EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FLORENCE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

E U I   W O R K I N G   P A P E R   No. 30

THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL CULTURE: ITS
MEANING FOR COMPARATIVE POLITICAL RESEARCH.

by

M A X   K A A S E

NOVEMBER 1982

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1. Political Science and Political Culture in the Federal Republic of Germany

In 1980 David P. Conradt wrote in his essay on the "Changing
German Political Culture" that the pioneering work by Almond and
Verba, The Civic Culture (1963), had had only a very limited
impact on the scholarly agenda of political science in Germany
(Conradt, 1980: 217). In fact, apart from one excellent con-
tribution setting out the key elements of the political culture
approach (Dias, 1971), and one instance of independent adoption,
which went so far as to produce a "questionnaire to survey the
political culture of a country" (Berg-Schlosser, 1972: 167-185),
only a few essays and articles have appeared, dealing usually
critically, with the concept as developed in the USA (e.g.
Busshoff, 1971; Hüttenberger, 1974; von Beyme, 1974; Sontheimer,
1976; Schissler, 1978; 1979).

By comparison, at least in English-language political science, one could observe a continuous response to the approaches, findings and problems in political culture research and a corresponding transfer into the stock of the profession's "collective memory" (e.g. Pye, 1968; Kavanaugh, 1972; Devine, 1972; Rosenbaum, 1975). Moreover, Wiatr (1980: 104-108) points out that the concept of political culture was also taken up - obviously, in part critically - in the socialist countries and stimulated research there.

All the more remarkable then - and perhaps understandable only in terms of the sociology of knowledge - is the sudden appeal that considerations on political culture created in German political science after 1979. The first turning point was the book A Difficult Fatherland, published by Greiffenhagen and Greiffenhagen in 1979, and previously partly serialized in Der Spiegel, which eclectically presented a multiplicity of considerations and data on the topic. Further, the same authors (Greiffenhagen, Greiffenhagen and Prätorious, 1981) have now presented a Dictionary on the Political Culture of the Federal Republic of Germany. Strangely enough, the political culture approach in this book is even stylized into a "new discipline" (Greiffenhagen, Greiffenhagen and Prätorious, 1981: 6). Besides a small book by Rausch (1980), there are other new publications by Reichel (1981a), Shell (1981:29-36), Schissler (1981), Döring and Smith (1982) and Rohe (1982) on the theme. However, the profession's interest is most clearly documented in the debate in the Politische Vierteljahresschrift, Berg-Schlosser, 1981; Gerstenberger 1981; Shell 1981; Schissler, 1981; Gabriel, 1981, which was triggered by an article by Peter Reichel (1980), and which comes to a certain closure with another statement by

Reichel (1981 C).

Anyone who expected progress from this debate in the systematic theoretical foundation and research on political culture, must have been bitterly disappointed. Indeed, the contributions from Reichel and Gerstenberger repeat old misconceptions, particularly on the allegedly normative bias of the systems theory approach and again take aim at the relationship between political culture and civic culture previously clarified by Almond (1980) and Verba (1980) themselves; Berg-Schlosser (1981:111) and Shell (1981:196) have adequately responded to this. What is particularly annoying about Reichel's contribution (1980:383) is the lack of an analytical perspective in his speculations about the deficiencies of German political culture as he sees them. By contrast, it is argued here that, however one may evaluate particular elements of German political culture or, for that matter, of any country's political culture, in analytical terms it is precisely the empirical evidence on significant elements that helps to identify the specificic nature of the political culture of a country, be these elements present or absent. Furthermore, this lack of conceptual clarity may be caused in no small measure by the heavy ideological burden of the concept of "Kultur", in the sense of an intellectual
in Germany - an association not present in the English word "culture" (on this see also Shell, 1981:196-198).

Reichel himself concedes (1980:394) that one decisive - perhaps the decisive - problem of political culture research lies in the imprecision, indeed arbitrariness of what are the

central, empirically observable elements of any given political
culture; we shall return to this point later. Unfortunately,
despite a massive effort, Reichel too is unable to come up with
the theoretical criteria necessary for a convincing solution to
this problem. This explains why his large-scale attempt at a
"participation-theory oriented redefinition of the political
culture concept" (Reichel, 1980:393; Reichel 1981a:46-58) dis-
plays a marked ad hoc character. Because it is normatively
defined, it is theoretically arbitrary. As a consequence, it is
irrelevant whether this "new" approach to political culture res-
earch has been defined too narrowly or has overshot the mark
(Reichel, 1981: 419).

At this point it seems appropriate to briefly address and correct
the misunderstanding by which the evident normative bias of the
civic culture concept is taken to commit the system-theory based
political culture approach ipso facto to system stability. On
the one hand, it would be hard to operationally define political
stability other than as the retention of a given form of political
order; in any other case, for the simple reason of socio-politi-
cal developmental dynamics, "stable" systems ought not empirically
to occur. Secondly, it is not at all clear why elements of pol-
itical culture, even in a systems approach, cannot be thought of
as favouring or hindering regime change, depending on their
specific direction and empirical distribution; the Weimar
Republic, or more recently the People's Republic of Poland, are
good cases in point. In evaluating the analytical utility of
the political culture concept, Shell (1981:196-197) rightfully
complains of Reichel's confusion of analytical categories and
their manifestations in social reality. The "attack on the

as-if value freedom and on the systems-theory packed normativ-
ism of state-oriented concepts of order and stability" (Reichel,
1981:419) misses its mark because it overlooks the analytical
character of the political culture concept which is basically
devoid of concrete content.

The emphasis on the analytical qualities of the political cul-
ture concept is also shared by Jerzy Wiatr, who clearly con-
siders it quite suitable for the study of "countries with dif-
ferent socio-economic and political order, to find the degree
to which their political cultures differ" (Wiatr, 1980:119).
Brown (1979:12) goes even further in his views: "Indeed, the
validity of the concept of political culture cannot be said to
have been fully tested until it has been used in a comparative
study of Communist states, for if the political cultures of
societies which have become Communist can be readily moulded
into a new shape with old values cast aside, the explanatory
value of political culture may reasonably be regarded as mar-
ginal."

Finally, it seems especially important to answer the question of
whether political culture research is conceivable at all other
than as comparative research. Particularly relevant for pol-
itical science here is a distinction between cross-cultural
studies - where the units of analysis are essentially ethnic
groups - and cross-national studies, where the units of analysis
are essentially nation states (Köbben, 1979:1). The concentra-
tion of comparative political science on nation states does admit-
tedly seem plausible in view of the fact that it enables one to

define units of analysis in terms of legally described geo-
graphical areas. At the same time, however, and in historical
perspective, the differing significance of "nation" for the
present-day nation states should draw attention to the fact
that "political culture" can also be analysed as a collective
property of transnational (Federal Republic of Germany, GDR) or
subnational (Wales, Scotland) units (on this point see Elkins
and Simeon, 1979:140; Verba, 1980:404; Dogan and Pelassy, 1981:
60).

For the time being let us set aside the problem of determining
the appropriate unit of analysis. Then, it is maintained here,
political culture research can - in total opposition to Gersten-
berger's position (1981:118-120) - only be conceptualized as
comparative research - comparative between nations, within a
nation between national subunits, or in one nation over time
(Elkins and Simeon, 1979:140); other, still more interesting
comparisons, for instance between nations over time, can easily
be imagined.

Once more in opposition to Gerstenberger's view (1981:119),
these comparisons do not automatically imply a normative evalua-
tion. Rather, if indicators of political culture are conceptu-
alized as additional explanatory variables amending - even in a
statistical and quantitative sense - indicators of the political
and institutional structure, then the assessment of their rel-
ative influence necessarily presupposes a large number of units
of analysis.

"Cultural explanations... utilize this information (the range
and distribution of assumptions about the political life of a
collectivity - M.K.) in conjunction with structural features
to account for the differences between collectivities on cert-
ain dependent variables. The use of culture for explanation,
therefore, must always be comparative" (Elkins and Simeon, 1979:
131; see also Verba, 1980:402). How else should it at all be
possible to determine whether a typically German political cul-
ture exists and what characteristics differentiate it from that
of other countries?

At this point we must at least allude to a special dilemma of
comparative research. The assumption that social and political
developments in different societies follow the same or similar
patterns (e.g. industrialization) stimulated a great deal of com-
parative research. Ultimately, it was hoped, this research
might bring about time-space independent generalizations, so-
called nomological theories. Moreover, these theories would
possess the further advantage of approaching complex multilevel
theories (the micro-macro problem) through the systematic inclus-
ion of system variables. Thus, the conclusion to try to move
away from the concrete phenomena of any given socio-political
system was logical: "Therefore, the role of comparative research
in the process of theory-building and theory-testing consists of
replacing proper names of social systems by the relevant variables"
(Przeworski and Teune, 1970:30).

By contrast, it cannot be overlooked that any kind of comparative
macro analysis has to confront the massive problem that the

number of relevant characteristics that distinguish societies
can scarcely be below the number of units of analysis available
and thereby rapidly limits any quantative analysis on the system
level. Furthermore, increasing consideration must be given to
Galton's problem of the extent to which similarities between units
are the result of independent within-system functional relations
or the result of transnational diffusion in the sense of collect-
ive learning (on this see Przeworski and Teune, 1970:51-53;
Köbben, 1979:7; Verba, 1980: 406). Also, Tenbruck (1981:348)
points out that growing transnational interpenetration has made
the concept of a "society", in the sense of an independent nation
state, steadily less tenable from the analytical point of view.

These critical considerations are so consequential for analysis
and research strategies that one can very well pose the question
whether a concept of so diffuse as political culture should be done
away with. However, here the point for the time being was rather to
start by giving a brief overview on the current state of the debate
on political culture in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The controversial course of this debate is not surprising given the
political polarization and related deprofessionalization of political
science in Germany (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, 1979: 44 - 45).
This would be all right in itself, if the discussions had
triggered an analytical impetus for political culture research.
Unfortunately, this impetus has clearly not matterialized.
The massive criticism of US political culture research being
voiced in German political science for more than a decade now,
had neither led to theoretical-analytical clarification nor -
as a consequence - to good empirical research. This

is all the more surprising since many of the protagonists of
the discussion in the early 1980s were already participants
ten years ago.

In this situation two strategies seem conceivable. The first
would be to attempt to work out the analytical core of the pol-
itical culture concept in order to evaluate its utility as a
research paradigm. The second strategy might aim at denying
the approach any theoretical status and thereby eliminating
it as an element of political science. This latter, more rad-
ical cure will not be prescribed in this paper; indeed, such a
proposal would not seem particularly helpful in the light of the
fact that the concept of political culture is obviously widely
accepted and attractive in political science. But it is worth
wondering why none of the four most important empirical com-
parative studies of the last decade in political science have
used the concept of political culture at all (Inglehart, 1977;
Verba, Nie and Kim; 1978; Barnes, Kaase et al., 1979; Aberbach,
Putnam and Rockman, 1981). Such scepticism deepens with the
observation that one may seek in vain for political culture
as an analytical concept even in a recent stock-taking of pol-
itical sociology (Ebbinghausen, 1981).

2. The Theoretical Basis of Political Culture.

Lowell Dittmer's statement that political culture runs the
danger of degenerating into a "catch-all term" is frequently
quoted. It is surprising, though, that in a recent statement in
a working paper he concludes that the concept of political cult-
ure is "capable of encompassing an extremely wide range of

political concerns" (Dittmer, 1981:34). The danger of such
an encompassing, imprecise formulation is obvious, and even in
Dittmer's case it is striking that he himself has not applied
his theoretical reflections so far in empirical research. Con-
sidering Dittmer's failure to progress from concept to research,
the course of the debate on political culture in German politi-
cal science, and the general trend in academic writing as well
as in journalism in including highly divergent phenomena as
political culture, suggests that considerable pay-off may come
from an approach where the theoretical foundation concentrates
heavily on the thoughts the initial protagonists of the con-
cept put forward. This description will then be followed by
a critical evaluation in order to bring in, wherever necessary,
important elements of the more recent discussions.

In his classic article Almond (1956:396) writes:
"Every political system is imbedded in a particular pattern
of orientations to political action. I have found it useful to
refer to this as the political culture".

In the introduction to "The Civic Culture" Almond and Verba
(1963: 13 ff.) argue:
"When we speak of the political culture of a society, we refer
to the political system as internalized in the cognitions, feel-
ings, and evaluations of its population (my emphasis)
... The political culture of a nation is the particular distri-
bution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among
the members of the nation... It includes (1) "cognitive orient-
ation", that is knowledge of and belief about the political
system, its roles and the incumbents of these roles, its inputs,

and its outputs; (2) "affective orientation", or feelings about the political system, its roles, personnel, and performance, and (3) "evaluational orientation", the judgements and opinions about political objects that typically involve the combination of value standards and criteria with information and feelings." (Similarly also Almond and Powell, 1966:50; 1978).

Verba writes (1965:513):

"The political culture of a society consists of the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place".(For an almost identical definition see Huntington and Dominques, 1975:15).

And finally, Lucian W. Pye (1968:218) states:

"Political culture is the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system. It encompasses both the political ideals and the operating norms of a polity. Political culture is thus the manifestation in aggregate form of the psychological and subjective dimension of politics (my emphasis)

A political culture is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of that system, and thus is rooted equally in public events and private experiences."

Many of the review articles on political culture emphasize the academic and political trends behind those particular conceptualizations of political culture (on this see especially Almond, 1980). This paper is not the appropriate place for an exhaustive

analysis of the conditions of its emergence; in addition, enough
has already been said on this point in the literature. Neverthe-
less, one cannot help but feel fascinated on observing how these
conditions interacted. In the _political_ area the enormous shock
of the Second World War, and in particular the search for those
conditions that caused the passage from democratic to totalitarian
political systems by civilized peoples such as the Germans, pro-
vided a major stimulus. In this connection, Pye (1972/73:285)
explicitly points out that in the USA the (self-)imposed need
"to train large numbers of people to understand foreign cultures
so as to plan for military governments, conduct psychological
warfare, and simply to interpret what made the enemy act as he
did overnight legitimized area studies and interdisciplinary
approaches" turned out to be important factors. Here, of course,
is the point of departure for the criticism levelled against
American political culture research that claims that it showed
an implicit bias by measuring all the polities studied with the
yardstick of the idealized type of stable Anglo-American demo-
cracy. Additionally, as Brown (1979:3) rightly stresses, there
was the questionable idea of a quasi-inevitable political develop-
ment through modernization into democratic industrial societies
of the Anglo-American kind, which - and here is the normative
bias - ought to be energetically promoted.

On the theoretical level, American political culture research
was influenced heavily by the sociological positions of Max Weber
and Talcott Parsons. Both strongly emphasized the role of values
and norms which give structure and coherence to a society (Pye,
1972/73:287; Almond, 1980:10-12). This perspective at the same
time permitted scholars to overcome a traditional view according

to which the institutional arrangements constitute the core of
any political system. This changed perspective was facilitated
by the emergence of cybernetic systems analysis and by the develop-
ment of public opinion research based on representative random samples
of the population (Pye, 1972/73:287; Almond, 1980:15-16). The
analytical framework developed by Almond and Verba is paradigmatic
for this direction of political culture research. Here, the
nature of orientation and the objects of orientation provide the
dimensions that permit the classification of political systems
according to their political culture:

Objects of Orientation

Nature of Orientation	System in general	Input structures	Output structures	Self
Cognitions				
Feelings				
Evaluations				

Depending on the nature and the objects of orientation, Almond
and Verba finally arrived at three major types of political
culture: the parochial culture, the subject culture and the
participant culture (Almond and Verba; 1965:14ff). This typ-
ology could of course be criticized by pointing, for example,
to the lack of criteria defining the cutting points for the
assignment to the three types. However, this is not what we
are concerned with here. Rather, the central aspect is the
procedural advice to be gained from this analytical framework
for empirical research: "Characterizing the political culture
of a nation means, in effect, filling in such a matrix of a

valid sample of its population. The political culture becomes
the frequency of different kinds of cognitive, affective and
evaluative orientations towards the political system in general,
its input and output aspects, and the self as political actor"
(Almond and Verba; 1965:16).

With these considerations Almond and Verba present a type of
recipe for the conduct of empirical research into political cul-
ture. This approach is, as such, neither reductionist, as Dittmer
asserts (Dittmer, 1981:1-2; see also the criticism by Behrmann,
1981: 3-4), nor ahistorical, nor hostile to structure; instead,
it takes as a starting point the notion that the "subjective
dimension of politics" can make an independent contribution
towards explaining processes of continuity and change in poli-
tical systems (Brown, 1979; Elkins and Simeon, 1979). It is
by this claim that it should be judged, and not by the inap-
propriate mixing of analytical and normative-evaluative view-
points which indeed emerged in Almond and Verba's development
of the civic culture concept.

3.   Conceptual and Methodological Problems of the Study of
     Political Culture

It is symptomatic of the doubtful theoretical status of the con-
cept of political culture (Pye, 1972/73:287), that any attempt at
a critical assessment leads directly into central problems of
social science theory building and empirical research. Within
the limits of this paper we must confine ourselves to deal only
with a few of those problems which are deemed of particular
importance for empirical research.

As should have become apparent from the considerations above,
political culture as the sum of the political experiences and
predispositions acquired by the members of a political system
(as a rule a nation state), just like the political institutions
and organizations, carries the status of an explanatory variable.
(The question of the Explanandum will be taken up later in the
paper). Difficult questions immediately arise here. Thus, pol-
itical culture quite clearly is a macro concept, since it involves
statements about nations or at least about groups within nations,
based on simple aggregation of individual level data collected (as
a rule) through population surveys. We shall not consider further
here whether the aggregation rule applied "one man one vote" is
appropriate (this refers to the problem of the individualistic
fallacy; on this reproach by Scheuch (1968) see in particular
Verba, 1980: 402-403). However, clarification is obviously
needed regarding the _specific_ way in which institutional arrange-
ments, political events and individual political attitudes inter-
act over time thus producing a particular behaviour of the pol-
itical system. One example of the complexity of such interactions
is an analysis of the development of support for _parliament_ as a
political institution in the Federal Republic of Germany between
1951 and 1959 (Boynton and Loewenberg, 1973). This study concludes
that Adenauer's 1953 election victory was a decisive basis for the
increasing acceptance of parliament, a positive evaluation which
developed first among CDU/CSU supporters but, with increasing
economic prosperity also spread to supporters of the opposite parties.

Whether Boynton and Loewenberg (1973:24) can also be followed in
their speculation that the rapid acceptance of parliament as a
democratic institution in West Germany was favoured by the previous
acquaintanceship with the representative parliamentary system of the
Weimar Republic is another question. Nevertheless, their analysis points to another

important problem in the study of political culture. Necessarily -
and all authors dealing with the subject are agreed on this - an
analysis of political culture requires an analysis of the social-
ization processes by which the elements of political culture are
passed on from one generation to the next. These processes are
relevant particularly under the - necessary - assumption that
these attitudes constituting the political culture of a country
are - by contrast with opinions - important dispositions, rel-
atively stable over time and possessed by more or less all parts
of the population or at least by clearly definable subgroups
(Kim, 1964). Research should therefore concentrate on which agen-
cies of political socialization contribute what to the establish-
ment of stable political attitudes (e.g. long-term effects of the
mass media) and what changes can be observed as people pass through
the various stages in the life cycle. It is precisely by study-
ing polities of differing life spans in regard to both their nat-
ional identity and the continuity of the political system that
both the contents and the long-term effects of political social-
ization can be determined. Bellah's (1967) article is a good
case in point; he attributes the presence of a "civil religion"
in the USA to value positions related to central elements of the
history and self-image of America (the Declaration of Independ-
ence, the Civil War).

The importance assigned by Almond and Verba to processes of pol-
itical socialization for political culture research shows that
the critisism that they adopt an ahistorical approach is not at
all well taken. Political culture as a property of collectives
(nations, ethnic groups, socio-structurally defined groups) is
passed on in interactions between individuals, groups and
institutions, and is reflected in individual-level properties

as values, beliefs and attitudes (Elkins and Simeon, 1979:129).
This is why it can be <u>measured</u> there; through aggregation, the
macro quality of political culture is regained.

One last aspect of socialization research should at least be
mentioned. The question must also be asked whether, and if so
to what extent, there is a quasi-automatic carry-over from gen-
eral attitudes of the citizens to specific attitudes towards the
political system. Contrary to research into prejudice and nat-
ional character (as is typical, for instance, of early cultural
anthropological studies, e.g. Pye, 1968:219), political culture
research does avoid equating general and political attitudes.
Instead it makes this relationship an object of empirical res-
earch (Verba, 1965:523 f.). For example, Almond and Verba
(1963:309) arrive at the conclusion that in Italy, political
alienation has its basis in social alienation.

The necessity of measurement at the individual level, which
usually implies the application of survey research methodology,
is by no means an absolute must. Rather, one has to be aware
of the fact that the decision in favour of any one data-base to
be chosen for analysis is theoretical, methodological, prag-
matic and not least also evaluative in character. The aggreg-
ation mechanism of the "one man one vote" rule springs
from the uncontested recognition of the equality principle; to
that extent, it is precisely survey research with representat-
ive samples of the voting-age population that is <u>the</u> procedure
appropriate for a competitive democracy. Whether one then
regards the political culture of a country empirically identi-
fied by such procedures as its "true" political culture is of

course a quite different question. Thus, in repressive autho-
ritarian or totalitarian political systems one may readily do
without knowledge of the political beliefs of the citizens and
instead concentrate on the analysis of the political beliefs
of the ruling elites - including or excluding the cultural
elites.

But even in Western democracies it can hardly be denied that
the political belief systems of the citizenry are, in addition
to processes of horizontal socialisation in family, school and
the like, also vertically effected through direct and indirect
(media!) interactions with cultural, social and political elites -
as producers and interpreters of reality and meaning (Sinn-
produzenten). A minimal conceptualization of a complex, process-
oriented model will have to start from the assumption that pol-
itical culture is created as the result of an interplay between
well-established stable belief systems of individual system
members - the citizens - and a permanent production of new socio-
political interpretative schemes (e.g. ideologies) by the class
of Sinnproduzenten.

The advantage of this perspective is that it remains a question
to be empirically decided which interpretative schemas are
accepted or not accepted and, if accepted, to what degree,
changed or unchanged and why. It is, incidentally, precisely
this perspective that once again points to the fact that culture -
and political culture - is and must be conceptualized in longi-
tudinal, historical terms.

The second stage of the process model - very much in the intel-
lectual tradition of Max Weber - has to consider, in addition to

the institutionalized systems of values and norms called
culture, and the structural, organizational integration of indi-
viduals, that the <u>institutional</u> structure of any given society
creates decisive limitations and constraints for the latitude
of behavioural alternatives available to the members of any
given social system. Surely, it cannot be denied that during
the process of modernization societies have chosen different
institutional options; this choice was determined, among others,
also by cultural factors. Nevertheless, it seems mandatory
for any structural analysis of societies to analytically sep-
arate the three dimensions of <u>culture</u> - as institutionalized
systems of values and norms -, <u>individual</u> - as carriers of action,
and <u>institutions</u> - as normatively and organizationally codified
systems of roles. Only through such a distinction can an analy-
tically satisfactory attribution of the specific impact of cul-
ture and institutions on individual behaviour - as the dependent
variable - be achieved.

With these considerations in mind it is more easily understood
why the decision of a researcher in favour of specific conceptual-
izations and operationalizations guiding empirical research
cannot be arrived at in an <u>ad hoc</u> fashion but rather has to be
embedded in a clear theoretical framework. It is important that
in this respect one avoids the misunderstanding that such an
approach necessarily entails specifications and limitations
regarding the concrete content to be brought under scrutiny.
Rather, it should be understood that the researcher cannot avoid
the precise formulation of a research problem; it is the lack of pre-
cision in that formulation that characterizes the present dis-
cussion on political culture in Germany and that has been a major

factor in the lack of useful results coming out of that discussion.

It is only through such justification that one can argue against the decision by Almond and Verba to fill in their theoretical conceptualization of political culture empirically by using data acquired through public opinion surveys. Moreover, empirical social science research is in any case experiencing an increasing methodological pluralism; this was already demanded some time ago for political culture research by Rosenbaum (1975:21-29) and Elkins and Simeon (1979:138-139). The difficulty in converting this requirement - for instance the quest for greater use of content analysis to improve the historical depth of the data bases - is shown in exemplary fashion by the work of Mohler (1978) and Klingemann (1979). One should not, however, overlook the extent to which empirical research into political culture based on surveys of representative samples of the population is burdened by the unavoidable lack of historical depth, the insufficiency of time series, the high and sharply rising costs of surveys and a number of methodological problems, particularly of operationalization and functional equivalence in comparative studies. Perhaps these difficulties will provide a (healthy) pressure towards theoretical rethinking of political culture research (possible examples are Stern, 1963; 1974, or Döring, 1977).

The key issue of political culture research that runs trough all the work and of which there is full awareness (Verba, 1965:515; Pye, 1972/73:292), lies in the question of which political attitudes make up a, or the, political culture. Remarkably enough, the current debate in the Federal Republic of Germany systematically ignores this problem. To answer the question, of course, a

theory of political culture should be available; unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, this is not the case (Dias, 1971:448). This makes it almost arbitrary which elements of the citizens' political belief systems are constitutent of a national or sub-national political culture; the great multiplicity of national opinion surveys now available increases the chance that the current debate will lose sight of the theoretical issues of political culture research.

Almond and Verba's path-breaking work on political culture as a matrix of types and objects of orientations towards political action is certainly one example of how a theoretical conceptualization could be begun (for another attempt to develop a theoretical framework see Pappi; 1970). At the same time their approach, when confronted with more recent developments in political science, shows substantial weaknesses and white spots. This can be shown, for instance, by the discussion on the dimensionality of legitimacy beliefs. Based on the work by Easton (1965) and Gamson (1968), to name just two, these citizen orientations towards the political system can be conceptually broken down into attitudes towards the political community and its self-ideology (e.g. nation), the non-partisan institutions of the political system, and the political authorities. The aim of this differentiation is to obtain more precise information on the nature and intensity of legitimacy and political conflicts in democratic societies (e.g. Muller and Jukam, 1977; Zimmermann, 1981:26-47). However, this type of differentiation creates an insoluble dilemma for political culture research: while gaining theoretical precision, it simultaneously increases in complexity. If one does not take the rigid position - which is not taken here -

that the ultimate goal is to reduce the considerable complexity
to a few dimensions - possibly even only to one or two - then a
restriction to three types of political culture, as was pro-
posed by Almond and Verba, loses all plausibility. This is so
because they arrive at their types without theoretical foundation
of the process of typology formation and the information
reduction algorithm applied.

Two further considerations complicate matters still further.
Firstly, Almond speaks of political culture as a specific pattern
of orientations towards political action. Correspondingly, both
conceptualization and empirical analyses in later political culture
research work emphasize <u>attitudes</u> toward the political system.
In addition, however, there has also been a tendency to subsume
political action itself under the concept of political culture.
This not only runs counter to the initial conceptualizations by
Almond and Verba, but also brings up the question of the system-
atic relationship between attitudes and behaviour - a key question
in attitude research. Let us take up these two considerations one
at a time.

In the light of a large wealth of research evidence, and to avoid
circularity it must first of all be stressed that attitudes - as
individual predispositions - and behaviour must be kept conceptually
separated and must also be separately measured. Whether political
action should be embraced as part of a given political culture is
the kind of question that can only be answered on theoretical
grounds. An exegesis of the writings by Almond, Pye and Verba
clearly confirms the understanding that <u>action</u> should be concept-
ualized as a separate dimension from the <u>attitudes towards action</u>.

This position is also decidedly taken by Brown (1979:9-10), who argues that behaviour is determined, apart from individual predispositions, by situational and especially institutional factors. In this sense elements of political culture, as Elkins and Simeon (1979) write, structure the perception of latitudes of action. It is precisely the analytical separation of attitudes and action that makes it possible to determine the contribution of cultural factors to the overall development of a system (provided the research design is sufficiently complex, comparative and embraces more than one level of analysis). This approach is particularly viable for the analysis of Communist systems thereby once again pointing to the usefulness of the political culture concept: "It would seem to be the case that (in Communist states - M.K.) institutional structures and even overt patterns of political behaviour can be changed much more quickly than political cultures, so that a revolutionaly change in the political system opens up the possibility of dissonance between the political culture and the political system" (Brown, 1979:4). And the concrete result of this analysis is undoubtedly also interesting: "Perhaps the most striking implication of our study is the relative failure of communist processes of socialisation and education, in spite of the enjoyment of all the institutional powers which a communist political system bestows" (Gray, 1979:271). The analytical fruitfulness of the separation between belief on the one hand and action as a partial reaction to institutional factors on the other is not only demonstrated by the case of Poland, where beliefs about freedom stand against authoritarian power structures, but also through the case of Weimar Germany, where the transition to democratic institutional structures was not enough to overcome authoritarian predispositions prevalent in the mass public.

One further problem of political culture research - addressed only marginally here - is related to measurement. Even if a problem has been adequately conceptualized, the researcher still has to do the job of converting the concepts into valid operationalizations. However, as the above-mentioned analysis of problems in the measurement of legitimacy beliefs shows, it is by no means ascertained that valid operationalizations will succeed at first go. This is again non-trivial, because empirical, internationally comparative studies are to date very rare in the social sciences. As a consequence, the findings of such studies - as the civic culture study of Almond and Verba shows - determine academic discussion for a long period. One example is a distorting context effect not taken into account by Almond and Verba. Scheuch (1968:198) points out that the differing frequency of conversations about politics in the five countries studied by Almond and Verba is attributed to the differing political culture of the countries, whereas in reality it merely reflects their differing degree of politicization - measured as distance from the next or the last national election at the time of the survey.

It has already been pointed out how rare systematic internationally comparative studies have so far remained (Kaase and Miller, 1978). However, such studies are central if we are to identify the genuinely relevant elements of the political culture of any given country and provide an understanding of the conditions that created it. This is important not least because it helps to avoid the danger that one's own parochial perspective may overemphasize details of one's national sense (Przeworski and Teune, 1970: 26 ff.; Scheuch, 1968: 207).

It was already mentioned that, in addition to the conceptual and practical problems of comparative survey research (Rokkan, 1969; Verba 1971; Szalai and Petrella, 1977), there do exist considerable difficulties within nations because of the lack of time-series data, although the situation is not equally poor for all countries. Thus, for the US in many areas there do exist very good time series data which have retained their full analytical potential, because they have been made accessible for secondary analysis through academic and non-academic data archives (e.g. Converse, 1976). The situation is less satisfactory in the Federal Republic of Germany, where not only time-series are far rarer, but access to the primary data is also much more restricted (Allerbeck; 1976:17; for exceptions see the analyses by Boynton and Loewenberg, 1973; 1974, and Conradt, 1974; 1979; 1980).

As a further complication, frequently nations or national populations cannot be meaningfully identified as carriers of political culture. This consideration is emphasized by taking into account the enormous difficulties encountered in Italy and Germany during the process of national integration. Particularly the analysis of transition from parochial to more integrated political systems and, more recently, the analysis of processes of regionalisation and decentralization have to build heavily on the analysis of regional, cultural or structural subcultures. However, such analyses are, as a rule, severely hampered by the small size of representative national samples - by far the most frequent data base.

Many of the questions raised in this section can - and this is a recurring theme - be answered only by empirical research.

The obsession of Germans with their most recent past, with the
traumatic experiences of the 1933 failure of the democratization
experiment and its well-known consequences, ought not to divert
attention from the problem of the extent to which it is still
at all possible today, in the age of total mass communication,
mass tourism, the cosmopolitization of the world and the increas-
ing institutionalization of international cooperation particul-
arly in the developed industrial countries, to entertain the idea
of genuinely independent national or sub-national cultures. The
diffusion effects that occur are still further confused by such
global structural developments as the extension of the system of
secondary education and the increase in social and regional mobil-
ity. These developments, together with the problem of defining
what the central elements of political culture may be are the
most severe objections against the analytical fruitfulness of the
political culture approach. The considerations below will deal
with the latter problem.

4. The Empirical Analysis of Political Culture

An important prerequisite for any kind of useful empirical analysis
is the conversion of theoretical concepts into valid and reliable
measurements on the basis of the operationalization of those
concepts. In this paper, one cannot and need not go into the
plentiful methodological problems arising in this transformation
process. However, it should at least be said that operationaliz-
ation, more than any other phase of the research process, compels
the scholar to lay his cards on the table as far as what he had
actually theoretically pre-thought. This instrument of intel-
lectual discipline has the further advantage of documenting the
results of the individual conversion process very clearly towards

the outside world, in particular the community of scholars.

It is typical of the difficulties in dealing theoretically with
the concept of political culture that to date, apart from the
original work by Almond and Verba (1963), no study has yet been
presented that can claim to be a comprehensive, empirically-based
description of the political culture of a country or of several
countries. Instead, existing empirically-based discussions of
political culture tend to be eclectic descriptions based on
more or less haphazardly available data bases (one example is
Greiffenhagen and Greiffenhagen, 1979).

It was pointed out above that the theoreticians of political
culture stress the need for a pluralism of methods and research
data; everybody can agree with this demand when formulated in
such a general form. From abstract demands to realization is
a long way, however, and it is therefore not surprising that
to date there has been no systematic transposition of the con-
cept of political culture into anything other than survey data.
In this paper the position is argued that for developed indust-
rial societies the instruments of opinion research remain par-
ticularly suited for providing the empirical basis for political
culture research. Regarding the theoretical and analytical basis,
the original work of Almond, Pye, Verba and others still seems to
provide the best starting point for the process of marrying
theory and research. Accordingly, the direction that such res-
earch ought to move in is sketched out in the broadest outline
below.

To begin with, we shall recall that Almond and Verba (1963) had
started from the political orientations of the citizens towards

the four <u>objects</u>:
- political system
- input structures
- output structures
- Ego (self).

In addition, they included as a second dimension the <u>type of</u>
<u>orientation</u>, distinguishing between cognitive, affective and
evaluative orientations (Almond and Verba, 1963:13-16). Unfort-
unately, this two-dimensional matrix of the components of pol-
itical culture is not filled out quite so systematically by
them as they themselves postulate (Almond and Verba; 1963:16).
One should therefore approach this point first, checking what
conceptual development work is still necessary.

This paper will not try to make any contribution to that end.
Instead, as a pragmatic compromise it is suggested to rely,
besides considerations derived from systems theory, on the emp-
irical research of the last two decades or so and systematically
go through its findings looking for results particularly relevant
to political culture research. Surely, this procedure lacks
theoretical stringency. On the other hand, it might - assuming
acceptance of the general analytical framework - contribute to
the urgently needed concentration on relevant problems and the
accumulation of research findings.

At least one extension of Almond and Verba's work seems to be
urgently needed. Particularly in the perspective of the <u>dev-</u>
<u>elopment</u> of political systems and political culture, and for
reasons spelled out earlier in the paper, an inclusion of the

"producers of meaning" (Sinnproduzenten), i.e. the social,
cultural and political elites, is absolutely mandatory. These
elites create the supply of ideologies and situational inter-
pretations which compete with the existing values and beliefs on the
open market of those factors influencing the citizens' behavi-
our.

In terms of practical research methodology, it should be stres-
sed that the production of meaning by the elites is documented
in many other forms than interview reports and is therefore
particularly amenable to historical analysis. Nevertheless,
for practical purposes in the following paper those areas
are emphasized for which empirical data are already available
or seem to be amenable and are equally relevant for citizens
and elites.

4.1. Orientations towards the Political System

The most important development in this area is the distinction
proposed by Easton (1965,1975) and Gamson (1968) between sup-
port for the political community, for the political institutions
and for the political authorities (Rosenbaum, 1975:6,9; Muller
and Jukam, 1977). In developed democracies this hierarchy will
be especially studied in the perspective that disenchantment
with the government - created structurally by the system of
party competition - will be neutralized by high symbolic identi-
fication with the party-independent system institutions and the
political community (nation). Boynton and Loewenberg (1973)
have, for instance, convincingly shown for the Federal Republic
of Germany that in the stabilization phase of a political regime
transfer may also run in the opposite direction: satisfaction

with the government's output rubs off onto the legitimacy of
the overall system institutions. This approach can likewise
be applied to the development of attitudes towards the system
in communist states. Here it is especially the national
identification of the citizens that ought to play an important
role.

4.2. Orientations towards the Input Structures

Inputs from the citizens into the political system take place
either directly or indirectly, and at least the following part-
ial aspects should be distinguished:

a) Information on and interest in politics

b) Integration in communication structures, including the
   mass media

c) Estimate of own chances to influence political outcomes,
   and size of the political repertoire

d) Structure and coherence of political belief systems

e) Political ties (e.g. parties, interest groups).

For almost all these concept findings of empirical social science
research ought to be available in the Western democracies.

4.3. Orientations towards the Output Structures

The development towards the welfare state has led in all industri-
alized countries to an increasing tendency by citizens to hold the
state directly or indirectly responsible for their welfare in many
or perhaps even most areas of life. Accordingly, the continuity
of political order in any system ought to be closely bound up with
the citizens' satisfaction with political decisions and actions
of the state. Accordingly, the following aspects deserve special
scrutiny:

a) The ascription of responsibility to national or sub-national state actors for political outcomes and outputs

b) Information on political decision-making and allocation processes

c) Estimation of the efficiency of political decision-making processes

d) Evaluation of the quality of political outputs of central political actors (government, administration, courts).

4.4. Orientations towards the Self

It would be tempting to begin, as for instance Pappi (1970:36) has theoretically justified, by discussing the characteristics of a "democratic personality", but there are both conceptual and empirical reasons not to follow suit. Contrary to original expectations it has not been possible to convincingly conceptualize the "democratic personality" as a possible counterpart to Adorno's "authoritarian personality". This has meant that the empirical research in this area has remained inconclusive. The attempt to be less demanding and at least measure "democratic attitudes" (see Kaase, 1971 and references therein; more recently also Adrian, 1977 and Weil, 1981) has not borne fruit; it has not been frequently carried out, and in no case comparatively between countries. Even the hypotheses of an intensive socialization influence originating from the decision-making structures in the parental household on the children's later political attitudes, particularly regarding the production of "authoritarian personalities", remained inconclusive (Verba, 1965a:162 ff.; in the meantime the proportion of parental homes with permissive education has progressed in Germany beyond that in Britain or France; Shell, 1977: Volume III:25).

As a consequence, what is left is recourse to particular attitudes

for which a wider influence on the handling of political affairs can be expected:

(a) Self-esteem (Sniderman, 1975)

(b) Trust in others

(c) Internal control

(d) Political competence

In terms of democratic theory these aspects are particularly relevant for the joint study of mass publics and elites.

4.5. Further Considerations

The eclectic nature of the elements of political culture which have been discussed in the previous four sub-sections is evident. The systems theory model underlying the selection involves, apart from its lack of specifity in content, also the danger of including practically all aspects of the political process in some way or other, thereby overloading the political culture concept and ultimately making it unusable. Convincing solutions for these difficulties - as was stated at the beginning of this section - will not be easily found. The chance to go beyond the status quo lies in the systematic linkage between theory and research. Without research the debate will, as hitherto, keep on going round in circles. The work of Conradt (1980) and Baker, Dalton and Hildebrandt (1981) at least indicates the direction to move in.

5. Should the Concept of Political Culture as an Instrument of Analysis in Political Science be Abandoned?

As the considerations set out in this paper should have shown,

the question raised at the outset on the meaning or lack
of meaning of the concept of political culture cannot be
answered by a simple yes or no.   It is therefore advisable
to indicate once again the most important arguments - pros
and cons.

What speaks in favour of retaining the concept is the fact
that it enjoys both wide public and academic use. It quite
clearly meets a need for a better understanding of the factors
and processes that determine continuity and change (revolut-
ionary or otherwise) of political systems. Additionally, if
made suitably precise, it has the presumed ability to explain
political processes better than the mere consideration of
structural and institutional factors. But if all this is true,
why could more solid theoretical foundation and empirical back-
ing not be established?

The reasons for this certainly do not lie in the obviously
 present methodological (research design, micro-macro approach,
comparative approach) problems which in principle will sooner
or later be soluble. The main objection continues to be the
theoretical and empirical arbitrariness of the concept. As
long as all matters felt to have something or other to do with
the political system and citizens' behaviour in that system
are brought into the concept of political culture - in the
sense of a catch-all term - its academic yield will be close
to zero. This, as analysis of the work of Almond and Verba
(1980), Brown and Gray (1979) and others has shown, is not least
due to the way in which the concept is handled by scholars. As
long as the social sciences, and in particular political
science, continue to confuse academic innovation with the

invention of ever-new arbitrary concepts and to underestimate
the need for the systematic accumulation of research findings,
no significant further developments of these disciplines can
be expected. The wide-spread negative public evaluation of the
social sciences takes this into account.

It would, of course, be wrong not to ponder the diffusseness of
the thing itself in pronouncing this negative verdict. Obviously,
political modes of behaviour that are embedded in a clearly def-
ined institutional context, like electoral behaviour, and for
which there are only marginal operational and measurement prob-
lems, lend themselves more easily to a systematic, quantitative
and also historical analysis (on this see for instance Nie,
Verba and Petrocik, 1976). But considerable scepticism must
arise from the fact that Sidney Verba, one of the intellectual
fathers of the political culture concept, does not, in a large
comparative empirical study (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978) use the
concept of political culture at all. Where else, one feels like
asking, can it then be meaningfully used?

Many proponents of the political culture concept have pointed
out that a strict theoretical conceptualization will lead to
an impoverishment, undesirable rigidity and desensitivity in
the many fruitful efforts to work innovatively on political
culture. These arguments are not plausible, neither vis à vis
considerations related to the theory of science nor vis à vis
practical considerations of research. This is because the aim
is not to develop but one theoretical approach and discard all
others. Rather, this paper aims at creating an awareness among
social scientists that without precise theoretical conceptuali-
zations and corresponding empirical research no meaningful

results can be expected.

Any political scientist may, taking these considerations into
account, answer the question whether he or she can work with-
out relying on the concept of political culture. The arbit-
rariness and therefore the comfort of association, the jump-
ing on the bandwagon of the debate on political culture, as
recently on that of ungovernability, do not of themselves
suffice to adhere to the concept.

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