

17.50, Introduction to Comparative Politics (Fall 2006)
Prof. Chappell Lawson
Session 19: Culture (social capital) and Democracy

Notion that culture affects democracy has a long and hoary tradition

- Plato: devotes enormous attention to training and education, as did others
- Aristotle's definition of a city-state's constitution included both formal rules and informal norms; seen as intertwined

Machiavelli continues in this tradition, but makes an effort to separate laws (institutions) from culture (corruption)

- Argues for primacy of political culture
- His goal/focus: show how civic republicanism can be preserved and nurtured
- What does he argue?
- How might you solve the problem?

But the real poster child for cultural claims is **Alexis de Tocqueville**

- *Democracy in America*
- Three 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"
- Protestantism; religious fragmentation
- Since the laws and geographical situation are the same, Tocqueville argues, the answer is mores.

2 side notes on Tocqueville:

- Typical graduate student manipulating his grant
- Volunteer fire departments

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture*

- First really serious cross-national survey research
- Subject vs. participant
- Democracy required a mix

Where does political culture come from?

- Putnam: very old historical legacies dating back to period of enervating authoritarian rule
- Particular crises or leaders

Dimensions of political culture

- Mass beliefs
- Elite beliefs (elites are, of course, just one subculture)

How does culture change?

- Generational change and cohort replacement
- Crises
- Institutions
- Exposure to foreign models
- Leaders

And that's the state of the discipline when **Putnam's** book *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* hits the scene

- Systematic, in-depth research on single country
- Explicitly anchors his study in Tocquevillean notions

He talks about how Italy has strong regional and local identities

- Talked about how France made peasants into Frenchmen with universal education and draft
- State created the society, not the other way around
- "Having made Italy, we must now make Italians" (northern monarchy)

Reform has lots of effects

- Contributes to depolarization of politics among elites
- 1948, Communists were pointing to lampposts (what happens to PCI, p. 32)
- Moderation in views, greater tolerance of each other (p. 33)
- Why might institutional reform contribute to this?

Now, the part of the book that you didn't read: about **how culture changes**

- Some professors think this is the most important part
- Argument is that institutional change (specifically decentralization) can really affect how government works
- Good finding for all those countries that took the World Bank at its word
 - Transformismo
 - Extremists lose
 - What happens to local notables?
 - What happens at national level?
 - Alternative explanations for change at regional level
 - Not a matter of cohort replacement
 - Not a matter of what mass public feels