

**The variable of political
culture
&
Socialization**

We will especially be interested in...

- How do we explain democratic stability? Why is democracy the “only game in town” in some countries but not others?
- Different answers:
 - Level of economic development
 - Culture
 - Institutions

Culture and Politics

- *A thought experiment*: if we took a political institution(s) (e.g. democracy) indigenous to one country and transplanted it to another country with a *completely different culture*, would that institution /institutions perform the same way?
- *Does culture matter?*

Culture and Politics

- *Classical political theorists starting with Plato and Aristotle and continuing through Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Tocqueville all recognized the importance of custom, tradition, mores, and religious practices for explaining political differences. However, the formalizing of the concept of political culture had to await the developments after World War II...*

Culture and Politics

- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
- *3 major causes of democracy in America:*
 - (1) geographical situation
 - (2) laws and institutions
 - (3) values, culture and what he called mores - “the whole moral and intellectual state of a people”

Political culture is?

- Political culture
- = the set of attitudes, beliefs, and norms held by a population toward politics...

Political culture is?

- **Attitudes**

- = dispositions towards politics (political leaders, events, institutions, governments, policies, etc.).

- examples: support for the government, tolerance for opposing view points, trust in political institutions, feelings of political efficacy and so on.

Political culture is?

- *Norms:*

= values / ideas about the world / judgments about what is good and bad...

– Example: “Democracy is good”; “justice is the most important thing”, etc.

Political culture is?

- **a nation's political culture** includes its citizens orientation toward 3 levels:
 1. *the political system*
 2. *its individual institutions and the political and policy-making process*
 3. *policy outputs and outcomes*

Political culture

- *Other issues:*
- government overall involvement in society and economy
- ‘big government’ or ‘small government’?
- nationalization or privatization?
- from basic needs to quality of life (environment, arts, etc.)

Political culture

- Political culture (PC)
- **PC affects** / has influence on: how the political system and institutions evolve, how political decisions are made, etc.
- How much does PC have impact on institutional structures in political system & decision-making processes?
- PC = a longer-term factor

Political culture

- *“shared” political culture in one country does not mean that people have identical positions/ opinions on all issues...; we can, for instance, distinguish between*
- **“mass” vs. “elite”** political cultures
 - they might be different within one country and could be seen as different **“sub-cultures”**
 - there might also be regional subcultures and subcultures associated with larger groups /classes

Political culture

- *Observe also concepts / values such as:*
- *national identity*
- *national pride / patriotism*
- *nationalism*

- *National vs. regional / local identities*

Political culture

Political culture / political subcultures

- Consensual
- Conflictual
 - sometimes can coincide with religious, ethnic differences

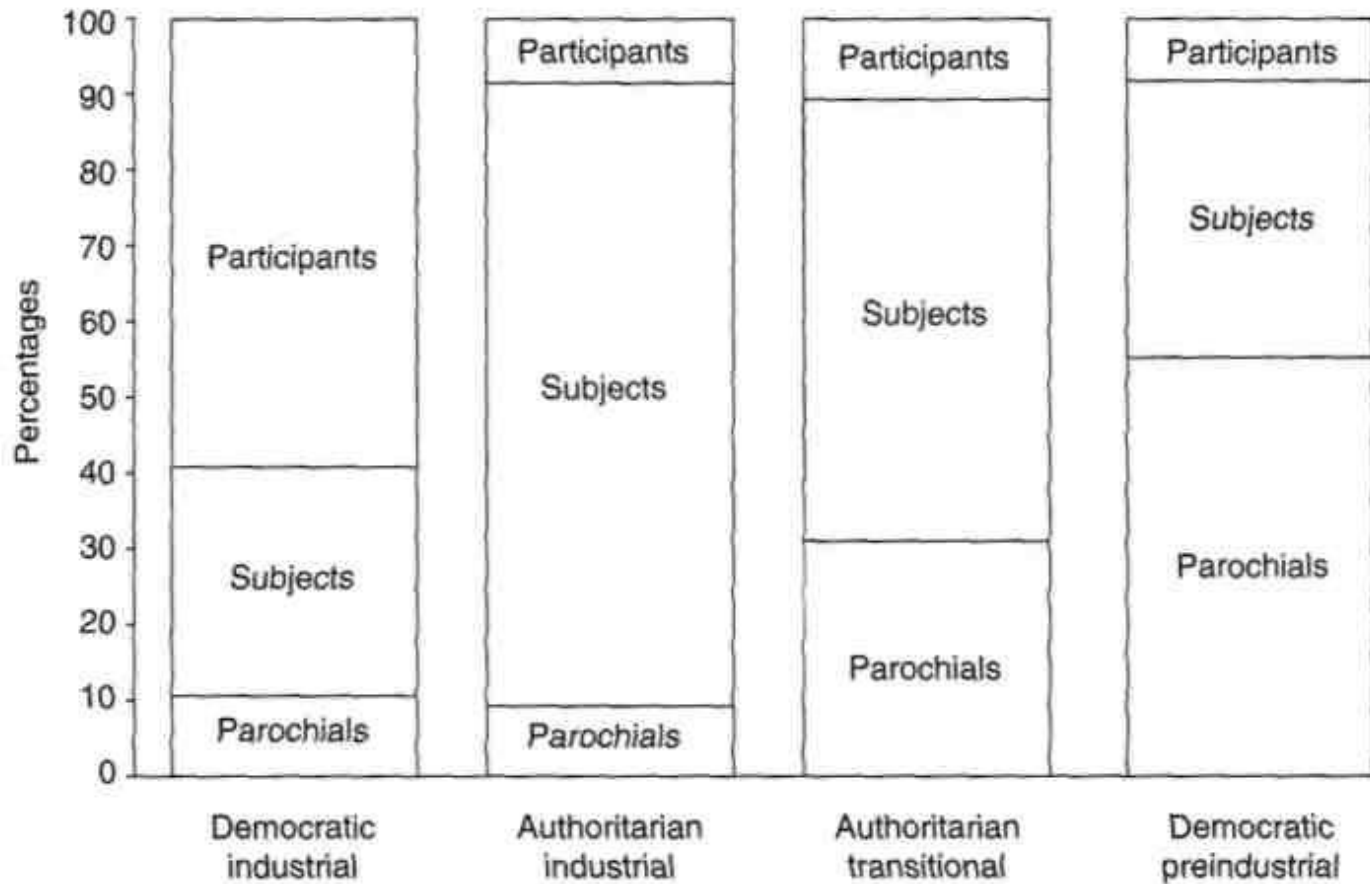
Political culture

- *You may often hear that democracy cannot succeed in some countries because of their “undemocratic political culture” ...*
- **civic culture** = PC that supports liberalism and democracy (*G. Almond & S. Verba*)
 - *perhaps a balanced mix of participant and subject political cultures*

The Civic Culture: Almond & Verba

- Two components:
- **A participant attitude** toward politics. Individuals value participation and become involved in their communities (not just their own narrow self interest)
- **Trust** in other people and a willingness to cooperate

The Civic Culture: Almond & Verba



The Civic Culture: Almond & Verba

- In *subject* or *parochial* political culture (also “familism”):
 - all loyalty and trust is centered in the family.
 - people are not public-spirited: they don’t participate in community life, are not informed about politics, etc.
 - no trust of “outsiders,” no willingness to cooperate.
 - maximize material, short-run advantage of family

The Civic Culture: Almond & Verba

- *Hypothesis:*
 - Civic Culture => Stable Democracy
= in stable political systems political structures and political culture are mutually reinforcing
 - Other PC / Familism => Unstable Democracy

The Civic Culture: Almond & Verba

- Seminar Test:
 - Measure civic culture in 5 countries that vary in their level of democratic stability:
 - High stability: US, GB
 - Middle stability: Italy
 - Low stability: Mexico, Pakistan
 - *Prediction*: Civic culture is high in US and GB, low in Mexico and Pakistan, moderate in Italy.
 - *Results*: Hypothesis confirmed.
- Conclusion*: Cultural attitudes => Stability of democracy.

The Civic Culture: Almond & Verba

- BUT: Couldn't the relationship run the other way? Perhaps high levels of civic culture are an *effect* of stable institutions, not their cause!
- AND: Perhaps both cultural values and democratic stability are caused by something else, namely, economic development?
- (In general: correlation is not the same as causation!!!)

The Civic Culture revisited: Putnam

- Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*
- Why does democracy work well in some places but not others?
- *The Italian experiment*: 15 identical regional governments situated in different economic and cultural contexts. Would they perform differently? If so, why?

The Civic Culture revisited

- Citizens have become more distrustful of electoral politics, institutions, and representatives and are more ready to confront elites with demands from below.

V113.- I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?:

The police

Полиция

	TOTAL	Sex	
		Male	Female
A great deal	10.6	9.7	11.4
Quite a lot	39.7	37.5	41.6
Not very much	36.4	39.1	34.0
None at all	13.3	13.7	13.0
(N)	(1,502)	(703)	(799)

The Civic Culture revisited: Putnam

- *In fact:* performance has been quite varied.
Government in the north = good; government in the south = not so good.
- The institutions are the same but their performance varies. WHY?

The Civic Culture revisited: Putnam

- *Explanations for the difference between the North and the South?*
- Explanation One: Economic development. The North is rich, the South is poor.
- Explanation Two: Culture. Civic culture is high in the North, low in the South.
- *So which is it? And what causes what?*

The Civic Culture revisited: Putnam

- *Putnam: Culture.*
- Why? Because the cultural differences observed in Northern Italy emerged *first*, before the economic differences, and long before the political ones.

The historical argument . . .

- *Medieval Italy: a time of great violence and anarchy. Insecurity was a constant fact of life.*
 - In the South: the solution was to strengthen the power of the king, who could then secure the area.
 - In the North: the solution was self-governance and mutual aid and defense.

The historical argument . . .

- These different solutions had a long-lasting impact on the cultural traditions of the areas. A rich associational life flourished in the North, did not quite developed in the South.
- Furthermore, these cultural traditions emerged well before economic differences became entrenched.
- Thus, according to this argument, *culture* preceded politics and economics.

... and the mechanism?

- Rich associational life (“social capital”) => Solves collective action problems.
 - rich associational life means people interact repeatedly with one another, which helps them identify with common goals, punish free-riders, etc.
 - rich associational life also promotes “norms of reciprocity”

Political culture and political socialization

- *How people acquire their political culture?*

Socialization and Political Socialization

- *PC is gained in the process of political*
- **socialization**



(Political) socialization

- **Political socialization =**
- *the process by which political culture is transferred from generation to generation*
- i.e. it happens through your exposure to family, school, the media, etc.
- during this process you become a *“political animal”!*

Political socialization

- The way in which political values are formed and the political culture is transmitted from one generation to another
- Direct (public courses at school)
- Indirect (examples)

Political Socialization

- Agents of political socialization:
- The Family
- Schools
- Religious institutions
- Peer groups
- Social class and gender
- Mass media
- Interest groups
- Governmental structures (police, bureaucrats,...)

Trends in contemporary political cultures

- *Some general and global processes / trends are affecting political culture in many countries...:*
- modernization
- democratization?
- globalization / marketization?
- resurgence of ethnicity / religion?
- postmaterial values

Liberalism's Key Norms

- The protection of individual rights from powerful groups and governments.
- Competition and disagreement versus harmony and cooperation.
- Tolerance of dissent rather than unanimity.
- Egalitarianism over hierarchy.
- Society should have a separate, protected realm from the state.

Notes on Liberalism and democracy

- Historically, liberalism was a precedent to democracy in Western Europe and the US.
- This has lead some to see liberalism as a necessary condition for democracy.

Liberalism and democracy

- Why?
- Norms like egalitarianism and tolerance of dissent may improve the quality of competition.
- Emphasis on individual rights may make majority rule less frightening for minorities.

Huntington's cultural argument

- *Samuel Huntington*: liberal norms are associated with some religions (Protestantism) but not others (Catholicism, Confucianism, Islam).
- Can we found democracy where these “non-liberal” religions prevail?

Huntington's cultural argument

- *Catholicism*: hierarchical, emphasizes a single, collective good. Values harmony and consensus.
- *Confucianism*: authority, hierarchy, responsibility, harmony. Sees conflict as dangerous. Merges state and society.
- *Islam*: rejects separation of religion and state.

Huntington's cultural argument: problems

- Religions and cultures are dynamic, not static.
- *All* religions have aspects that conform with liberal norms and others that contradict them.
- Consensus building may be as important to democracy as competition.

Liberalism and Democracy

- But what comes first in practice, the chicken or the egg? Democracy or liberalism, liberalism or democracy? Can living in a healthy democracy teach people to be liberal?