

## Political Culture (Almond/Verba 1963/65)

Measurement and Theory of Democratic Attitudes

## Measuring attitudes

- ▶ Attitudes
  - ▶ Disposition to evaluate (political) object
  - ▶ Possibly constructed on the fly
- ▶ Interviewing
  - ▶ Still most important instrument for measuring attitudes
  - ▶ A social exchange
- ▶ Survey questions/questionnaire
  1. Understand question
  2. Collect information from memory
  3. Combine considerations
  4. Map result to categories
    - ▶ Weak/strong satisficing (subsumes most problems)
- ▶ Good surveys/questions
  - ▶ Reduce cognitive/social costs
  - ▶ Use social norms to get optimal results

## The 'Civic Culture' as a research program

- ▶ Published 1963/65
  - ▶ But based on data from the 40s/50s
  - ▶ Five countries
- ▶ Part of the 1950s 'Behavioural Revolution'
  - ▶ Attitudes + behaviour of ordinary people
  - ▶ Not interested in deeds of 'Great Men'
  - ▶ Not much interested in *institutions* → backlash
- ▶ Part of modern political sociology
  - ▶ Electoral behaviour
  - ▶ 'Unconventional' modes of participation
  - ▶ Changing value orientations
  - ▶ *Social/attitudinal preconditions of democracy*

## A crisis of democracy?

- ▶ Failed in most of CEE, but that was expected
- ▶ Germany, Italy (North) different
  - ▶ Liberal constitutions
  - ▶ Economic development
  - ▶ Efficient public administration, schools
- ▶ Spread of Communism
- ▶ Failure of democracy in most de-colonised countries
- ▶ (later on: ungovernability in the West)
- ▶ Search for factors at the micro-level

## Political Culture

- ▶ The distribution of attitudes towards political objects
- ▶ Nominally: a macro-concept
  - ▶ Completely reducible to micro-features
  - ▶ Songs, books, symbols etc. *not* relevant for Almond/Verba
- ▶ Famous three/four ideal types

# Attitudes

- ▶ Mode
  - ▶ cognitions
  - ▶ affects
  - ▶ *evaluations*
- ▶ Objects
  - ▶ Policies and Decisions
  - ▶ *Authorities*
  - ▶ **Roles and Structures**
- ▶ Dimensions
  - ▶ input
  - ▶ output
  - ▶ political system as a whole
  - ▶ own political role

## Ideal types

	system	input	output	self
parochial	0	0	0	0
subject	1	0	1	0
participant	1	1	1	1

0 no attitudes present

1 attitudes present (positive or negative)

## Congruence of culture/structure

	allegiance	apathy	alienation
cognitive	+	+	+
affective	+	0	-
evaluative	+	0	-

+ positive (in which sense)

0 neutral/ambivalent

- hostile/negative



# Assumptions

- ▶ Orientations are durable (acquired through socialisation)
- ▶ Misfit between structure and culture
  - ▶ Crisis
  - ▶ Normally, structure (=regime) will change
- ▶ Real culture as mix of ideal types
- ▶ Participant culture → overload
- ▶ Best for democracy: civic culture
  - ▶ Small group of active *democratic* citizens
  - ▶ Majority of benevolent subjects
  - ▶ Some parochial orientations ok

## Indicators

- ▶ Behaviours: voting, signing petitions etc.
- ▶ Political attitudes
  - ▶ National pride and its sources
  - ▶ Performance of political institutions
  - ▶ Political interest and knowledge
  - ▶ Support for alternative regime types
  - ▶ Values
  - ▶ Efficacy
  - ▶ Political trust and alienation
- ▶ Sources and correlates
  - ▶ (Social) trust and isolation
  - ▶ Perception of social/political conflict

## Findings

- ▶ UK/US democracies
  - ▶ System values in high regard
  - ▶ High levels of knowledge and efficacy
  - ▶ High levels of pride and positive evaluation
  - ▶ Close to ideal of civic culture
- ▶ Germany
  - ▶ High levels of knowledge, low levels of interest
  - ▶ Low levels of affect/pride
  - ▶ Input institutions in low regard, orientations focused on (economic) output
  - ▶ High levels of social distrust, camp mentalities
  - ▶ A subject political culture, democracy not stable

## Class Questions

1. Do you agree with the assertion that too much democracy can be a problem?
2. Are you happy with Almond's/Verba's notion of attitudes?
3. Are Almond and Verba missing something that should go in an assessment of democratic attitudes?
4. In which ways is the macro-micro link problematic?