception social culture is *integrally* bound up with the broader culture, such integration has not been demonstrated empirically; moreover, the general fuzziness of "culture," combined with the uncertainty of proposed linkages between culture and social culture, imply that such integration may remain problematic empirically.

Only a few perspectives genuinely favor an integrated culture/social-culture. One is the desire to explain politics in terms of culture - in which case social culture is conveniently presented as a subset of culture. Another stems from the illusion that a coherent and consequential "national culture" can be discerned in every nation; but as I pointed out in the first proposed revision above, at the level of "nation," cultural phenomena usually suffer the effects of dilution. The illusion dovetails nicely, however, with the fact that a national social system *can* be discerned in every nation; the structuring limits of a concrete, constant, and unidimensional "social system" and the ideational limits of an abstract, constant, and highly multidimensional "national culture" are then merged to serve as the conceptual boundaries of "social culture." The problem, of course, is that the manifold planes of culture, national or otherwise, may or may not intersect with the world of politics; by merely *assuming* that they intersect, the culturist obscures the need to investigate whether or not they actually do.

A more compelling perspective in favor of an integrated culture/social-culture is the "plus *ga change*" phenomenon - the fact that though structures may change, politics-as- usual often persists. The reasoning here (the residual- variable approach) is that if structure is not necessarily determinative to politics, then the inertia we often see in politics must be derived of culture, which apparently pervades people's minds more thoroughly than do structures; naturally, too, it must be a specific subset of culture, namely social

[45] Here, of course, semantics has a role to play. If the one is ***defined*** in terms of the other, then it is natural to ***assume*** a determinative relationship. Again, though, my point is that such a relationship has not been investigated, let alone proved.

culture. Let me return to this argument after introducing the following revision.

Although it may seem dogmatic or restrictive to insist upon a *defining* property of malleability and an *inherent* capacity for rapid change, this step follows logically from two essential features of social culture theory. First, it is merely the reversal of the assumption of continuity, which has proven itself unable to keep pace with empirical reality. Mere reversal, of course, would be arbitrary; but in constructing a research strategy characterized by a critical perspective, by adequate suspicion (and indeed, by appropriate skepticism) of coincidence and correlation, we have no choice but to define social culture in this way (Hristić: 112). Moreover, of course, since particular social cultures have been assessed again and again as having undergone change in relatively brief periods, to define social culture as malleable and capable of rapid change is, in fact, an *empirical* definition - and one which makes a great deal more sense than an *ad hoc* scavenging of the social landscape for the "unique" conditions which, in any given case, led to theoretically "unexpected" social cultural change. In very simple but perfectly accurate terms, what this means is that when change has occurred, we can assume that the conditions for change were present; when change has not occurred, we can assume that conditions for change were not present. In doing so, we open the way for a plausible investigation of what the agents of change might actually be.

Secondly, outright reversal of the assumption of continuity is required in order to eliminate the subtextual, ersatz touchstone of social culture research, which indicates that data are "social cultural data" only when they produce evidence of enduring and widely shared traits in a population. Through this revision of assumptions, our attention is drawn again to the question of *why* change occurs, which invokes the core of social culture and should comprise the core of social cultural research, but which has thus far been kept at arm's length - a priest called in by the psychiatrists, as a last resort, to perform an exorcism.

To return now to the point suspended above: it should be noted that from the perspective of the *changed* thesis, a conception of social culture which a) excludes the larger culture, b) is understood to be relatively malleable, and c) is affected by and transformed by

structure, appears not to be adequate to the task of explaining social inertia and social cultural inertia. However, this perspective (and hence the rejection of the malleable-culture thesis) relies on the assumption that if structure were determinative, then any and all changes in social structure would have definite effects on politics. But, as I have indicated, this assumption is not valid, for not all structural changes comprise sufficient conditions for social cultural change. Consider the basic example of a new law or regulation - in effect, structural change - implemented to alter a particular social process. The Federal Election Commission has occasionally added new limits to campaign contributions; although the goal of such regulations has been to reduce the influence of money in elections, campaign spending nevertheless continues to increase dramatically. Contribution and spending patterns, as well as accounting and reporting procedures, have changed (and, of course such regulation spawned the ill-controlled and notorious PACs of the 1980s and 1990s), but the overall face of the social process has not changed: large amounts of money are spent in campaigns, and are spent largely for the same purposes. In short, the unintended consequences of policies, laws, or regulations, coupled with frequently ineffectual formulation and implementation, remind us that attempting to evaluate the effects that structural change have on process solely on the basis of the explicit *intention* behind such changes is often pointless; significant changes in structure can be effected, but if the flow of former processes is not impeded, or if its path is only rerouted, not redirected, permitting it to end in the same result, then overall change in process may turn out to have been minimal or nil.

A culturist interpretation would likely draw support from such "inertia:" since structural change had little effect on process, it is the social culture that comprises the agency for politics-as-usual. And indeed, such a statement is not entirely inaccurate; probably, in a case such as the FEC example, the social culture of those involved did not change much at all; moreover, however we define social culture, it does not seem amiss here tentatively to assign to it some power of agency. But what is critical to sort out analytically is the agency behind the agency; doing so, I shall argue, implies that social culture is an epiphenomenon of other forces. This is certainly not to say that it is insignificant - merely that a close examination of social culture is a first step in exploring the forces that

generate a "subjective orientation to politics." This brings us to the fifth and final revision.

*Social culture is an organic, "living" phenomenon which undergoes continual reinforcement and/or change, the agents of which, in turn, are to be found in the structures and processes of politics.* The features of a social culture cannot be assumed to have sprung from nowhere, or from point distant in the past; indeed, in consonance with the previous revision, they may be assumed constantly to be in *potential flux,* undergoing continual adjustment - reinforcement, change, or combinations of the two.

Complex human behaviors are seldom perpetuated without motivation; among those that are, we count behaviors derived of instinct and of psychosis - essentially neuronal phenomena. Politics may often seem instinctual, and certainly it appears at times to border on the psychotic, but it is a fundamentally *social* and fundamentally *psychological* activity. At the same time, the activity of politics consists largely of *behavior* and *constraints on behavior,* both of which are motivation-driven. What links all of these together - the social, the psychological, the active-behavior, and the passive-behavior - is *incentive.*

As an interim and highly simplified summary, we can say that social culture entails the socially mediated, psychologically perceived, motivationally driven apprehension of incentives in the social environment; it is reflected in and supported by both behavior and by "non-behavior" (i.e., behavior which is avoided, excluded, or hampered, either by structural-legal means or by less formal social controls).

The conventional, culture-centered conception of social culture can support only dilute motivations: people have certain values, attitudes, and beliefs (and thus act in certain ways) because they are to some extent controlled by their social *culture,* which is what endows the social world with its meaning. Here, the social culture expands to occupy all of the "motivational space" - effectively subverting any empirical search for motivation.[46] To put this notion into

[46] Of course, researchers applying the rational-choice model do focus on motivation, but only along the narrow strand of conscious self-interest. Since basic social commitment - especially, for example, deep loyalty to a particular candidate - often develops in the absence of any discourse dire-

stark perspective, consider once again a pair of clear types among Almond and Verba's citizens. Because they are beneficiaries of the "civic culture," Americans are motivated to "form groups" as a strategy to influence government; Italians and Mexicans, who lack the civic culture, appear either to be motivated to do nothing to influence government, or not to be motivated to influence government. For Almond and Verba, both the motivation to act, on the one hand, and the motivation not to act or the lack of motivation to act, on the other, flow directly from the social culture. But if so acting, on the part of the Italians and Mexicans of the time, would be certainly futile, then there would appear to be no compelling motivation to act; and, obviously, if so acting would generate risk for the actors, then certainly there would be motivation *not* to act.[47] As I argued in my critique of *The Civic Culture,* it makes a great deal more sense, logically and empirically, to attribute these particular differences to differences in the social systems.

Similarly, the motivations of Inglehart's respondents are understood to be derived of the degree to which they are subject to materialist or postmaterialist orientations, which in turn are derived essentially of single-factor, cultural-material causes. The alternative interpretation that I proposed in my critique emphasizes instead the probable causal roots of significant changes in structure and process, with an emphasis on the resultant expectations. In both of these cases, the approach I advocate invites an examination of incentive and motivation beyond the "cultural" motivation upon which Almond and Verba rely, or the cultural-material perspective that Inglehart proposes.

It is important to note, too, that logically and empirically, to emphasize the causal nature of structure and process in a social culture model *permits* the search for motivation and incentives, whereas not to do so is to end the search before it has begun.

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cted to self-interest, rational-choice apparently must be confined to certain instances. In any event, it is important to note that in the model I am outlining here, actors are understood typically to behave "rationally" within the potentially "irrational" frameworks of their perceptions and evaluations of the social system - about which more later.

[47] According to LaPalombara, as I noted in chapter 3, this was a distinct and widespread possibility in Italy.

## Language foundation

Against the momentum of more than three decades of conventional social culture research, it has been necessary in my exposition to devote a great deal of attention to what is "wrong" with the way the social culture is conceived. In presenting an alternative conception, it has been important as well to define it in opposition to the conventional one. The revision of assumptions that I have just presented provides the framework now to begin to define a revised conception of social culture more in terms of what it is, rather than what it is not.

To propose a "noncultural" social culture not only generates a clash of paradigms, but also, I think, exposes a semantic obstacle. The conventional social cultural paradigm holds that social culture, "a certain autonomy" notwithstanding, is dependent for much of its substance upon the broader culture; for some, the broader culture essentially *makes* the social culture. I showed in the previous chapter why this need not be so, and argued, in fact, that it is not so. The semantic obstacle is merely that "social *culture*" seems to implicate, or at least to evoke, the broader culture; otherwise, some ask, why use the term "culture"? The strong tradition in comparative politics of assuming "cultural barriers" to development - not entirely without justification, but unsustainable as a single-factor explanation - not only has supported this understanding of social culture, but also has supplemented it with a ready-made framework: "traditional" versus "modern" culture appear in Almond and Verba's model, newly clad (and as smaller members of a larger team, for now a "matrix" substitutes for a continuum) as "participant" and "parochial" social culture.[48]

[48] I also showed how Eckstein builds the traditional- versus-modern equation into his framework. Recall, too, Inglehart's deep concern over Asian "anomalies" in his data, which threatened to violate his own built-in traditional- modern understanding of the shift to "postmaterialism;" the seriousness of the problem may be gauged by Inglehart's logical shell game in his explanation of why these were not really anomalies, and his sudden evocation of "premodern" values. The ways-of-life model of Thompson et al. also may be seen to have the traditional-modern poles built into it, if perhaps only as a Rorschach blot; after all, the "fatalist" is as widely viewed as a "traditional" personage as

A similar, related term has gained currency during the past decade "cultural politics" (alternatively, "the politics of culture") (Hristić: 112). Here, the distinction is fairly clear; few social scientists would confuse "cultural politics" with "social culture." The object of study in cultural politics is the visible extension of aspects of broader cultures into the explicitly social realm, usually within a single nation characterized by cultural or subcultural pluralism; culture itself becomes an object of social competition. The reason I bring up this term is that it illustrates a case of a descendent of cultural study in which there is virtually no semantic ambiguity; "culture" means what it is supposed to mean. Note, however, that it implies cultural pluralism, which in turn implies that if we were to couple it with a social culture analysis, we would be looking at more than one social culture.

Consider now some conceptual-semantic relatives of "social culture." As Almond and Verba note:

> We speak of a social culture just as we can speak of an economic culture or a religious culture. It is a set of orientations toward a special set of social objects and processes (1963:13).

It was thus clearly part of the initial thrust of social culture theorizing to *define* social culture in terms of its object, namely politics. Similarly, a "religious culture" would refer to religious belief and practice, and an "economic culture" to economic belief and practice.

Either of these *could* (coincidentally or intentionally) be used to refer to the broader culture, or they could be understood, in some contexts, to manifest themselves completely separately from the broader culture; but the point is that they are defined in terms of "a *special set* of social objects and processes."

Other semantic relatives have come to be widely used and widely "understood": "trade union culture" and "corporate culture" rely not on the broader culture, but on the trade union and on the

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some combination of "egalitarian" and "hierarchist" is viewed as "modern." In all cases, the limiting factor, between the lines, is Weber's rationality.

corporation. Some residual ambiguity may reside in the term "trade union culture;" in strongly unionized countries like those in western Europe, the term could conceivably refer to the "culture" of an entire nation or even an international region. But the term is typically used to refer to members of trade unions - including in the United States, where unionization is relatively weak. Typically, then, "trade union culture" refers to a culture separate and distinct from the general culture, and depends completely on features of trade unions and trade union membership themselves. The expression "corporate culture" bears even less ambiguity: it refers to the culture that develops among those who work inside corporations. The subfield of "organizational culture," which has grown, in part, specifically around the corporation, further illustrates the point that certain cultures develop through engagement with certain "special sets of social objects and processes," and that these cultures may function with a great deal of independence from the broader culture.

This digression is not trivial, for in establishing a semantic basis for an autonomous, "extracultural" social culture, the conceptual space for its substantive basis is more firmly defined. If we so easily conceive of "corporate culture" in terms of the effects of engagement with the corporation, then it rather makes sense to conceive of "social culture" in terms of the effects of engagement with the social system. This is only a beginning, however, for we must still specify what "engagement" and "social system" entail; the following section, which begins with my model of social culture, elaborates on these.

## Different standpoint

I will first present a formal, somewhat abstract, statement of the model, consisting of numerous elements that are distinct but related; collectively, these comprise as well an alternative *definition* of social culture.[49] These items are not "laws,"

[49] I should note that in the history of the concept, almost all ***definitions*** of social culture have been entirely acceptable to all - ***except*** to those who

and nor are they designed to delineate the absolute scope and limits of the conception of social culture that I propose. Rather, they are designed to provide an economical introduction to the whole concept before I elaborate in more plain language; they will serve to introduce all of its pieces, even if the cost of this method is to present them before their precise meaning has been established. The following then, represents a formal definition of social culture.

1. Social culture is a coherent and discernible set of beliefs about the operation of politics. In this sense (following Verba), it provides "the subjective orientation to politics."
2. Although the locus of such a set of beliefs is the individual, groups of individuals holding similar sets of beliefs thus comprise social cultural groupings.
3. The object of social cultural beliefs is "politics." Because politics is not inherently static, neither is social culture.
   a) "Politics," in my usage, includes "the *social system*," which in turn includes not only the "national" social system, but also any relevant components of *subnational systems* (e.g., state or city governments).
   b) "Politics" as an object of social culture also includes the *social processes* that comprise the manifestations of politics, and the *social structures* (largely social institutions, but also laws, regulations, etc.) through which social processes operate.
4. Sets of social cultural beliefs consist of several related components, which may be enumerated in two groups.
   a) The first group consists of first-order derivations - beliefs which derive from perceptions gleaned through engagement with social structures and observation of social processes:

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demanded more detail; indeed, my own review shows that the problems in the actual conception of social culture are revealed only in elaborations on it and in applied research. Hence, although item one in my statement could be read as a basic definition - and it is Verba's - I would reject its use as such.

i) assumptions about the operation of social systems with which the individual has (actively or passively, directly or indirectly) engaged
ii) expectations about what the social systems will do, what they will produce, how they will perform under different circumstances

b) The second group consists of second-order derivations - beliefs derived, in part at least, from interpretations based on the first-order derivations, taking into account other factors:
i) perceptions of what relevant choices are offered by the social system
ii) perceptions of the incentive structures connected with such choices
iii) assumptions about the roles of individuals in politics - spanning a range from one's own potential role to those of elite social figures, but extending as well to the potential roles of groups
iv) assumptions about the "rules of the game" in politics

5. Because social culture is rooted largely in *perceptions* of empirical, but incorporeal events, discourse, and relationships, it is a subjectively derived phenomenon. Its rooting in the subjective, in turn, means that the same "objective" conditions within a social system may be perceived in radically different ways by different individuals or groups.

Unlike the conventional conception, which emphasizes the *effects* of social culture on politics, the one proposed here emphasizes instead the effects of politics on social culture - the relationships of social system, structures, and processes to the *sources,* the *means of reproduction,* and the *nature* of social culture. Hence this model emphasizes social culture's properties as a dependent variable - without, however, denying that it may have some role in and effects on politics and the social system, thus likely containing properties as an independent and an intervening variable as well; as I noted earlier, such relationships must be determined empirically. (I should note, too, that I am using the word "variable" here only

in a general analytical sense, and not necessary in a statistical sense) (Hristić: 115).

The elements of this formal statement collectively specify a dynamic model of social culture based upon the interactions between people and social structures and processes. Because the number of different types of such interactions is relatively small, the model is a fairly simple one. The definitional emphasis on these interactions, however, serves as our bridge to the relevant *content* of the interactions, namely "communications" that pass between people and social structures and processes.

Given the emphasis I place on social culture's role as a dependent variable, what I propose is that the substantive elements of social culture are formed in individuals and groups in reaction to the communications they receive in the course of such interactions. What I mean by this begins with the assumption that the unfolding of the social process is structured to a large extent by institutionalized factors such as laws, regulations, procedures, roles, conventions, and so on. This structuring can be viewed as comprising and conveying a *text,* which I conceive as the formal aspects of the interaction, and a *subtext,* which, though not part of the formal interaction, is certainly part of the substance of the interaction. An example of a "text," at one level, might be that of having to renew one's driver's license at the state Division of Motor Vehicles; it might also include the fees, the late fees, the need for supporting documentation, and the related laws and regulations that would apply to the motorist driving with an expired license. The "subtext" might include having to wait in long lines, coming into contact with brusque, indifferent, and unfriendly clerks or bureaucrats, or a distant and authoritarian examiner. At another level, we have the "text" and "subtext" of events and processes like the Watergate and Iran-Contra affairs; in between, we have, for example, "routine" elections.

Such texts, and perhaps especially the subtexts, inform people in manifold ways, depending on how they "read" them when they come into contact with them (and what assumptions and incentive-responses they bring to the "reading"), (Hristić: 116) of what they can expect from the various social institutions; of what their choices might be in the interactions they have with institutions; of what incentive structures appear to exist; and of what

they can assume to be the rules of the game - very broadly speaking, of what meanings the social system comes to have for them. Thus, among sectors of a population, certain patterns of expectations, choices, motivations, and assumptions are established, altered, and reaffirmed, and these in turn condition social behavior. It is these shifting patterns, then, that I refer to as social culture.

The communications that people perceive in the course of their interactions with social structures and processes are not passively received and irrationally converted into rigid and stable patterns of attitudes and behavior. Because the boundaries and structuring of politics change, generally slowly but often perceptibly, institutional texts and subtexts are fluid; and because interactions (including passive and indirect ones) with social structures and processes continue throughout life, aspects of institutional texts or subtexts may have changed between one interaction and the next. Certainly, people who engage with or observe politics notice, for example, that the performance of a social or bureaucratic role often undergoes marked change as a different incumbent fulfills it. For example, the Lyndon Johnson White House appeared, even to casual observers, markedly different from the Kennedy White House.

Thus the communications between people and social structures and processes contain within them the message that they are not immutable communications of a different character are always potentially in the offing. In a very general way, then, I suggest that people expect some change; because people expect change, they look for it; to put it more boldly, they "test" for it in each interaction they have with social structures and processes. In doing so, they are evaluating changes in what they can expect of social institutions, in the range of choices available to them, in the incentive structures that condition their choices, and therefore in the assumptions they should make about the rules of the game. Their social behavior in turn is based in part on these evaluations.

Because the language employed here overstates this "plausible assumption" as a "probable process," several points should be clarified concerning rationality, socialization, culture, and social culture. This model obviously assumes a certain kind and degree of rationality on the part of the people, but the assumption has several *caveats* attached to it. An important qualification is that we

cannot assume that people make these rational evaluations in a highly conscious and purely rational way. The rationality to which I refer is more diffuse and less systematic than that: I wish only to imply that, irrational though we may be, we are not unconscious animals or mere brainstem preparations. Secondly, I posit an assumption of rationality in direct competition with the conventional assumption of irrationality in twentieth century social sciences research,[50] including in social culture research, and hence my account of the motivations driving people's behavior will differ from the conventional account. In insisting upon a rationality/motivation dyad, whether or not it is objectively or empirically ethereal, my point is to deflect emphasis from the role of "socialization" - and consequently of "values" and "attitudes" - in the patterns to which I refer as social culture. The term socialization, as it has been used in social culture research, includes, and even emphasizes, non-social values and attitudes which then are assumed to play a critical role (often the critical role) in determining the nature and character of a social culture. This treatment of socialization as enculturation minimizes the role that volition, rationality, and consciousness play in forming the motivations of social behavior. Thus my second *caveat* concerning the assumption of rationality is that, although I emphasize the role of certain forms of rationality in conditioning social behavior and minimize the role of "socialization," I do not discount the latter; it is simply peripheral both to this conception of social culture and to the research strategy suggested by the model. [51]

The deflection of emphasis from socialization in favor of an emphasis on rational response to perceived incentive structures suggests as well a third caveat, which is that, in this model of social culture, the role of rationality also displaces that of broader

[50] The assumption of irrationality certainly has not been universal, and in the past decade it has increasingly been challenged. On the American public, see, for example,

(continued...)

[51] (...continued)
Popkin (1991), Gamson (1992), and Page and Shapiro (1992). Although the findings in this line of research are mixed, and the researchers' interpretations variegated, they do tend to imply a need to view the concept of reason with some relativity.

"cultural" effects. Again, however, I do not assume that culture plays no role, only that such a role must be determined empirically.

All of this serves, in turn, to emphasize that mine is a *acultural* conception of social culture. As I have made clear, my view is that the role, substance, and sources of a social culture are different from those of the broader culture; social culture is confined to the social, and its elements are derived from the social. In addition, the relationships individuals have with social culture are quite different from those they have with "culture." Culture amounts ultimately to the ways and values of the collectivity, and the individual's place in the collectivity is contingent upon his or her enculturation; sharing in a culture, then, implies membership. Moreover, sharing and participating in one's culture and enjoying the concomitant subjective sense of identification and membership come of close, active, and perpetual engagement with family, community, and social institutions in a vast number of routine social interactions. Social culture, on the other hand, according to my model, comes of engagement with social institutions in the course of a relatively small number of interactions which are definable less by their integration in the fabric of life than by sporadic and more formally structured encounters; certainly the community plays a role - but it is rather a supporting role, and sometimes a peripheral. Inevitably, then, one's subjective perception of culture is substantially different from that of social culture; the former is bound up with identification with the ways of one's own community or collectivity, whereas the latter is an ongoing, rationally-based response to the ways structured within an inherently antagonistic relationship between government and people, between state and society.

Disentangling social culture from culture in this way provides an important conceptual complement to my assumption of some component of rationality in the formation and evolution of social cultures. Because the broader culture is contingent upon an incalculable number of complex social relations and institutions, and social culture on a limited number of more simple and often formally based social and social relations, social culture is far less resistant to questioning and analysis by ordinary people. Furthermore, both because of its accessibility to conscious questioning, and because of its relative simplicity and limited integration in

social relations, social culture is less resistant to change. Were we to assume, on the other hand, with the social culturists of the past thirty years, that social culture is more the result of enculturation than of rationally-based response to perceived reality, then we would tend to assume social culture to be highly resistant to change - which, as I have shown, is part of the reason that social culturists have been unable to deal convincingly with social culture change.

Having thus differentiated culture and social culture, and having emphasized the need to keep the broader culture outside of social cultural *modeling*, I should make clear that I would by no means lock out the broader culture. Although my model explicitly avoids inducting the broader culture into social cultural explanation, it does, in fact, accommodate it. Earlier, I addressed this issue in terms of the need to ascertain *empirically* the role of the broader culture, rather than to assume an *a priori,* determinative role for it; thus the relationship may be explored, rather than statically assumed and left unexplored. What I expect to find in empirical research employing this model is that broader cultures inject specific influences into social cultures, and that the nature of such influences, their extent, their importance, and their specific features will vary from culture to culture.[52] Nevertheless, as I have noted, I expect to find these influences to be secondary to those of the structures and processes of politics.

The bare framework of my definition and model of social culture may appear deceptively narrow. While the conception I have proposed is, in fact, designed to be restrictive, the purpose is certainly not to reduce social culture to a sterile, dogmatic, and mechanically linked set of simple politosocial forces that might leave behind precisely the intuitive notion of social culture that many of

[52] Among the salient effects of the broader culture, I would expect that ***social styles*** would be the most significant, a general category in which I would include the symbols deployed in politics and the forms of discourse shaping social discussion. For example, the ends of politics, as well as the structural and procedural means to achieve those ends, might well be equivalent in two nations, but take on different appearances because the style (and set of symbols) attendant to politics differs.

us have long held. Rather, the point is to submit each and every proposed element of a social culture to a rigorous inclusion test.

The research strategy that my model implies is thus to accumulate "social cultural" information - admitting only those elements that can be shown to meet the empirical requirements of the definition - and to build up, layer by layer, models of social cultures. A great number and variety of social and social phenomena can, in fact, be included, and can be pieced together into a dynamic model. What I wish to avoid in social cultural research are the inferential chains - series of relatively weak, interlinked proportions or probabilities - upon which much of the empirical research in the conventional mold has been dependent. I also wish to avoid undue emphasis on nationally-based characterizations of social cultures which are empirically weak, appear to be only marginally relevant to the operation of politics, and seem all too frequently to exclude the social cultural traits of large subpopulations. And, of course, my model includes the explicit rejection of the assumption that social culture is a stable and enduring constant with only marginal causal referents in actual politics, and of the assumption that the general culture very strongly shapes the social culture. Because the model explicitly renounces the assumption of continuity, research not only may proceed with the assumption that change may be manifest at any time in any aspect or set of aspects of a social culture, but also may be directed explicitly toward exploring the dynamics of change. The results of research along these lines thus are likely to present themselves quite differently from those derived of the conventional approach.

The starting point in generating the data that would populate and animate my model is to determine what sorts of interactions individuals and groups have with politics and the social system. Like much social research, this task may be fraught with uncertainties, for we have no reliable means of determining the level and depth of an individual's conscious engagement with an external object. Nevertheless, the somewhat certain may be distinguished from the less certain.

In the previous chapter, I argued that social culture is different from the general culture, both in character and in dynamics, in part because their respective objects are different; social

culture's object is confined to politics, while that of the general culture embraces virtually all of social life. Aspects of general culture or of social culture cannot be maintained if they are not in some way institutionalized – i.e., if they are not supported by structural features of their respective systems (the social or the social), and the depth of institutionalization in social life far exceeds that of social life. I also argued that a large society may present different "faces" to different individuals or groups, which means that different groups may experience different sorts of contacts with the same set of objects. Different sorts of contacts with the social system, then, may be viewed as constituting essentially different interactions - exposure to different "institutions," different structural features. And I noted that the number of such contacts and interactions in the social world is relatively small, which promises to keep the empirical study of social culture relatively manageable.

1) In this chapter I provide a rough overview of the arenas of interaction that we find in the course of the social process, which I present in four categories:
2) social participation, confined largely to elections;
3) government institutions; media and community;[53]
4) symbols.

Although there is little space in my model for the latter category, I provide a discussion of symbols in order elaborate on the question of "meaning" in social culture.

[53] Violence as a mode or method of participation will be addressed later. Although violence is exceedingly important in the analysis of a great many social systems, and although it obviously comprises part of the standard human repertory of social behavior, it is not ordinarily a significant component of the sociological modeling of social culture outlined here in terms of social- culture-forming interactions. At this point, then, I should repeat that it is a sufficiently common response to social processes that it must at least be accommodated in social culture modeling; to whatever degree we believe violence to indicate social pathology, we cannot consider it to be a social anomaly.

## Adherence to the ethos

Even in the Serbian social system, which is commonly described in terms of the large number and variety of points of "access" that characterize its peculiar pluralist thrust, the vast majority of citizens find no utility in such access. Indeed, for many, it is plainly illusory; we may have "access" to the employees in the offices of our political representatives, but their attention to ordinary citizens is geared to a small set of possible constituency services, rather than to views on policy. It is well known, of course, that large contributors or representatives of large voting blocs may gain a more attentive hearing ("they'll listen to anyone - but money makes them hear better"), but despite the large number of organized interest groups in Serbia., most citizens do not participate in this way.[54]

Although many people participate in party politics and in campaigns, for large majorities of citizens of democratic countries elections are the only practical avenue of explicitly social participation, at both the local and national levels. Voting is thus one of a very few concrete interactions that people may have with the social process. And yet voting as participation does not go very far. It is an occasional, periodic activity, designed usually to select representatives who will then enter a legislative or executive body which manages politics on the voters' behalf. Obviously, how elected officials generally [55]

[54] In this vein, I should clarify several points. First, in most nations, including Serbiathe group of individuals who truly are ***active*** social participants is sufficiently small, diverse, and insulated that it is difficult to view them properly as sharing in a social culture other than their own - that of social elites. For the "players," the rules of the game are fundamentally

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different from those of the spectators. Secondly, although there are probably more single-issue "participants" than general participants, and although their activities likely have an important impact on politics, theirs typically comprises "extraordinary" social activity and cannot be said to infuse activity into mass social behavior.
There are also many "participants" whose activities addres a single issue, but are conducted less publicly.

conduct themselves varies a great deal from system to system. In strong party systems, their social behavior may be fairly predictable; presumably their constituencies selected them on the basis of the candidates' party affiliations; presumably the electorate's choice is based (in part at least) on sets of policies, orientations, or approaches associated with the party with which they sympathize; and presumably the elected official remains faithful to what the party represents. In systems with weak parties, some of these rough assumptions may apply, but candidates more likely succeed on the basis of their own explicit social stances, of their own charisma or personality, or of material promises they may have made while campaigning. In any case, after the election the citizen's periodic role as elector has essentially ended - until the next election. Hence, this mode of *active* participation may be characterized in terms of one or several years of passivity, punctuated by short bursts of campaign activity, capped by the casting of a ballot.

Viewed in this manner, the "activeness" of voting, alone, does not really achieve proportions that would justify considering it to be *"active social participation."*

Consider, for example, a hypothetical lobotomized patient, "mobilized" to the polling booth on election day; he may cast a vote that has, literally, no meaning for him. May we consider him to be "an active participant in politics"? Not really. But he *is* participating in the *social process* - a distinction that has not been lost on critics of the functioning of democracy who bemoan the supplanting of social will by, or its dilution into, the symbols and ritual of "democratic process."[56] Indeed, it has become something of an aphorism among

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For example, whole departments in corporations might serve as liaison with government agencies, not only to help to ensure the corporations' own compliance with the laws, but also to "assist" agencies in interpreting laws. In all of these examples, we may see concentrated social "purpose," derived either of a single-issue passion or of a vocational, salaried motivation - but these activities are not characteristic of the activities of the mass of individuals.

[56] The American social process in particular has long drawn critical scrutiny in this vein, perhaps because our tattered rhetorical defense of democracy-at-the-ballot-box all too frequently contradicts observers' perceptions. At the level of popular perceptions, many voters have long been annoyed by

social scientists glancing at the brief history of suffrage to declare that the best way to neutralize the social potential of peoples or groups whose growing social activity threatens to become disruptive to the status quo is to "give them the vote."

I noted in passing in my critique that, in their analysis of community participation, Almond and Verba count voting among "more passive community activities" - along with activities such as "try[ing] to understand and keep informed" and "taking an interest in what is going on." As *active* community participation, they include «taking part» in activities of local government, social parties, and "nongovernmental organizations interested in local affairs" (1963: 169-171).[57] Voting does, of course, carry exceedingly important functions in democratic politics - and hence non-voting trends are widely viewed not only as interesting phenomena in themselves, but also as signs of potentially destabilizing social pathology that merit close and solicitous scrutiny and careful remedy. But voting as an activity of social participation is inherently limited; generally, it may be said to represent an endorsement of selected policies which have been articulated in advance, and which are usually incorporated into one of two or three competing sets of policies. The details of policies are invariably left to social elites.

My point here is twofold. First, in democracies, where social participation is explicitly exalted as one of the principal ends of

perennial candidates "Tweedledum and Tweedledee" who dominate electoral politics. At the level of academic writings, some writers address the politics-process contradiction directly, sometimes even in textbook format, for example, Parenti's ***Democracy for the Few*** or Hellinger and Judd's ***The Democratic Facade***), but a great many others assume it in their analyses - e.g., Edelman (1967, 1988) and Marcuse (1955, 1964), as well as the elite-rule critics, such as C. Wright Mills (1956, but also 1951) and William Domhoff (1967, 1970, 1978).

[57] The context at this point in Almond and Verba's analysis is more general than mine here. They are attempting, in part, to link social system and social system, using the local scene as microcosm of both. These categories are drawn from survey responses to the question of "what part do you think the ordinary person ought to play in the ***local affairs*** [my emphasis] of his town or district?" It is Almond and Verba's own choice, however, to count voting among "more passive community activities."

politics, a wide array of structuring forces have been developed which channel social participation and social action into voting, which has the effect of confining to the poll booth almost the entire set of concrete participatory interactions between people and politics. Secondly, because the act of voting is brief and periodic, and because a single vote means nothing outside of the aggregate of votes, and because actual elections are designed to reveal only very general outlines of a public will (which in reality may be highly variegated), the act of voting does not go very far at all as "social participation," or in formulating and implementing policy, or in expressing the social will of individuals or groups. Voting is thus not just weak as social participation: voting as an *interaction* with politics - the most important such interaction - is ethereal.

In the model I propose, social cultures draw some of their components from just this sort of interaction. Voting contains both instrumental and consummatory components,[58] and both contribute to social cultures. Since the marginal nature of the relationship between voting and policy is not likely to be invisible to voters, the consummatory component of voting supplements the instrumental end of voting for a candidate of choice (or voting against the more "evil" of Tweedledum and Tweedledee). Thus the subjective perception of voting likely contains a sense of compromise: people know that voting is important, but they know too, even in the most politicized systems, that its importance is often rather indirect.

Of course, voting is an activity that is characterized by physical action as well as legal regulation; this means that it not only requires

[58] I have adapted these terms from David Apter's analysis of tradition in ***The Politics of Modernization***; Apter adapted them from Parsons. Instrumental acts provide "gratifications that come from empirical ends," and consummatory acts provide "gratifications that follow from the transcendental values associated with [the] act" (1963: 84-85). In my view, following hard-won suffrage, the act of voting very rapidly acquired symbolic or transcendental significance, seen by many to comprise not just a ***duty,*** but a ***sacred*** one. Apter conducts his analysis of tradition specifically to investigate how the different traditions in instrumental and consummatory systems respond to innovation; naturally, the former more readily accommodate innovation, while the latter tend to be bound up by aspects which may either serve to resist it or fail to accommodate it. This

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a certain degree of logistical organization, but also is subject to state regulation and control. In some nations, voting is required by law (whether or not there are multiple candidates); here, voting takes on a different coloration than in nations where it is voluntary. Even voluntary voting is subject to a variety of forces. In some districts, votes may be purchased in large numbers; to the individual whose vote was paid for, the act of voting carries a meaning different from that of one whose vote was more volitional. The case of Serbia has [59] helped to generate hypotheses concerning the effects that structural features of social systems have on voting, and will help here to illustrate the structure/social culture nexus in my model.

In Serbia , a great deal of politicization took place on social issues toward the end of the nineteenth century, and the issues that characterized the "progressive era" retained high visibility for nearly two decades into the twentieth century - and yet voting activity decreased during that period. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward (1989) have argued that electoral reform in Europe and the US beginning in the progressive era generated stringent electoral regulations that made voting much more complicated, which itself decreased the numbers of votes cast; despite the reforms that have followed since then, voting remains complicated, and so even today (for the past several decades) only half or so of eligible voters actually vote. Obviously, the issue is more complicated than that, but here my purpose is to discuss structural effects.

Electoral laws and regulations play a role in establishing the "rules of the game" for voting activity, as well as those for the broader social arena. In the terms of my model, these rules represent one category of communications that people receive from the structures and processes of politics; it is a specific text. But there are other categories as well. To some groups of potential voters, voter registration laws alone are a significant impediment to voting. Of course, the poll taxes and literacy tests of the past comprised an insuperable barrier for many. But merely having to register may be a significant obstacle: it usually requires planning well in

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distinction is certainly worth exploring in the context of "postmodern" traditions.

advance of the election; it may be cumbersome or complicated; it may require travel; and for some, it may amount to a humiliating experience. For some people, then, the *subtext* of the regulatory message might be that "if you can't meet these requirements, then stay home: your role and interests are marginal and your participation is optional and dispensable."

To other groups of people, though, the regulations might have entirely different implications and subtexts. Piven and Cloward argue that because registration regulations tend to exclude specific groups - mainly the poor - incumbent members of the elite in the West and state legislatures (for whom reelection is usually a primary goal) may feel that an exclusionary but predictable electorate is far more desirable than an inclusive but unpredictable one. The ramifications of regulations do not end with the reluctance of elites to change them, or their general avoidance of voter-registration drives; in addition, the incumbents' messages (speeches, policies, and so on) to their constituents are often tailored to that significant segment of their constituency comprised of *registered* voters - and exclude the interests of those who are not registered and do not vote.

Here the thread can be taken up by the "fractured parties" hypothesis for American non-voting, which holds, very generally, that party platforms are designed partly to maximize appeal and partly to maximize differentiation from the other party - a process in which both logical coherence and popular allegiance are likely casualties. Everett Carll Ladd (1982) argues that because interests articulated by the parties diverge increasingly from those of most people, fewer and fewer people see any reason to support or endorse the parties, and hence few vote (and hence the rise of "personal" candidacies).[60] Here, then, is a second category of communications that people receive. In this example, the message from parties and politicians to people is partly a definition of the scope of the interests of those governing or competing to govern (the interests they define as valid or legitimate), and partly a subtextual

[60] E.J. Dionne, Jr. traces contemporary citizen discontent to related trends, though by this time it is not just the parties that have become irrelevant, it is much of politics itself.

statement that people whose interests are different are not important - again, marginal. But different groups receive different messages, depending on their location in the incentive structure. There are those, of course, who perceive their interests to align nicely with those articulated by party or politicians; the subtext they perceive is quite different - the opposite, really - from that perceived by those whose interests appear to be excluded.

These examples illustrate several aspects of my model. For one thing, social structure need not be conceived solely in formal institutional terms. Formal laws and regulations, themselves products of politics, provide a structural framework, a skeleton of sorts, within which secondary structural features may evolve - which they may do on the basis of different forces entirely. Whatever their origin, however, primary and secondary structural features of social systems and subsystems certainly affect the way those systems operate. The above examples highlight the notion that social structure and process may very easily acquire the sort of autonomy that transforms them into independent forces that majorities of people must often consider to be either unchangeable or simply controlled by others (such as elites). As such, social structures and processes represent "givens" to which people must adapt, and from which they must derive their understanding of the social process. These together, structure and process, in turn have effects on people which are not likely to be uniform; because different groups are positioned differently socially and economically, as well as in terms of their knowledge and experience of politics, not only are they affected differently, but also what their members perceive in the unfolding of politics is different. The result is that different groups within a social system are likely to have different social cultures.

The point of the line of inquiry described here is to explore the usually neglected (or distorted) *cognitive* element of social culture. Although Almond and Verba's theoretical framework explicitly includes a cognitive component, in their application it is limited to a misconceived "social information test,"[61] a practice emulated

[61] And, as I noted in my critique, survey items that might legitimately be considered to explore cognitive elements of social awareness were treated as ***affective*** orientations toward the social system.

by Inglehart in his notion of "cognitive mobilization." This approach has diverted the question of what people know or believe about how politics works, as well as questions concerning people's understanding of the objects and beneficiaries of politics - and thus the larger, composite questions of how people perceive the system and its functioning, what the system means to them, what it offers to them or denies them, and whether and how their social attitudes and behavior follow from these. Since these questions are the object and substance of social cultures, this line of inquiry should be fruitful.

## Political participants

Other interactions with politics are very few in type. Although they are not as concretely or systematically manifested as voting, they may carry social cultural ramifications far exceeding those of voting, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Contact with government institutions constitutes an important arena of interaction, more important in some social systems than in others. In heavily "socialized" systems (for example, in the Scandinavian countries, in the U.K., in Germany), government institutions may provide a great number of benefits, in the process of which a potentially large number of direct and indirect interactions occur. The regular arrival of a social security or welfare check in the mail would constitute a regular interaction. Of course, what meaning the contact carries may vary widely; in this example, receipt of a social security check representing retirement benefits would likely strike a resonance different from a welfare check representing unemployment. In addition, the texture of the interaction for the person who retrieves the check from an agency office will be different from that of one who receives it in the mail.

Questions concerning whether policies should be adopted to expand or contract such services and benefits may figure in the day's social discourse (and may do so perpetually), which is then likely to sustain regular policy discussions among people; it may also have real correlations with social activity, including campaigning and voting. (Naturally, it is safe to assume that many receiving

benefits would argue against contraction, and many not receiving benefits might argue for it. Richard Coughlin's analysis of attitudes in several industrialized nations (1980), for example, indicates that in most of his survey nations the poor and the blue collar workers supported social welfare more strongly than did their more affluent counterparts.) But the interactions attending normal contact with the agencies managing benefits are bound up in administration, in bureaucracy, in procedure - in Weber's "routinization of authority." These interactions are not inherently participatory, but they are to some extent inherently social, for they transmit basic information about the state of affairs of the relevant policies and the delivery of benefits. More important, they are social insofar as authority is established, enforced, reaffirmed. In these ways, then, they contain components that contribute to the formation and perpetuation of social cultures.

An important point, however, is that whatever the degree and depth of bureaucratization, contacts between people and agencies are not necessarily uniform. Although it is a truism that petty bureaucrats treat all comers with studied indifference (often baffling those who expect deference), it is not a fact. The well-dressed, polite, friendly client is likely to receive better treatment than his or her less polished counterpart. The savvy are likely to fare better than the ignorant, and those whose needs are few better than those who require a great deal of effort on the part of the bureaucrat. In many countries, good treatment has a standard price, in cash. More generally, then, those who are equipped intellectually, financially, or even psychically to maintain boundaries between themselves and the authority of the government or its agent undergo a contact, an interaction, subjectively quite different from those who are not so equipped.

Similarly, interactions with police forces may contribute a great deal to the texture of a social culture. In many nations, the distance between the effective authority and the legitimacy of the police may be vast (particularly where they assume a role akin to that of an occupying force) . In others, of course, the role of the police is less malignant. In all cases, however, police action serves to define boundaries - to affirm and communicate legal boundaries and to establish the locus of legally defined boundaries in practice,

in the concrete reality of quotidian life. But police action is more than that, for the police have something of a monopoly on legal, physical coercion; whatever degree of coercion they tend to apply routinely, police forces usually consist of armed agents of the state (the term "state" here is meant very broadly), a condition which few citizens fail to notice. In addition, in the words of one student of the police, "The centrality of coercion to police work means that the police, whether they care to admit it or not, make social decisions" (Brown, 1981: 103). Police force is often a large part of the "face" of the state, and thus we would expect to find social cultural building blocks in interactions between people and police.

Obviously, interactions between people and police are not uniform. It is quite common for certain groups to be targeted by the police (typically, members of minority groups); and it is common for some groups to be treated preferentially. In some countries, separate police forces are maintained by different governing bodies, perhaps overlapping (e.g., in the United States, municipalities, counties, and states), and so police action is unlikely to be delivered uniformly from place to place.[62] These variations have consequences for social culture formation, for the ways individuals perceive the delivery of justice is a critical feature of a group's social culture. Is justice delivered in accordance with the explicit principles of the laws and of the ways of the society? Is it delivered consistently? predictably? uniformly? at all? Do the members of particular groups *expect* to be treated well? to be treated badly?

Government agencies and agents of the police fit into my model as structural features of the social system; they are manifested both as structuring forces and as processes. What people believe (either from direct experience or from hearsay) about the ways these structures function, and about the processes they engender or control, has a formative effect on the social culture that characterizes the groups of which they are members. The beliefs

[62] For example, legend and rumor, as well as documented accounts, endow the phrase "Alabama state trooper" with a great
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deal more meaning than three words should have.
"KGB," of course, has similar metonomy.

that individuals have about these structures form the basis of what they assume to be the meaning, significance, and role of such agencies. These assumptions in turn are incorporated directly into the calculus of what individuals can expect to be the texture and outcome of any given hypothetical scenario in which these agencies of government are involved. And these expectations, in turn, affect what they perceive to be the relevant incentive structures for any given action that might involve such agencies. Of course, in my model, a set of assumptions held by an individual is not itself a social culture, and alone, it is insufficient to comprise a component of a social culture. However, if a demographically definable *group* holds a common set of assumptions, then it begins to appear viable as a component of that group's social culture.

## Social participants

The assumptions that people hold, the expectations they have, the incentives they perceive and to which they react, are all subjective phenomena. Moreover, as I have noted, the "objective" phenomena to which they refer may be considered to be objective only in the abstract, for government and social systems consist to a large extent of interactions, relationships, perceptions, motivations, and roles - none apprehensible without some translation, interpretation, extrapolation or interpolation. While the conventional, culturist view of social culture frequently includes the assumption that it is precisely here that we may find the influence of culture - that social culture amounts to the methods, the modes, the ways in which the apprehension of such abstractions is made - I argue that we cannot accept undifferentiated "cultural forces" info explanatory social cultural modeling until we have not only identified their mechanisms, but also accounted for other social-culture-forming forces. This is not only a means of retrieving social culture from the status of broad "residual variable," but also of examining more closely the subjective realm of politics. As I have noted, the conventional approach tends to freeze analysis at the level of cultural explanation; in other words, once some phenomenon has been "explained" by culture, the search for causes has ended.

Influence from the media and from an individual's various communities may seem to overlap substantially with what looks like general cultural influences, but a closer look shows that differentiation is not necessarily problematic. On the other hand, if we assume that media representation conforms to the ways of the general culture, then of course differentiation is moot; similarly, if we assume that the ways of the individual's communities conform to those of the culture, then "community" as a separate force does not merit scrutiny. And, of course, the assumption in the conventional approach that social cultures are usefully characterized at the national level would lend support to this view: the individual has a single community, and it is the national community.

However, as I have noted, Kim pointed out long ago (1964) that in large nations only a very few, dilute traits are sufficiently widespread to amount to the sort of "least common denominator" that may be manifested at the national level. More to the point, whatever the degree to which individuals are systematically and subjectively integrated into a national community, other, smaller communities condition their perceptions as well.

Hence, if we view media and communities as influences independent of the broader culture and as influences which may exert differential effects on members of different communities, then researching media and community influences is highly indicated. While these two classes of influence are, in fact, very different from one another, I have lumped them together in this section in order to highlight their similarities as forces which serve to select, condition, and mediate information, assigning, adding to, or modifying its meaning, as well as transmitting it. In both cases, of course, the focus suggested by my model is limited to the social aspects of media and communities. By "media," then, I mean "news media;" by "community," I mean those aspects of community influences that have a bearing on the meaning of politics. As such, both media and communities contain components which may be treated as social structural - although it is exceedingly important to keep these components in perspective and in proportion.

***Media.*** In some nations, the news media are controlled by the state, in which case their status as social structure is quite clear.

Even where the news media are independent, however, they are nonetheless a *de facto* social structure (and are widely viewed as such), insofar as they transmit social information. Hence questions concerning the degree to which news media are controlled by capital or by other partisan forces carry only marginal relevance; however news information is selected, framed, and presented, what is significant is merely that information is transmitted. In other words, the forces that shape the final form of the social information delivered by news media represent an avenue of research secondary to the research agenda suggested by my model.[63]

Social information is essential to the subjective experience and evaluation of politics, and therefore essential to the formation, maintenance, and modification of social cultures. Assumptions about how the social system operates must be derived in part of information (whether not it is accurate). Expectations about what the social system or its elements will do, or will produce, must also be based in part on such information. And perceptions of what incentive structures exist, of what choices exist for action or inaction, and of what utility will be produced by such action or inaction, are all dependent, first, upon information, and then upon interpretations of the meaning of the information.

The news media, of course, not only provide a great deal of such information, but also frame it in certain ways. Since drawing

[63] 1 hasten to add, however, that by "secondary" I mean essentially "one layer removed" - and in this case such research would represent a deeper layer that would provide a deeper understanding of the forces that affect social cultures. Indeed, there is a rich and diverse literature on media influence on culture and politics in the American context. For example, the wide-ranging cultural-hegemony critical approach, rooted in the Frankfurt School's critique of modern capitalist society, is traced and advanced by Douglas Kellner (1990). Herbert Gans (1979), David Broder (1987), and Robert Entman (1989), ***inter alia,*** argue that numerous forms of bias are built into the news-making process; and all argue, to varying degrees, that cultural and social ramifications issue directly from the process. Jeffrey Schrank (1977) focuses on the media creation of popular culture (emphasizing popular "tastes"), and Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen (1982) link mass media influence on popular culture and fashion to its parallel influence on the functioning of democracy: as "democracy" is absorbed iconically into popular culture, social space is choked with culturally-based, socially eviscerated choices.

print buyers and television viewers is a requisite of the survival of news organizations, the social "news" tends not to be confined to stark facts; news writers and broadcasters create "stories" designed to capture the interest of a broad spectrum of readers or viewers, and in doing so, they bring issues into the public forum, provide interpretations, and frequently offer generalizations about how social goings-on might affect ordinary people directly. The inherently competitive process is structured such that purveyors of news thrive on crisis, or, more broadly, as Kyosti Pekonen (1989) puts it, on "the new" - anything that will differentiate them from the ordinary and thus capture public attention.[64]

The features of newsmaking are well-known; my point in providing a summary here is largely to draw attention to the fact that what we get from the news media, packaged as it is, is not mere information; it is not the sort of factual data upon which rational-choice interpretations of human behavior rely. However, the packaging itself, the framing, the biases, and the interpretations are themselves "information" which accompanies whatever facts are being conveyed. All told, what the news media provide is a *simulacirum*[11] (or, indeed, a continuous chain of simulacra) of the social system and its operation. Interaction with this simulacrum serves essentially as interaction with the social system itself; in a sense, it is a substitute for "the real thing." The news media thus comprise a social structural object with which people engage; despite the largely unidirectional flow of conditioned information, it is a locus of interaction between people and politics.

***Communities.*** That the news media may figure prominently in the production of information is more than obvious. More complicated, however, are the ways in which the individual's communities may figure both in the production and reception of information, as well as in its interpretation. In my view, the individual's communities [65] may serve in part as a social structure - but here

[64] Pekonen's argument is outlined below, in the section on symbols.

[65] The term is from Roland Barthes: "The goal of all structuralist activity, whether reflexive or poetic, is to reconstruct an 'object' in such a way as to manifest thereby the rules of functioning (the 'functions') of this object. Structure is therefore actually a ***simulacrum*** of the object, but a directed,

it is particularly important to establish conceptual perspective and limits. A "community" is widely understood to be the natural locus of collectively held culture, whether general or social; moreover, the mediatory role I have just ascribed to community is hardly distinguishable from the role generally ascribed to social culture. To integrate culture and structure by insisting that community is both would be to invite confusion; there are, however, significant differences between the two in my approach.

First, with the assumption that each individual has numerous communities, the notion of community-based "culture" loses focus (Hristić: 67). To ascribe numerous "cultures" to an individual is reasonable, but only to a point - in bicultural bilinguals, for example; and it is reasonable, to a point, to describe separate cultures for each of an individual's various communities. But to ascribe causal, formative influences at the cultural level to each community would not be credible. Recall that part of my thesis is that *culture,* deeply woven into the fabric of quotidian life, generally dwells beyond the reach of questioning and reinterpretation, while *social* culture, perpetually in potential flux and restructuring as politics unfolds, is readily accessible to questioning and is characterized by much smaller, more narrowly defined sets of assumptions which may undergo constant revision. Among the variegated cultures that may be said to characterize the individual's various communities, usually only one could be said to comprise that person's *culture;* the others are milieus through which the person is capable of navigating.[66]

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***interested*** [i.e., imbued with interests] simulacrum, since the imitated object makes something appear which remained invisible, or if one prefers, unintelligible in the natural object.... [T]he simulacrum is intellect added to object...." (1972: 149-150).

[66] Elkins and Simeon think of social culture partly in terms of being able to "'pass' as a legitimate social actor" (1979: 127). In my view, the notion of being able to "pass" is nicely suited to the broader culture, as well as to various compartmentalized cultures, such as corporate culture, military culture, or street-corner culture. Its application to social culture, however, both exaggerates the stringency of social cultural requirements and places the elements themselves of social culture at the high levels of abstraction, generality, and dilution (on the national scale) to which I object.

Secondly, in my model, the demographically definable *groups* to which social cultures may be ascribed are quite distinct from the various *communities* to which an individual belongs (although one of an individual's communities may overlap with his or her social cultural grouping). Communities in this sense are thus to be understood analytically as external to the individual, and as exerting forces which are internalized to highly variable degrees with highly variable temporal duration. To render this in English may be as simple to say that people adjust their opinions and attitudes to the company in which they happen to find themselves.[67] The social *structural* characteristics of communities are essentially an abstraction that I employ in order to identify external determinants of social cultures. I must emphasize that, in the larger scheme of things, these are weak determinants, but also that the importance of social information (including facts, misapprehensions, interpretations, opinions, and so on) gleaned from one's various communities has been underrated. Communities thus may be understood to evince "social structural" features and forces only peripherally and secondarily - as a mobile intervening variable, so to speak, hovering ambiguously between status as dependent and independent variable.

Needless to say, the full extent of community influences is inherently unresearchable, even on a small scale, for they are comprised more of uncertainties and subjectivities than of anything else. However, the ambiguity of the community influences that I have just described should be understood to approximate that of actual events and processes in individual cognition. The space I have devoted here to the role of communities is therefore justifiable in part as a reminder in the course of research that social culture is vague and complex, but also in [68] part as a

[67] Of course, there is no limit on the potential complexity of this sort of exchange. An eloquently argued social point during a chance encounter in a transient community (e.g., at a bar) may be imprinted permanently on a listener, who may thenceforth carry it unadulterated from

(continued...)

[68] (...continued)
community to community. This mode of exchange may apply equally to

platform for developing further propositions concerning variables that may be very difficult, at this point, to pin down. In the current state of knowledge in these areas, the cohesion and the meaning of what data we have are heavily dependent on theory itself; it is likely, however, that a decade or two hence, the body of data will have accumulated sufficiently to cohere and suggest meaning without "prompting" by theories. A final point to be made regarding communities is that if there are broader cultural influences affecting particular social cultures, then they will likely be found here, in one or possibly several communities, and they may have manifestations in the realm of the symbolic as well, which is the subject, though not the underlying emphasis, of the following section.

## Recognition through non verbality

As I indicated earlier, although symbols are not well- accommodated in my model, my discussion here is designed to elaborate a bit on "meaning" in social culture. One of the explicit goals of my model is to investigate the interactions themselves between people and politics in order to evaluate the quality and strength of their social- culture-forming components. I have suggested that we may discern *texts* and *subtexts* in these interactions, and that social cultures are derived in large part from the communications emanating from social system and process to individuals in the course of such interactions; in other words, people extract meaning from their encounters with politics, and the experience of aggregated '•meanings" differentially forms social cultures for various groups. Bound up as they are with "meaning," the world of the symbolic is frequently evoked, though seldom explored, in discussions of social culture. Is it possible analytically to dislodge social-culture-forming components from social interactions by sorting out the symbolic

media information. There is, for example, a pejorative stereotype of Parisians whose opinion on any subject may be found in yesterday's ***Le Monde***.

content of, or symbolic accompaniment to, events and processes? Do symbols themselves comprise reliable, consistent, legible social cultural texts and subtexts? Does exposure to a symbol itself comprise a social interaction? Although I do not propose fully to answer these questions, the following discussion will illustrate some of the ideas surrounding the concepts of symbols and social culture.

Incorporating the world of the symbolic into social cultural analysis is extremely attractive theoretically, for a variety of reasons, three of which are immediate and important. First, the general transcendent quality of the symbolic promises a nice match with the transcendent features of politics. Politics, as it is experienced, is rooted to a large extent in abstract constructs - at a high level of abstraction, there are nation, government, power, etc.; at middling ranges, parties, policies and belief systems; and at lower levels of abstraction, even politicians, appointees, and actual buildings. These entities achieve a sort of proxy concreteness in our minds through symbols, or by serving as symbols themselves. To this concreteness is added the manageability supplied by the compactness of the symbol - its characteristic power to condense very broad themes, often many at once, into pithy compactions. Hence, during his presidency, Ronald Reagan was, for many, a symbol of America, the American Dream, democracy, conservatism, postwar prosperity, social mobility, hope, good-feeling, and so on - simultaneously.

Secondly, "culture" itself is generally understood to rely a great deal on symbols. The cultural model for social culture (i.e., culture as an analogue for social culture) itself thus introduces the question of symbolic analysis into social cultural research, as does the conventional view that social culture is a subset of culture.

Thirdly, we know of course that people have deployed and responded to symbols for millennia, but politics stands second only to religion in the deliberate use of, and extreme reliance on symbols, not only in the quests for legitimacy, mobilization, action, and control, but also in the basic modes of discourse that characterize politics. Moreover, because language itself is a symbolic system, and because politics is created and conducted largely through

language, the symbolic content of politics cannot be ignored or discounted.[69]

In sum, politics, culture, and language all represent symbolic enterprises, and so one might expect symbolic analysis to figure prominently in the social cultural literature. Certainly, Verba's 1965 definition explicitly brings the symbolic into the purview of social culture. Nevertheless, the fact that few social culturists have ventured into symbolic analysis is not surprising: symbols

are even more abstract, ambiguous, and slippery than social culture itself; to rely on symbolic analysis in social culture research could very quickly become a task akin to using soup to buttress a column of jelly.

On the other hand, subsuming one into the other could, to some extent, circumvent the problem of exponential ambiguities. Lowell Dittmer has in fact proposed a conception of social culture based heavily upon the symbolic. "What is it," he asks, "about social culture that is inherently 'cultural,' resisting reduction either to social structure or to social psychology?[70] I would submit that it is social *symbolism*" (1977: 557; emphasis in original). He acknowledges that the study of symbols has accumulated as much definitional ambiguity as that of culture, but points out (compellingly), that "it is far easier to propose social symbolism as the most promising unit of analysis for studies of social culture than it is to define the term" (1977: 558).

Much more than mere shorthand for standard verbal communication, symbols transcend not only language, but also social structure and psychology; a single-word (or single image, or single-gesture) symbol may conceivably evoke a world of correlatives as it is perceived and apprehended. [71]

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[69] In making these points I have drawn from Kyosti Pekonen's analysis of the symbol in politics (1989), which I will take up more explicitly below.

[70] Dittmer's usage of "social structure" here is in the broader sense. In this context, he is referring to the widely noted structure-versus-psychology problem that has plagued theory and research from the outset. In his review of the literature, he distinguishes between the

(continued...)

[71] (...continued)

Symbols are not absolute, of course; they may evoke different correlatives in different individuals or groups.

Dittmer believes nevertheless that "human communities do set forth comprehensible and relatively consistent rules of usage to facilitate speed and fidelity of communication" - hence the autonomy of symbols (1977: 557).[72] He proposes a model of social culture that incorporates communication theory and semiotics, and provides a basic definition: "Social culture is a system of social symbols, and this system nests within a more inclusive system that we might term 'social communication'" (1977: 566).

> Elucidating, he argues that social symbolism is *less* than social language, just as social culture is less than politics. Social symbolism is embedded in social communication, but analytically distinct from it. Social symbolism has two specific properties distinguishing it from other social language: its metalinguistic property, and its connotative property (1977: 567; emphasis in original).

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methodologically convenient "psychological reductionism" of The ***Civic Culture*** on the one hand, and tendencies toward "global, macro-analytic descriptions of structure" (including, for example, the social-structural, "vulgar Marxism" approach) on the other, with some blurring between them. The problem, then, is that conceptions of social culture themselves tend "to merge imperceptibly [either] into definitions of social psychology or social structure," which deprives the concept of its causal- explanatory utility. I agree with Dittmer on this point, and acknowledge that my own model may be subject to this criticism (though my "structures" are not the same).

However, my model represents an attempt to incorporate ***both*** the psychological (if not actually to measure it, which remains highly problematic) and micro-structural features of social systems. I have argued that social culture is, in part, a psychologically-based response to structures and processes, which means that in the study of social culture neither can be viewed as more "important" than other. I must also snatch from Dittmer*s critical dustbin my notion of ***explanation:*** explanation fits into my epistemological schema in terms of two basic and general questions: 1) How does politics work? 2) Why does it workas it does?

[72] This closely resembles the view expressed by Lehman, which I mentioned in chapter 7 - and with which I do not agree, as I will elaborate shortly.

Although Dittmer provides a clear, nicely nuanced, and compelling discussion of how semiological analytical techniques may be readily applied to social symbolism, the price of his clarity is the potential complexity of his model (and, in my estimation, the price is high indeed). Symbolic communications in Dittmer's model move in one direction: "elites manipulate symbols, while masses interpret them and respond more or less accordingly" (1977: 570). This plainly does not seem to cover enough of what occurs in politics. Indeed, Dittmer explicitly removes from the realm of social culture the effects of interests, wealth, and power, insisting instead that they are subject to the structuring forces of the *cultural* system (1977: 570-571). Dittmer's static social culture *precedes* social communication and social action (is not affected by them), as well as whatever might be produced by the social process - and the latter, my argument holds, may well include social culture itself.[73]

A slightly different perspective on symbols, social culture, and politics is offered by Kyosti Pekonen (1989). Pekonen begins by suggesting that Max Weber's conceptions of culture as values, of politics as conducted through speech, and of politics as culture, collectively imply, in modern democracies, an integral relationship between culture, symbols, and social culture; he notes that "this conducting [of politics] through words is a precondition for viewing politics as culture" (1989: 132). Pekonen shares Weber's concern that the "routinization of authority," the reabsorption of charisma, generalized rationalization, and expanding administration all serve domination and the supplanting of politics; this process also serves to separate politics from social culture. Pekonen therefore proposes to explore the significance of "the new" - new situations introduced to the social arena, which are not yet endowed with fixed meaning, not yet fixed in law or administration. At its extreme, the

[73] This means of managing the soup-jelly conundrum, then, entails stirring the two together and freezing the mixture - it is largely to the freezing that I object, for it renders static otherwise vital and dynamic relations. I should note, in any event, that Dittmer's discussion contains a great deal more than I have indicated here; my discussion focuses only upon that part of his model which concerns the theoretical linkages between the social, the symbolic, and the social cultural.

politicized "new[5]* constitutes transition or crisis periods - and it is here that we find both politics and symbols, and hence social culture, "reawakened." In modern democracies, in which large proportions of formerly social issues have been absorbed into administration, social actors (including the media) strive to "be social;" the tractability of "the new" makes it their arena of choice, for here, unlike in settled, administratively fixed arenas, they can in fact "be social."

Several ramifications derive from the conduct of politics characterized by intentional politicization of the new. One is that common interests, which tend to remain broad and stable, tend also to remain in the realm of the routine, and hence are not generally subject to politicization. Secondly, politics loses some of its "continuity in time."

> Day-to-day social problems and disputed questions come to the fore and their relevance to the whole of parliamentary politics becomes all the more important. The aim of parliamentary politics in this situation, when social actors try to answer the challenge posed by the modern situation, seems to be *the "electrifying" of situations* (the phrase is Frederic Jameson's).
> When the present moment and situations are continually changing, all that is left is the "electrification" of always new, repetitive and differing kinds of situation (1989: 137-138; emphasis in original).

Thus visible politics, politics as reported in the mass media and as practiced in parliamentary deliberation - in short, politics *presented as "reality"* - is "no longer progress in history;" rather, "reality is changed into images depending on a situation, and time is split into a series of present moments" (1989: 138).

To illustrate this component of his argument, Pekonen provides a compelling example; although it is drawn from politics in Finland, its broader applicability is clear:

> *Elections always seem to be a new situation which needs new social posters with new social slogans.* That is the reason why parties have changed their slogans in every election in

> Finland in the 1980s. The slogans change so rapidly that it is very difficult to remember the party social slogans in earlier elections. Slogans are not intended to represent the long-term ideological interests and aims of the parties.
> Once slogans have been discovered and used they may be forgotten (1989: 138; emphasis in original).

Pekonen attributes to these trends the development in modern democracies of the "personalization of politics," which may function either as charismatic politics, which serves to transcend the routine, or "as a non-politicizing mechanism," in which a candidate's personal image comes to the fore, but may or may not serve as a symbol of the politician's beliefs, ideology, or favored policies. Certainly the image is a symbol, but because it is an artificial image, "here image must be understood as a signifier which does not have any necessary relationship with the signified, that is to issues, policies and a person's real subjectivity" (1989: 140). The ersatz symbol, exchangeable with other such symbols, is insinuated into the public sphere as a product that is "consumed," which in turn serves to restructure politics into processes and discourses amenable to the exchangeable-product/consumption nexus.

This analytical stratum of the social process is, of course, well-known in the social science literature, but Pekonen's contribution lies in his linking it with social culture through the symbolic. "When politics and politicians are 'consumed,' the consuming may bring with it changes in social culture. One change may be within the reference of image" (1989: 140-141). Just as a linguistic sign is a unit in a closed language system, the social image is a unit (again, following Weber) in a vocational system. "The vocation in a way 'closes' the language and narrative and locates the horizon for interpretation;" further, the image replaces the language and narrative of ideology (1989: 141).

Although Pekonen's own use of language in the latter part of his argument may stretch our tolerance for the abstract, his conclusion is clear.[74]

[74] And here again, although he arrives at this conclusion via a discussion of Finnish politics, his argument need not be confined to Finland.

> The understanding of the time and history of politics has become implicit: it is after all within *[sic],* but only as signs which an individual reader must himself decode and interpret. In a way - and this is really very ironic - this kind of politics is very "symbolic," but at the same time the "symbolic" has very little to do with social culture as meaning-giving (1989: 141).

Pekonen's perspective on the role of the symbolic in social culture thus differs substantially in some respects from Dittmer's. While Dittmer proposes a conception in which social culture essentially *is* symbols, Pekonen only goes so far as to link symbols and social culture through the creation, delivery, and mediation of *variable* meaning. While Dittmer insists upon autonomous symbols that are interpreted according to broadly shared, cultural, communicative codes - and thus carry consistent meaning - Pekonen emphasizes instead the individual's autonomy - and potential uncertainty or idiosyncrasy - in interpreting symbols. The derivation of these differing views is clear. Dittmer assumes a certain degree of cultural continuity, and assumes the broader culture to be an important force in shaping the social culture (the broader culture provides the framework for the individual's interpretation of symbols). Pekonen, on the other hand, in emphasizing "the new," directs his attention toward the tendency in modern democracies both for the new to be thrust consciously, forcefully, and dramatically into the social arena, and for the routine to be repackaged as "new." Both forms of "new" social issues or discourse not only challenge conventional, culturally-based frameworks of interpretation, but also - and more to the point - they are presented by the mass media or by politicians in conscious attempts to assign meaning - i.e., to control interpretation, thus supplanting, circumventing, or perhaps supplementing whatever codification rules may be supplied by the broader culture.

It is clear that symbols are an exceedingly important factor in the operation of politics. They are also important in the creation and maintenance of social attitudes. Social symbols are deployed and interpreted, consciously and unconsciously, as social currency. As the foregoing shows, however, the ambiguity of

"the symbolic" is not easily resolved. Nevertheless, because politics itself is fraught with ambiguity, the realm of politics may have a nice match in the realm of the symbolic. In other words, it does not seem unreasonable to argue that the explication of complex phenomena may be well served by complex explanatory mechanisms.

Although my proposed model does not go this far, I do suggest that the ambiguity of symbols may actually be an advantage in social cultural analysis. My model suggests that different individuals and groups may perceive the same "objective" social phenomena quite differently from one another. In this respect, then, my model is consonant with Pekonen's view that interpretation of symbols cannot be assumed to be uniform within a society. Consider, for example, the politician's clothing. While Dittmer's model would likely exclude dress as a symbol, Pekonen's emphasis on image and packaging may elevate clothing to considerable significance. The standard suit worn by most members of Congress and state legislatures in the United States is not only an integral part of their image, but is itself a symbol - among other things, of the "establishment." As such, it is a highly variable symbol. To some, the suit projects a favorable image, perhaps representing importance, dignity, or membership in a favored socioeconomic class (the "establishment"); to others, however, the suit is a mark of arrogance, unfair privilege, exclusionary membership, and perhaps even greed (again, the "establishment"). Generally speaking, then, as these two groups carry different perceptions of politicians, most likely they also carry very different social cultures.[75] Of course, responses to sartorial symbols do not go far in characterizing social cultures; the point here, again, is that social cultural phenomena have differential effects on different groups.

[75] Consider a different sort of example, which highlights the ambiguity in the analysis of symbols. President Carter's cardigan may at first have been symbolically evocative of his self-image of a representative of all of the people, as well as of his seriousness about getting work done; later on, though, it may have come to represent an almost shabby inability to stay above the fray. Yet another example might be Jack Kemp's hair, which, it seems, must symbolize ***something.***

Although the foregoing is but a sketch of the possible interactions between people and politics, it is essentially comprehensive in outlining the sorts of interactions in which social structures and processes may affect social culture. If there appears to be a democratic bias in this outline, it is because the operation of democratic politics tends to be a great deal more complicated than that of non-democratic politics; analysis of the latter merely draws on narrower subsets of what I have enumerated and described.

Applying the model proposed here to social culture research entails not only applying a different set of assumptions, but also asking a different set of questions about social cultures - about how they are formed, how they can be characterized, what changes them, and ultimately, what their own social effects might be. Naturally, then, as I have noted, the interpretations derived of this model will be different from those derived of the conventional approach; in *conceiving of* social culture differently, we will not only view it differently, but also generate different findings.

My approach emphasizes the need, in order to address some of the important deficiencies of social culture theory, to incorporate into the model the effects that structures have; to situate politics as the object of social culture; and generally to adopt a critical perspective. Together, these practices should sharpen our conceptual understanding of social culture, as well as the interpretations we draw from empirical data. I suggest that we jettison some of the assumptions held in the conventional approach, and adopt a set of revised assumptions - without which, of course, research in the mold of my model would not entirely make sense: 1) de-emphasizing the national unit of analysis permits us to focus on more sharply defined groupings; 2) focusing on politics means focusing on the object of social culture, rather than on personality, stereotypes, or survey values which may or may not constitute components of social cultures; 3) separating social culture from the broader culture enables us to gauge the extent of their relationship empirically, rather than assuming an empirically intractable organic integration; 4) assuming social culture to be responsive and malleable enables us to address change directly, from within the model, rather than having to treat it *ad hoc* as anomalous or exceptional; and 5) viewing social culture as a dynamic phenomenon in constant potential flux

permits us to incorporate human cognition and motivation into analysis, rather than to assume high-inertia social cultures as determinative agencies circumventing higher brain function. Finally, on the basis of this revised set of assumptions, I outlined a model which emphasizes the causal effects of social structures and processes, through individual cognitive apprehension, on the formation, maintenance, and transformation of social cultures. Thus conceived, social culture comprises a cognitively-based, subjective social universe, an internal construct or *simulacrum,* which then comprises the "subjective orientation to politics."

The question to be addressed now, then, is: To what extent can this model provide accounts of social cultures that are more plausible than those produced by the conventional approach? I will approach an answer to this question by referring, first, to Almond's recent assessment of the "present state" of social culture, and then shifting the discussion to some of the areas in which my model suggests linkages between politics and people that may be novel to social cultural discourse but perhaps more familiar in other research areas, as well as in a common- sense understanding of the functioning of politics.

*"Present State*". In a article on the "The Study of Social Culture" (1990), Almond includes a section subtitled "The Present State of Social Culture Theory," which reflects some of the confusion surrounding the topic. He begins as follows:

> The historical record at first glance would seem to be ambiguous. Social culture on the one hand can change relatively quickly; on the other hand it would seem to be able to take quite a pounding without changing very much (1990: 149).

In the evaluation that ensues, Almond comments on various features of social culture, as well as elements comprising social cultures, and presents a mixed portrait, organized generally into the questions of social cultural continuity, "and hence of its explanatory significance in social explanation," and of the relative strengths of different forces that affect social cultures. Insofar as we agree with his premises (and there are some instances in which I plainly do not), the disparate findings that Almond describes may all find a

comfortable fit in the approach that I have outlined. Consider the following, in which I have added emphasis to the principal concepts:

> On the stability or persistence of social culture, the data we now have suggest that *social moods,* such as trust in social incumbents and confidence in social and social institutions, seem to be quite changeable, varying with the effectiveness of the performance of these leaders, officers, and agencies. *Basic social beliefs and social values* are more resistant, though still subject to change. Thus in the United States and Britain in the 1960s and 1970s trust in leaders and confidence in social, economic, and social elites declined sharply, but the evidence did not show any serious attrition in *the basic legitimacy of* American and British *social and social institutions,* despite the poor economic and governmental performance [76] experienced in both countries (1990: 149-150; my emphasis).

Here, of course, "social moods"[77] are distinguished from what we may call "basic values" and "basic system legitimacy," but there is ample overlap among their objects. My interest in this selection, though, is that despite the semantic *mélange* (which plays down the commonalities), social culture is now seen explicitly to include relatively rapid social cultural changes in response to the structures and processes of politics. In Almond's discussion, the "explanatory significance" of the concept is (implicitly) preserved by his emphasis on the maintenance of basic system legitimacy in the United States and Britain despite some significant upheaval.[78]

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[76] He does not elaborate on the ways in which social culture might "take a pounding," though it is likely that he is referring to contextual changes that might challenge social cultural assumptions.

[77] The very term "mood" implies transience; and "transience" in social time may extend through a much longer period than, say, in a person's time. But let us be realistic: when the "mood" lasts for decades, or worsens over the course of decades, "mood" might not be the scientific term of choice.

[78] Again, let us be realistic: while this sort of evaluation tends to emphasize the massive extent of the upheaval, it dodges completely the common-sense question of whether or not such upheaval even approaches the degree and quality that would be required to dislodge the basic legitimacy

The discussion addresses several other social cultural features as well. Almond discusses the vagaries of socialization studies, emphasizing the impact of the media during recent decades. He finds, too, that "social- structural engineering" seems to have affected significantly the social cultures in both Germany and France (1990: 152). And he draws additional implicit support for social culture's explanatory component (i.e., continuity) in the persistence of "primordial values and commitments" associated with "ethnicity, nationality, and religion."

These "explain the failure of the Soviet Russian and communist efforts to transform the social cultures of the Eastern European countries, and even in Russia" (1990: 150). I strongly disagree with this assessment; but, as I will address it later on, suffice it to say here that this brand of logic - *post hoc, ergo ante hoc (et ergo cultura perseverat)* - is faulty. In the end, it is indeed a mixed picture that Almond provides. He concludes:

> Thus the social culture theory that survives today is not the familistic, childhood, and "unconscious"-dominated set of ideas of the 1940s, but rather a theory that emphasizes the cognitive- level attitudes and expectations influenced by the structure and performance of the social system and the economy. But if much of it is fluid and plastic, there are persistent and stable components, such as basic social beliefs and value commitments, and primordial attachments that affect and constrain our social behavior and our public policy (1990: 152).

Because the model I have outlined disavows the assumption of continuity built into previous models, and because it emphasizes "cognitive-level attitudes," it is suited Almond's recent assessment of the concept. As for the "persistent and stable components," my model is designed to account for them either as equally

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of an entire social-governmental system. The total absence of broadly desirable or even acceptable alternatives alone implies a very high threshold indeed for revolutionary potential - but the clamor for ***reform,*** on the other hand, has been rather persistent in these cases.

cognitive-level attitudes, or usually only peripherally relevant to the operation of politics; either way, I emphasize digging into such factors empirically, rather than merely assuming "primordial" phenomena, which too easily equates a long history with non-cognitive features (more about which shortly). The following sections address some general aspects and implications of my model.

***Change.*** Viewing social cultures largely as the result of the functioning of politics enables us not only to address change directly, but also to account for it. Put simply, as the content and processes of politics change, so do social cultures; in other words, social culture changes as its *object* changes. The New Deal policies of the 1930s, for example, changed the face of American government, vastly expanding government's role, the range of responsibilities assumed by government agencies, and the range and extent of services provided by government. This in turn altered radically the number and the texture of the interactions that people thenceforth had with government.

In social cultural terms, it is somewhat significant that these new policies were received by a highly receptive public. Roosevelt's role as a savior of sorts, rooted in pragmatic grounds, was not a blinding force that swept along with it a dizzy public; had that been the case, his courtpacking plan would have met with public approval - which it did not. The point, of course, is that in the New Deal era, a broad set of unprecedented policies was embraced by a majority of the American population - and changes in the social culture followed suit. Despite the imprint of Liberalism, Americans were very quick to adapt to government's expanded role; as the century draws to a close, the American welfare state is firmly entrenched, both in policy and in social cultures, despite a general loathing of waste and fraud, despite a steady, strident but thin, stream of romantic, anti-statist rhetoric, and despite the near-universal acceptance of capitalist principles.

Strictly speaking, the conventional approach to social culture cannot readily accommodate this transformation. The "Liberal America" view, for example, would have majorities chafing against New Deal policies at their inception. Hartz (1955) addresses the issue in part by reflecting the New Deal off of European (alien, radical, Marxist) Socialism, which gives it a distinctly Liberal hue, and in

part by evoking the essentially Liberal pragmatism of American culture - a penchant for technical "problemsolving." In social cultural terms, this would have to mean that American social culture had already been configured in such a way that it could accommodate a drastically altered relationship between people and government; that leaves us, however, with a conception of social culture far too capacious to be of much analytical utility.[79] To be fair, Hartz himself was concerned with describing the American ethos through American *social thought* - not with developing a conception of social culture. In his view, the American experience, and consequently American social thought, was definitively characterized by an all-pervasive, uncontested Liberalism, the seeds of which may as well be traced to the Mayflower, and the roots of which run too deep even to be questioned. But "the people" in his narrative are essentially silent (if, perhaps, rumbling inarticulately beneath the surface, well within the strict confines of Liberalism) and his jaunt through the juggling of social thought during the Depression and New Deal eras has elites passing Locke around like a hot potato; but in the Hoovervilles, and in the buildings occupied by angry squatters, in the sit-down strikes, and in the expanding membership of the Communist and Socialist parties,[80] "social thought" - and the nascent social cultures to which it contributed - was somewhat more "pragmatic" than Hartz allows.

The "civic culture" approach to American social culture - characterized as it is by attenuated partisanship, participatory pluralism, and faith in the "democratic myth" - would not necessarily have New Deal era Americans chafing against an expanded state role - but it quite distinctly loses sight of both revolutionary potential and pragmatism in a warm vat of civic cooperation. Almond and Verba's parochials, participants, and subjects, as well as their

[79] Sven Steinmo (1994) has provided an analysis which is consonant in several ways with what I have said here; his argument is outlined very briefly below, in the section on "Implications for Research."

[80] Trends and events such as these, in other eras as well, are well-documented (see, for example, Zinn 1980 or 1984; Piven and Cloward, 1971), but apparently are frequently forgotten, especially in the social cultural literature.

"allegiance," "consonance," and delicately balanced "mixed" civic culture do not fit well with Depression and New Deal events. More important theoretically is that the model's premise of continuity leaves no accounting for social cultural change.

Similarly, Inglehart's historical populace reacts to such events largely by retaining the scars of privation. His conversion of Maslowian and "civic culture" theory into a material interpretation and a method of inquiry geared specifically to uncovering change both reveals change and suggests mechanisms for it, but would nevertheless leave a deep well of "early learning" largely intact - accounting for social cultural change only in members of those generations who came of age during or after the Depression.

Now, the *conception itself* of social culture is a crucial factor in this mode of interpretation. According to the conception that I have proposed, social culture not only did change as a result of New Deal policies, but also it had to change: the interactions between people and government had changed; the communications delivered to people from government had changed; what government did and what it provided had changed; incentives, choices, and motivations had changed; all in all, perceptions of and assumptions about government naturally underwent a significant transformation. Since these are all significant components of my definition of social culture, of course social culture changed. It may be, however, that interpretations conforming to the approaches that I described above might not acknowledge change - discerning instead, for example, a reaffirmation of the American "consensus on the fundamentals" or impulse to petition. If that is indeed the case, then the utility of those approaches is markedly diminished; after the loaded research questions of the Cold War, McCarthyism, "democratic stability," European fascism and socialism, and incipient Marxism in the developing world have loosened their grip on the social scientist's imagination, what is left? If virtually everything that *does* happen in a given nation's politics must be fitted into a pre-existing, steady, persistent, far-reaching, national social culture, then the concept's utility is confined largely to "explaining" *what does not occur* in that nation's politics. In other words, if social culture is confined to broad abstract values like Liberalism, Social Democracy, or the very legitimacy of the state, then its *analytical*

arena, once description has been dispensed with, is hypothetical politics, rather than actual politics.[81]

What I have outlined in my model, then, is a conception of social culture that incorporates politics and the operation of government, and does not restrict itself to attempting to explain, for example, why government does not fall apart. The deep roots planted in American society by New Deal policies can be traced, first, to the operation of government, and *then* to social culture; the notion widely held that "the government ought to do something," which seems at odds with our Liberal orientations, comes of the fact that "the government" not only does a great deal, but also has become an increasingly active agent in people's lives. In other words, "Liberal" though we may be, much politics and many policies are derived of other forces. Moreover, the social culture continues to change, sometimes very rapidly, as it did in America during, for example, the Civil Rights, Vietnam, and Watergate eras - which fostered anti-state sensibilities rooted more firmly in unhappy events than in Liberal impulse (Hristić: 98).

Although majorities in the US embraced Roosevelt's New Deal, support was not universal; and certainly during the Civil Rights, Vietnam, and Watergate eras, divisions were deep and wide in American social cultures. Indeed, events in the 1960s and early

[81] Hence, the same analytical thrust that might "explain" in cultural terms why socialism cannot develop in the United States might also "explain" why democracy cannot develop in Haiti - or, indeed for that matter, why the U.S. does not sell Arizona to Mexico. For some, though, Hartz on Liberalism need not be dismissed in order to accept Sombart's (1976 [1906]) account of America's early (pre- Depression) yawn at socialism (though Hartz on socialism would have to go); even today, we are very likely to find a "socialist impulse" in the United States where socioeconomic conditions nourish it - among the workers of a large plant about to close permanently, for example, especially if there are no local employment alternatives. Similarly, for some, because the class struggle in Haiti involves killing as much as it does daily caloric intake, the "not-ready-for-democracy" cultural argument looks as silly as it does insidious. As for Arizona, sovereignty and established borders likely count for more than culture; the proposal was offered deadpan by then- Governor Babbitt, during an April Fool's National Public Radio broadcast in the late 1980s. His reasoning, as I recall, was sound; the revenues would have been put to good use.

1970s, not just in the United States, but also in Europe (with sketchier data trickling in from Vietnam and other developing nations), contributed heavily to what may have appeared at the time to be the death knell for social culture: nationally-based social cultures characterized by continuity could not be reconciled with actual events.

Social cultural groupings are in some cases exceedingly obvious. Blacks in the United States, for example, have always had relations with politics and government significantly different from those of non-blacks; to expect blacks and whites in the United States to carry the same social culture simply would not make sense. Although it hardly seems necessary to illustrate this point, it may nevertheless be useful to place it more explicitly in the context of my model. In the category of "interactions with police forces," for example, consider a comment by Robert Coles, who has devoted many years to eliciting children's views on a variety of subjects: "In the South, for years, I heard black children speak of sheriffs and policemen as 'devils'" (1986: 28). Although we might expect much of what children say to amount at first to parroting their parents, and then to represent an internalization of what they had learned from their parents, Coles emphasizes that a few follow-up questions frequently draw significantly different discourses that tend to indicate that children have not only independent lines of thought, but also the ability to reason socially.[82] And, of course, children interpret what they see; the social culture in which sheriffs and policemen are "devils" likely comes from observation as well as from parents' comments. For example, Coles quotes a ten-year-old black tenant farmer's son: "I don't like the teachers; they say bad things to us. They're always calling us names, they make you feel no good. We saw the man on the television, the governor, and he wasn't any good either." The same child

[82] I should emphasize in turn that such follow-up questions are almost universally absent from large-scale surveys of adults or children. Coles acknowledges that this insight has been articulated and documented explicitly by Robert Connell in ***The Child's Construction of Politics*** (1971): Connell "makes plain the difference between a child's remarks, spoken over a substantial length of time, and the so-called standardized responses of survey research" (Coles, 1986: 26; see also pp. 38-40).

later provided a fairly sophisticated analysis of the utility of voting that included what his father had said, what his teacher had said ("To tell the truth, I don't believe her"), what his sister had said, and what he himself thinks; what he thinks is that whites are in control of both property and politics.

Decades later, Coles talked again to this same observer, now a grown man who works on a plantation: "It's no good for the black man here, no matter who's up there in Washington as President or down in Jackson as governor. That's all I know. Watergate? They caught a few crooks and liars, I guess. Where are all the rest of them? Still in charge of us, still up to no good" (1986: 28-30).

The poor in general, of all races, also often find themselves in a distinctly adversarial relationship with government and its police forces, and the relationship may be learned clearly in childhood. Coles quotes a nine-year- old West Virginian boy: "You make the wrong move, and they'll be on you, telling you off and ready to lock you up, if need be." This child has developed a sense of how politics works from a variety of cues - all of which seem to point toward the same conclusion. After an accident in which seventy-eight miners were killed, the boy attended a funeral at which he heard views the miners had of the negligent company; he also saw various high government and corporate officials talking about it on television.

> My mother says they can do what they want, the company people; and the sheriff, he listens to them, and that's it, they get their way. Last year there was going to be a strike, and daddy took us and we saw the company people and the sheriff and his people, and they were talking buddy-buddy (1986: 31-32).

In contrast, the views that Coles finds in middle- or upper-class children tend to be very supportive of the *status quo*, and are often uncritical of the way government works - and again, these views are based on both on what they have heard from parents as well what they are able to observe.

I have included these data from Coles' work in order to illustrate the point that "what you see depends on where you are." But

the formation of social cultural groupings goes deeper than that. Certainly, race and socioeconomic class are groupings which are highly likely to carry different social cultures. Even in Almond and Verba's data, controlling for class, education, and sex exposed different survey attitudes, which imply differences in perspective. Again, the stakes are different - the perceptions, incentives, choices, assumptions are different.

Beyond that, I have emphasized in my model the fact that interactions between people and politics, though confined to a relatively limited variety, are continuous - they do not end in childhood. Nor do they necessarily assume a fixed character according to race, class, education, sex, or any other variable. In this respect, social cultural groupings are not closed, and the basic mechanisms for the sort of social culture change that amounts to a move from one grouping to another are similar to those proposed by Thompson et al. - people may carry a set of assumptions until events and experiences force a reexamination and revision. The social cultures carried by excluded groups, for example, change as exclusionary practices are eliminated; similarly, when favored groups perceive changes in the function of the structures that support their advantage, they are likely to revise their views.[83] Social experience as an ongoing series of interactions with government thus serves perpetually to form and re-form social cultures, altering or affirming this or that component as individuals seek out (to varying degrees of consciousness) the meaning or implications of an interaction, communication, or event. Naturally, in media- steeped nations, much of this will be framed (and frequently generated) by news-media presentations.

***Conflict.*** Conventional approaches to social culture have found no satisfactory way to address conflict, either between groups within a nation, between nations, or between state and people. Conflict and violence are either ignored as exceptional or anomalous, and therefore extraneous to social cultural inquiry, or else are packaged into the term "fragmented social culture" or

[83] Again, even among children. For example, Coles discovered a diversity of such insights among white children in South Africa (1986; chapters VI and IX).

"social culture of fragmentation." However, conflict is intrinsic to politics, and its extreme form, social violence, is so common that some accounting for it in social culture analysis seems necessary. I would not propose that, where there is violence, the social cultures involved must themselves be characterized in terms of that violence, but I do insist that violence must be addressed, and that this can be done with reference to social culture. In some cases, for example, active and potentially violent conflict does indeed become part of the social culture (Ireland, for example; or Zaire, where people have come to expect conflict and violence in many interactions with the state itself), whereas in other cases it may serve to transform the social culture without violence's being incorporated. To strip conflict down to social cultural "fragmentation" not only obscures its dynamics, but also tells us nothing more than that the "fragmented" society is divided by conflict.[84]

I noted in passing that Almond built the notion of "fragmented social cultures" into the general concept in his seminal article in 1956. In fact, Almond essentially described this phenomenon in terms of a nation's having *several social cultures,* but insisted on *defining it* in terms of the national unit of analysis for social culture:

> [T]he typical countries of continental Western Europe, while constituting individual social systems, include several different social cultures which extend beyond their borders. *In other words,* they are social systems with fragmented social cultures (1956: 397; my emphasis).

In his explication, he elaborates West European fragmentation in terms of three basic sub-cultures: pre industrial, traditional middle-class, and industrial. The basic subcultures are further fragmented "at the level of ideology and social organizations." The portrait he paints does indeed make a strong case for the term "fragmentation" (1956: 405-408); but its conceptual scope [84] [85] seems to

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[84] A number of social culture researchers employ the term - e.g., Rosenbaum (1975), Brown (1987), Girvin (1989).

[85] should note that although Girvin's analysis of "fragmentation" in Ireland appears to be of a very high quality, I object nonetheless to the use of the

reach only the level of taxonomy - which may be part of the reason that the term has been used more to characterize societies apparently marked by deeply rooted and active conflict than generally to the West European nations.

The term does, of course, bear similarities to the notion I have advocated of "social cultural groupings." However, even though Almond's own understanding of conflict groupings is keen, I argue that the taxonomic bundling together of such groups under their respective national flags is to short-circuit *social cultural* as well as *social* analysis in favor of entertaining the broader discursive questions of that time's (1950s, 1960s) comparative politics - democratic potential, system stability, totalitarian temptation, and so on. The label itself hovers above a generalized fray, evoking international rather than intergroup contestants, and characterizing the conflict itself in ontological rather than etiological or teleological terms: Italy has a social culture of fragmentation and that's the way it is. Even if the social culturist can deliver a complex and complete discussion of the dynamics of conflict, such a discussion is independent of social culture theory and modeling.

Just as my model emphasizes the empirical search for what makes and re-makes social cultural groupings, so does it encourage the empirical search for the causes of conflict among groupings. Similarly, the premises of my model serve to discourage purely cultural explanations of conflict, and to encourage seeking out causal dynamics related to perceptions of the functioning of the system.

For example, although religious or ethnic (or "tribal") divisions may generally be viewed as *culturally* based, explanation that stops there essentially places the Hutu and the Tutsi alongside the Hatfields and the McCoys. In exploring the social cultural features of groups in Rwanda, in Bosnia, in Zaire, in Italy - in any nation marked by conflict, whether it amounts to perpetual social squabbling among groups, or involves hatred deep enough to launch intergroup slaughter on a genocidal scale - my model emphasizes rooting out causes other than "primordial" cultural traits, instead

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term. On the other hand, it is also noteworthy that his analysis in no way relies on the term, that he uses it only in passing, and that he actually refers to cultures in the plural: "fragmented social cultures."

seeking causes especially in the various groups' perceptions of the politics involved, of their own relationships with the social system, and of what they expect of the social system. In most cases, I would expect to find social conflicts rooted in material politics - conflicts derived of competition for resource allocation.

Certainly, there are cases in which the seemingly "alien" traits of another group - religious, ethnic, as well as cultural - may well transcend material-social concerns, either from the outset, as when different peoples are thrust into proximity by circumstance, or as a long- evolving reaction to earlier material conflicts. In a similar vein, consider the case of an occupying force, a fairly common historical contingency which presents a variety of possible consequences to social cultures. (Vichy France, for example, may serve as an instructive model; it includes a foreign occupation through the force of war, foreign occupying troops, the obliteration of the indigenous government, the establishing of a dependent, cooperative government, and varying degrees of collaboration, resistance, and "exit" on the part of the people.)[86] Insofar as these forms of conflict are or become social, and have manifestations in existing or newly created social systems, their relationship with politics and social systems falls within the purview of the mechanics of my model. Further, some of these could be shown to be cases in which cultural factors are admissible according to the terms of my model. Again, the model assumes a distinct separation between broader cultures and social cultures, but admits any cultural phenomenon that can be shown to be rooted the ***cultural*** system, and not in other causes; what this means, in short, is that "cultural causes" as a shorthand for constellations of ***other*** *causes is not admissible.*

The foregoing covers types of conflict that may escalate to violence, including civil war and war between nations. Conflict between government and people also commonly escalates into violence - riot, rebellion, revolution, and some civil wars - all of which conventional approaches to social culture have been unable to address satisfactorily. Since there is probably no such thing as a "social culture *of* riot, rebellion, or revolution," these violent forms of "unsanctioned" social behavior have been treated either as

[86] And, of course, very little in the way of "voice."

extraneous to social culture models or anomalies in social life; similarly, violence against citizens by the state has not been incorporated. In reality, however, these are exceedingly common occurrences, and their exclusion from social cultural modeling has comprised a serious analytical shortcoming. For example, the "civic culture" that many believed was a nice characterization of American politics at the start of the 1960s was exposed by the end of the decade to be a wholly inadequate characterization; by the end of 1968, social violence itself seemed to characterize American politics (and indeed, violent politics seemed to characterize much of the world during that era).

State violence directed against citizens fits well into my model as a social object which has potentially strong social-culture-forming properties. This form of violence may be accounted for largely as an external force on individuals and/or groups, comprising clear communications from government to people, and usually having clear effects on people's perceptions of government, and on their expectations, choices, incentives, and so on, and are therefore likely to have clear effects on social cultures. Riot, rebellion, and revolution, on the other hand, represent communication, as much as action, in the reverse direction, but *as a response* that people have to existing government; these forms of violence may be read as the varying degrees and breadth of dissent against a government, part of a government, or one or more government policies; they occur usually only when state-sanctioned means of participation either do not exist or appear to be futile. As such, they represent "desperate measures," which have indirect social-culture-forming properties; for example, they may redress an internalized imbalance of power between state and people; they may produce a sense that greater participation may not be futile after all; and they may forge or recapture a sense of community (or of conflict) among people or groups. Riot, rebellion, and revolution also may have roots in existing social cultures, frequently the result either of government action overstepping the bounds of the social culture's preexisting threshold tolerance, or of a social cultural evolution in which the interactions that people have with government redefine what is perceived to be tolerable.[87]

Obviously, social violence that involves large groups (or mobs, potentially fitting Le Bon's (1960 [1895]) characterization, in which individual psychology sheds all relevance), may have very complicated roots and ramifications. What I hope to have conveyed here is merely that violence, characterized in terms of communications between people and government, and based on perceptions of social structures and processes, is actively accommodated in my model. In approaching the subject in this manner, we permit ourselves to generate explanations of social violence that dig deeper than "tribalism" or "primordial hatreds" - characterizations which, from a western vantage point, emphasize the "otherness" of peoples in crisis, often to a point at which "otherness" itself comprises explanation.

The data themselves that permit this approach to social culture have accumulated a great deal in recent years, though they are not presented as social cultural data. On Zaire, for example - a quintessential object of [87]

the "tribalism" thesis[88] - Crawford Young (1976), Young and Thomas Turner (1985), Thomas Callaghy (1984), and Michael Schatzberg (1988), *inter alia,* have closely explored the dynamics of state-society relations. The account they provide, singly and collectively, emphasizes the fact that, whatever their individual psychology, Zairians have had to react to the Zairian state in certain starkly delimited ways. In these analyses, we do not find conflict explained in terms of irrational behavior. For example, in ethnic conflict, rather than "primordial hatreds," we find instead economic rivalries orchestrated from above. Similarly, in a system in which economic corruption is pervasive enough (and extractive and extortionist

[87] Barrington Moore, Jr. has performed a fascinating, preliminary but highly elaborate, exploration of the notion of what is "tolerable," in a context related to that I have presented here, in his ***Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*** (1978). As I develop my model in later work, I expect his research and analysis to be very helpful in guiding my own.

[88] African conflict in general is frequently characterized this way. More recent analyses similar to those I mention here on Zaire may be found on Africa in general in works such (continued) Rothchild and Chazan (1988) ; on specific countries, the work of area specialists on Africa has been, during the past decade or two, quite discriminating in this regard.

enough) for sober observers to declare that Zaire is perhaps the only *pure* kleptocracy, we find a very simple causal mechanism - and again, one ultimately orchestrated from above: the military, who are also the police, and the civil servants are paid only a fraction of subsistence level wages (that is, when they actually *are* paid). Although the accounts provided by these area specialists are not framed in terms of social cultures, they incorporate many of the elements I have included in my model of social culture; in terms of my model, then, their accounts provide a compelling portrait of some of the social cultures operating in Zaire.

## Supplementary potential

Empirical research based upon the model I have proposed is no easy task, and the full extent of its difficulty cannot yet be gauged. It is of some interest that the general contours of the research agenda implied here bears some resemblance to that implied in Almond and Verba's general discussion in the first chapter of *The Civic Culture* (specifically, parts of the discussion that follows their presentation of the details and mechanics of their model and precedes the introduction of their actual study). The fact that these aspects of their discussion - especially, for example, concerning the interaction between people and structure, process, and "governmental output" - were omitted entirely from their study is only partly explained by their explicit embrace of a specific, narrower focus; again, methodological convenience and an enthusiastic, pioneering spirit played a role - new techniques and new data held great promise.

But consider the following claim, in which Almond and Verba explain that they focus only on part of social culture: "Our study stresses *orientation to social structure and process,* not orientation to the substance of social demands and outputs" (1963: 29; my emphasis). Although this places my own model well within view of the original impulse of social culture research, my critique of *The Civic Culture* lays to rest the notion that Almond and Verba actually did study "orientation to social structure and process." But why did they not do so? Obviously, the methodological and inferential

errors that I have documented undermined their efforts. A deeper problem, however, was that, despite their goals, Almond and Verba's theory (or at least their own understanding of it) makes demands of which they apparently were not entirely aware; especially problematic were the assumption of continuity, the dilution to the national unit of analysis, the assumption of determinative influence from the broader culture, and the attempt to link social structure to social cultural variables which themselves had been poorly delineated. In addition, however, actually researching "orientation to social structure and process" is methodologically difficult; even if Almond and Verba had not made the pioneers' errors that they did, individual psychology - the basis of "orientations," whether or not aggregated into collectives - is largely a "black box." And so it remains today, which is a clue to the difficulty of performing some of the research suggested by my own model.

Nevertheless, it is possible (and, I think, desirable) at this early stage to suggest grounds for an optimistic outlook for social culture research based on the model I have proposed. For one thing, numerous avenues of research in other areas operate in close proximity to the sort of research my model suggests, even if they seldom address the issue of social culture. For example, research on the texture of the contact between people and agents of government (especially bureaucracies, social services, and police forces - e.g., Lipsky, 1980; Goodsell, 1981) has accumulated, promising to provide a source of data directly adaptable to my model.

More generally, some recent institutionalist research dovetails very nicely with my model, even though part of the theoretical thrust is, in fact, explicit dissatisfaction with cultural explanations. The basis for compatibility between these models and mine, of course, lies in the non- cultural nature of the social culture that I propose: some institutionalist approaches explicitly posit social structure and processes as formative forces in changing public outlooks. To combine this research with what my model proposes requires only accepting that my version of social culture is useful and legitimate. Sven Steinmo, for example, has recently sketched out the role of some specific institutional features of American politics and its social systems that collectively provide an

empirically- rooted account of American "exceptionalism" that sharply downplays the role of culture. As part of his conclusion, he writes:

> [W]hat citizens believe about politics, and what they think is possible and desirable is fundamentally shaped by what government does for them. In other words, what citizens want is in part determined by what they have seen and experienced (1994: 128).

Needless to say, I agree with this assessment. Whether or not Steinmo would agree with me, it is my thesis that "what citizens believe about politics, and what they think is possible," as well as "what citizens want," are all components of social cultures. Steinmo's (and my) objection to the cultural interpretation of American politics lies in its causal implications - i.e., culture drives politics; in my model, of course, the reverse causal direction is emphasized.

Other institutionalist research as well offers both theoretical perspectives and data that may be adapted to the version of social culture that I propose. James March and Johan Olsen, in their *Rediscovering Institutions* (1989), address directly a great many issues that have close correlates in my model - even though they express no interest whatsoever in social culture (their overarching interest appears to be the prospects for democratic reform). March and Olsen consider, of course, basic structuring features like the regulations and procedures imposed by institutions, but they also look at: the ways in which institutions generate and impose meaning on social objects and processes; constraints on and incentives to change (including constraints institutions impose on their own evolution); the construction of standards of success and failure; and the variability of interests or preferences, due in part to their subjection to the dynamics of power and institutional molding. A principal component of their thesis, similar to my own, is that conventional social theories tend to treat interests, powers, and structures "as exogenous to the social system" - products of social, and not social, processes - whereas in fact, each of these has significant endogenous roots, or influences rooted in the operation of politics as structured by social institutions. In addition, throughout their text, they

maintain an emphasis on the interactions among people, politics, and institutions.[89] The perspective suggested by my model complements the "new institutionalist" perspective largely by proposing to organize the other side of the general institution-people dyad into social cultures; this may be done, I believe, without injury to the institutionalist premises.

The research project implied by my model may benefit a great deal by incorporating data and findings from existing sources; the sheer quantity of research conducted over the past two or three decades suggests that the existing sources would supply more than enough data to populate the model.

The utility of field work would thus lie in refinement; certain areas might require more data, or clearer distinctions. The research I envision in the first stage, however, entails an integrative effort in specific social cultural areas; the model's empirical viability may be tested by sub-projects - for example close examinations of limited historical periods in particular countries, or even of particular sub-groupings within a country. Highly focused comparative inquiries, too, may yield valuable findings. By "highly focused" I have in mind investigations in which the fundamental research question is derived of the model itself and designed to illuminate, explore, and test it; the point is to uncover and evaluate social cultural [90] sources

[89] A1though March and Olsen's argument includes ample illustration, their text is an integrative work, drawing from a vast array of sources, designed to construct their thesis, rather than to collect or organize data. Other institutionalists have performed research more attentive to data collection and organization; as might be expected, it tends to be organized around a single historical thread - a policy area or a broad developmental theme. Several such studies may be found in ***Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Perspective*** (Steinmo,
Thelen, and Longstreth (eds.), 1992), some of which provide data which may be directly applicable to research employing my model. In a different, but related, vein, the work of Peter Blau may supply a strong analogical complement to the research agenda suggested by my model. A volume of highly diverse essays in the general tradition of Blau's work has been published recently, and contains numerous perspectives

(continued...)

[90] And data that may elaborate my perspective (Calhoun, Meyer, and Scott (eds.), 1990).

and mechanisms, and not actually to compare nations. Our current knowledge (or, really, "sense of understanding") in the social sciences is sufficiently slight that social culture research would be far better served by the sociological project than by the comparative project.

Indeed, comparative efforts are frequently premature, for they serve to tailor inquiry itself to easily comparable dimensions, in effect limiting findings to a narrow range - before the phenomena in question have really been studied themselves. What I propose is rather to investigate the effects that similar mechanisms have in different settings - different countries or regions (and hence different institutional settings), as well as in the varied perceptual settings of different demographic groupings.

Several candidate areas for productive early research present themselves. As my model emphasizes change, interactions, and perceived incentives, it might make sense to begin by investigating settings in which these factors have high visibility and high relevance, but are frankly limited in scope and variety. Crisis politics, where much else is, for a time, stripped away, may be the prototypical subject matter for this branch of inquiry. The model could be applied to a period preceding crisis, to the crisis period, and finally to a post-crisis period. Earlier I mentioned the case of Zaire, which may be especially instructive when viewed through the lens of my model, even though it appears not yet to include a "post-crisis" period. As a strong example of social pathology (with much Hirschman's "exit," and very little of his "voice" or "loyalty"), so much of what normally passes for social life has been stripped away that Zaire may at least instruct us in what some of the limits are. Short of crisis politics, periods of rapid change in structures or processes should prove to be enlightening as well. And, short of rapid change, even cases in which specific new or changed policies have altered the conduct of politics or the texture of interactions between people and social structures and processes promise to yield valuable data.

What was the "Communist Studies" school of social cultural analysis, for example, may find a great deal of interest in the formerly communist countries as the twentieth century yields to the twenty-first. Because of the strong assumption of continuity in conventional social cultural thought, many students of

communist- nation social culture have long assumed that while social systems changed rapidly (or suddenly) to communist governments, the pre-communist social cultures persisted. In a particularly weak piece of reasoning, some have further assumed that the general failure of communist governments actually to produce the "new socialist man" is the result of the older, pre-communist social cultures' persistence. Almond has made this assertion particularly boldly, and quite explicitly:[91] if communist governments "succeed in some reasonable length of time - let us say, a generation - in transforming attitudes in the desired direction, we might conclude that social culture theory has been falsified, that it is a weak variable at best" (1983: 128). He then provides some evidence that in a number of countries the desired changes have not obtained, and happily concludes that "What the scholarship of comparative communism has been telling us is that social cultures are not easily transformed." Although in this same, final paragraph he adds that we should keep in mind that those governments' efforts have not necessarily had no effect on social cultures, this last minute aside does not alter the thrust of his article (1983: 137-138).

Viewed from the perspective of my model, however, we would find the emphasis rather on the effects that communist governments actually did have on people. Although the change from pre-communist social culture is no less problematic than it has ever been (as we have little good data on pre-communist periods), the abandonment of communist forms of government in most of those nations provides anew the natural experiment in social cultural change. In my model, the dynamics are explicit: social cultures under communist governments are comprised to a great extent of responses to those governments, and post-communist social cultures are comprised to a great extent of responses to the new conditions. Indeed, because I assume some component of rationality to the individual constructions of reality that make up social cultures, I would argue that the "old ways" have minimal and indirect

[91] He cites Brown and Gray (1977), who (in their introductory and concluding essays) are actually somewhat more cautious, not only in their assessments, but also - and especially - with regard to the reach of social cultural explanation.

influence on current social cultures. These old ways may, for example, assume a symbolic dimension as something people wish henceforth to avoid; even if common discourse consistently evokes this spectre, its bearing on actual social culture lies in its representing a *conceivable* course of events in the foreseeable future, and hence is unlikely to last. In a different scenario, Stalinist "nostalgia" in the former Soviet Union - a concept that assumes a social culture best suited to a charismatic leader-dictator - likely is not nostalgia at all, but a response to current instability, crime, and uncertainty; it is highly unlikely, if economics and politics were stable, that many people would evince the so-called "tsarist" impulse.

Even in the long term, research is unlikely to generate "complete" portraits of social cultures. Three fundamental features of social phenomena which determine their political character may be traced in the political works of the creators of historical materialism. The first feature is the society-wide character of those phenomena, i. e., both their society-wide range (occurrence on the macrosocial scale, which alone gives an issue a political label), and society-wide significance. The former indicator is quantitative-it means that the investigated phenomenon concerns the whole society. We do not know yet in what sense it concerns the society. The latter indicator, a qualitative one, is the proper mark of the society-wide and political character. When the course and effects of the given phenomenon are functional to the needs of the whole society, the phenomenon is of a political character. It should, however, be added that society-wide significance does not necessarily go together with a society-wide range of a phenomenon; frequently phenomena of a local range influence the functioning of the whole society (Karwat, 200-201).

. As I have noted, the "black box" of psychology remains problematic in evaluating, with any certainty, motivations, beliefs, perspectives, and so on, as well as the consistency, strength, persistence, and variability of such internal phenomena. Even as the "mysteries" of psychologies are slowly revealed in research, the picture that emerges is nevertheless one of subjectivity, variability, and unpredictability; "rationality" itself recedes as an exact concept. The subject of politics is just such a class or large social group that has identified itself and its relationship to the whole society,

i.e., which through its needs and by way of self-realization, has defined itself and its place in society and its attitude toward society as a whole. This attitude is closely connected to the group's relationship with other groups: It is an attitude toward society as a whole expressed through attitudes toward other groups, and conversely, an attitude toward the whole society. Thus, a political value system is always that of a particular class, a particular stratum as an organized social force. As such, it is neither an expression of the needs of this one group, nor of the needs of the whole society, but an expression of the class's notion and knowledge of the way to satisfy its own needs together with the needs of the whole society, a modeling of the relationship between its own needs and the needs of other groups within the limits set by the needs of society as a whole (Karwat, 203-204). Perhaps furthermore, nevertheless, is that if we pertain a explicit model of social culture, then the expectation of change, inconsistent perspectives, and partisanship, as well the center upon these as the authentically noteworthy features of social cultures, all relax the necessities for "completeness:" what this model is designed to offer is some understanding of the active and dialectical nature of social culture and its object, which, of course, is political beliefs and the values they emanate.

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CIP - Каталогизација у публикацији -
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

316.42
316.7

HRISTIĆ, Ljubomir, 1976-
Social Culture : reevaluating the Paradigm / Ljubomir Hristić. - Belgrade : Institute of social sciences, 2018 (Beograd : Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, Research and Development Centre of Printing Technology). - 136 str. ; 21 cm

Tiraž 150. - Napomene i bibliografske reference uz tekst. - Bibliografija:
str. 125-133.

ISBN 978-86-7093-206-7

a) Друштвене промене b) Политичка култура COBISS.
SR-ID 264062988

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Its fleeting nature being inconspicuous, socio-political culture tends to appear prominently in the authors discussions and in their arrangement of the concept itself, but it is constantly situated beyond the working model, as postulation, as hidden activity — its omnipresents inferred and inveterated only by our shared faith or by our willing suspension of disbelief.
But the material engaged to epitomize such cultures, is far less solid, far more notional than what we think of as "rigid" data, and culturists have had therefore to rely significantly on inference in their analyses.

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