

The field of comparative political behavior has experienced an ironic course of development. Over the past generation, the field has generated a dramatic increase in the knowledge about how people think about politics, become politically engaged, and make their political decisions. Empirical data on citizen attitudes are now available on a near global scale. However, this increase in knowledge has occurred as the processes and structures of contemporary politics are transforming citizen politics. Thus, although more is known about contemporary electorates, the behavior of the public has become more complex and individualistic, which limits the ability to explain the behavior with the most common models. This article documents the expansion of this knowledge in several areas—political culture, political cognition, voting behavior, and political participation—and discusses the current research challenges facing the field.

CITIZEN ATTITUDES AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

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One might claim that the wellspring of politics flows from the attitudes and behaviors of the ordinary citizen and that the institutions of government and the political process are structured in response to the citizenry. This claim has stimulated debates about the abilities of the citizenry and the quality of citizen participation that began with Aristotle and Socrates and continue in the pages of contemporary political science journals.

The continuation of these debates over centuries might suggest that little progress has been made in addressing these questions. I will argue, however, that in the past generation, the field of comparative politics has made tremendous progress first in describing the attitudes and values of mass publics and second in assembling the evidence needed to understand the role of the individual citizen within the political process. I take up the current debate on four areas of political behavior: the importance of political culture and recent evi-

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dence of cultural change, the sophistication of mass publics, the process of voting choice, and the nature of citizen participation in politics.

The expanding collection of empirical data on public opinion has been one of the major accomplishments in comparative politics over the past several decades. *The Civic Culture* (Almond & Verba, 1963) marked a dramatic step forward in comparative research by simultaneously studying the publics in five nations; for a considerable period, such cross-national studies remained quite rare. Today, in addition to ad hoc comparative surveys, there are several institutionalized or semi-institutionalized cross-national surveys, some with a near global scope. The Commission of the European Communities sponsors the Eurobarometer series of coordinated opinion surveys in the member states of the European Union.¹ A consortium of sociological institutes regularly conduct the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) in more than two dozen nations on topics ranging from the role of government to political identity (see Web site at <http://www.issp.org>). There are also attempts to institutionalize a Latinobarometer for Latin American nations (Lagos, 1997). The largest number of nations is included in the World Values Surveys (WVSs), conducted in 1981 (21 nations), 1990 to 1993 (42 nations), and 1995 to 1998 (over 50 nations). The sampling universe for the WVS includes more than 70% of the world's population, with nations on every continent except Antarctica.² In short, over the past few decades, comparative political behavior has become a very data-rich field of research.

A second theme in our discussion is the transformation of citizen politics that has occurred simultaneously with the rapid expansion of our empirical knowledge. The nature of citizen behavior in the advanced industrial democracies has shifted in fundamental ways during the latter half of the 20th century. The past several decades have also seen a dramatic process of social and political modernization in much of the developing world. The democratization wave of the past decade has transformed the political systems and the citizenry in the new democracies of central and Eastern Europe, east Asia, and elsewhere.

1. The Eurobarometers have also been extended to central and Eastern Europe and include new flash polls and elite surveys. By the end of 1999, there had been more than 50 Eurobarometer surveys, and these data are available through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan, the Zentralarchiv fuer empirische Sozialforschung at the University of Cologne, the Economics and Social Research Archive at the University of Essex, and from other national archives. For recent information, see the Web page: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg10/infcom/epo/polls.html>

2. The data for the World Values Surveys (WVSs) are available from the ICPSR and other national data archives. For additional information, see Inglehart (1990, 1997) and Inglehart, Basañez, and Moreno (1998).

These new events provide distinctive opportunities to test our theories, expand the boundaries of knowledge, and develop new theories. We normally observe political systems in a state of equilibrium, when stability and incremental change dominate our findings. Now we have opportunities to examine questions of fundamental change and adaptation that often go to the heart of our theoretical interests but that we can seldom observe directly.

This article thus reviews some of the central research questions and research advances in comparative political behavior, roughly spanning the period of publication for *Comparative Political Studies* but with a special emphasis on the past decade. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive review of the field in a few pages (see also Barnes, 1997; Dalton & Wattenberg, 1993; Kaase & Newton, 1995; Klingemann & Fuchs, 1995). Instead, I focus on major areas in which scholars have made significant scientific advances in recent years. Although these examples are largely drawn from research on advanced industrial societies, they also are relevant to the process of transition for emerging democracies. These are areas in which we can expand our present knowledge in the context of this global wave of democratization.

A RENAISSANCE OF POLITICAL CULTURE?

One of the most powerful social science concepts to emerge in political behavior research—and one central to the study of citizen attitudes and behavior—is the concept of political culture. Almond and Verba's (1963) seminal study, *The Civic Culture*, contended that the institutions and patterns of action in a political system are closely linked to the political culture of the nation. Culturalist studies have been especially important in the study of democratization, as analysts tried to identify the cultural requisites of democracy (Almond & Verba, 1963, 1980; Baker, Dalton, & Hildebrandt, 1981; Eckstein, 1966; Verba, 1965; Weil, 1989).

Despite the heuristic and interpretive power of the concept of political culture, there have been recurring questions about the precision and predictive power of the concept (Laitin, 1995). Kaase (1983) said that measuring political culture is like "trying to nail jello ~~WAS IT JEL-O IN ORIG?~~ to the wall." That is, the concept lacked precision and often became a subjective, stereotypic description of a nation rather than an empirically measurable concept. Some analysts saw political culture in virtually every feature of political life, whereas others viewed it merely as a residual category that explained what remained unexplainable by other means. Even more problematic was the uneven evidence

of culture's causal effect.³ Some political culture studies were based on a public opinion survey of a single nation; in such a research design, it was difficult to isolate the role of culture in influencing national patterns of political behavior.

Even before the recent wave of democratic transitions, political culture studies were enjoying a renaissance of academic interest. Drawing on the 1981 World Values Study, Inglehart (1990, chap. 1) demonstrated the congruence between broad political attitudes and democratic stability for 22 nations.⁴ Putnam's (1993) research on regional governments in Italy provided even more impressive testimony in support of cultural theory. Putnam used an imaginative array of government performance measures to show that the cultural traditions of a region—roughly contrasting the cooperative political style of the north to the more hierarchic tradition of the south—were a potent predictor of the performance of their respective governments. Even more telling, Putnam showed that cultural factors were more influential than economic differences between regions and that cultural patterns reflected historical patterns of civic association. These research initiatives have produced a general renaissance in cultural studies (also see Inglehart, 1997; Jackman & Miller 1996; Reisinger, 1995; Tarrow, 1996).

The democratization wave of the 1990s has given added relevance to questions about the congruence between culture and political structures. To what extent did political change in Eastern Europe arise from the public's dissatisfaction with the old regimes? Several specialists on democratic transitions questioned whether culture played any role (e.g., DiPalma, 1990; Schmitter, Whitehead, & O'Donnell, 1986). Even a cultural theorist such as Harry Eckstein, for instance, suggests that political cultures change only gradually and that often there is a syncretism between the cultural norms of the ancien régime and the new political order (Eckstein, 1992; Eckstein et al., 1998). More important politically, to what extent can the prospects for democracy in this region be judged by their public's support for democratic politics?

Almost as soon as the Berlin Wall fell, survey researchers were moving eastward. We have assembled a wealth of findings on the political attitudes of Russians and East Europeans, and this includes many studies of political cul-

3. A persisting criticism questioned whether culture was a cause or an effect of institutional arrangements (Barry, 1970). I consider this a somewhat artificial distinction. Although the thrust of cultural theory emphasized its influence over institutional arrangements, the clear intent of Almond and Verba was to draw attention to cultural patterns so that governments and elites could respond to these inheritances and, in some cases, remake the culture (Verba, 1965).

4. This research has renewed the debate on whether the correlation between culture and democratic institutions is a causal relationship. See the exchange between Inglehart (1990, 1997) and Muller and Seligson (1994).

ture. For instance, several groups of researchers have found surprisingly high levels of support for basic democratic principles in the former Soviet Union (Finifter & Mickiewicz, 1992; Gibson, Duch, & Tedin, 1992; Miller, Reisinger, & Hesli, 1993). Furthermore, research from other Eastern European nations paints a roughly similar picture of broad public approval of democratic norms and procedures (Dalton, 1994; Mishler & Rose, 1996; Weil, 1993).⁵ Although one must ask whether these expressions of opinions reflect enduring cultural norms or the temporary response to traumatic political events (e.g., Rohrschneider, 1999), the publics in most post-Communist states began their experience with democracy by espousing substantial support for democratic principles. Rather than the apathy or hostility that greeted democracy after transitions from right-wing authoritarian states, the cultural legacy of Communism in Eastern Europe appears to be much different.

An equally rich series of studies are emerging for east Asia. Shin and his colleagues are assembling an impressive mass of survey evidence on democratic attitudes in South Korea (Shin, 1999; Shin & Chey, 1993). Despite the government's hesitant support for democracy, the cultural foundations of democracy appear more developed. There is similar research on Taiwan, where the transition to democracy has been accompanied by supportive attitudes among the public (Chu, 1992). Perhaps the most exciting evidence comes from studies of the People's Republic of China. Even in this hostile environment, Nathan and Shi (1993) find that the pre-Tiananmen Chinese public espoused surprising support for an array of democratic principles. One might question whether these opinions are sufficiently ingrained to constitute an enduring political culture, but even these endorsements of democratic norms are a positive sign about the prospects for democratic reform.

At the same time that questions about political culture have grown in relevance for the democratizing nations, important signs of cultural change have emerged within the advanced industrial democracies. Inglehart's (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995; Inglehart, 1990, 1997) thesis of postmaterial value change maintains that the socioeconomic forces transforming Western industrial societies also are changing the relative scarcity of valued goals and consequently the value priorities of Western publics. Older generations remain more likely to emphasize traditional material social goals such as economic well-being, social security, law and order, religious values, and a strong national defense. Having grown up in an environment in which these goals seem relatively assured, the young are shifting their attention toward post-

5. Another important question involves the relationship between mass and elite opinions and their respective roles in the democratization process. For mass-elite comparisons in Eastern Europe, see Rohrschneider (1999) and Miller, Reisinger, and Hesli (1993).

material goals of self-expression, personal freedom, social equality, self-fulfillment, and maintaining the quality of life.

Inglehart's postmaterial thesis has gained considerable attention because of its potentially broad relevance to the politics of advanced industrial societies. His postmaterial concept was immediately useful in explaining many of the political changes affecting these nations: the public's growing interest in environmental and other quality of life issues, changes in participation patterns, and support for new social movements. Postmaterial values have also been linked to the development of Green parties in the 1980s and the backlash of New Right parties in the 1990s. Thus, Almond (1997) observed that the postmaterialist theory may be one of the few cases of successful prediction in the social sciences in that it predicted many of the political changes that have transformed mass politics over the past two decades.⁶

Researchers have also debated whether another key element of the political culture—citizen orientations toward government—is systematically changing in advanced industrial democracies. There have been ongoing claims that people are becoming more skeptical of politics, more disconnected from political parties, and more willing to use unconventional political methods (e.g., Barnes et al., 1979; Crozier, Huntington, & Watanuki, 1975; Inglehart, 1977). In the mid-1990s, the Beliefs in Government project discounted these claims, reinforcing an image of the persistence of political cultures (Kaase & Newton, 1995). In reviewing the evidence, Fuchs and Klingemann (1995) concluded,

The hypotheses we tested are based on the premise that a fundamental change had taken place in the relationship between citizens and the state, provoking a challenge to representative democracy. . . . The postulated fundamental change in the citizens' relationship with the state largely did not occur. (p. 429)

There is mounting new evidence, however, that citizen orientations toward democratic political institutions and the democratic process are changing substantially. In the United States, for instance, the public's growing cyni-

6. The concept of postmaterialism must be one of the most cited concepts in recent political behavior research in the advanced industrial democracies. At the same time, the concept and its empirical measurement are often vigorously debated (e.g., Clarke & Dutt, 1991; Duch & Taylor, 1993; van Deth & Scarborough, 1995). There are clear imperfections in the standard measure of postmaterialism, but I remain impressed that even with this partially flawed measurement, the variable has proven so robust in predicting certain attitudes and behaviors. More recently, Inglehart (1997) has attempted to expand this concept to encompass general processes of modernization between the developed and developing world. There are certainly important elements of cultural change embedded in the modernization process (e.g., Inkeles & Smith, 1974), but the theoretical basis of modernization effects should be distinct from the postmaterial model.

cism about democratic politics did not abate with the end of the Nixon-Ford administrations or because of the patriotic rhetoric of the Reagan administration. By the early 1990s, public trust in government hit historic lows in the public opinion polls (Nye, Zelikow, & King, 1997). Furthermore, more extensive and cross-nationally comprehensive empirical studies point to growing political malaise in most Western democracies (Norris, 1999; Pharr & Putnam, 2000). When coupled with evidence of changing orientations toward partisan politics and changing patterns of political participation (see below), this suggests that the ideals of a democratic political culture are changing among Western publics.

In summary, political culture illustrates the two themes of this article. First, comparative politics has made great progress in the past few decades in developing the empirical evidence that describes the political culture for most nations in the world. Whereas once our scientific empirical evidence of citizen orientations was quite thin and primarily limited to the large Western democracies, we now have rich evidence of how citizens think and act across nearly the entire globe. The growing empirical evidence has also reinforced the importance of key theoretical concepts that were developed during the early behavioral revolution. For example, Easton's (1965) framework of the levels of political support repeatedly emerges as a valuable concept in explaining how citizens think about the polity and the political community. Similarly, the concept of cultural congruence has provided a valuable framework for examining the interaction between citizen values and political processes. We now have a much richer and sounder theoretical and empirical knowledge about what are the significant attributes of a political culture.

Second, as the empirical evidence has grown, it has become apparent that we are living through a period of significant cultural change—in both the advanced industrial democracies and the democratizing nations. This pattern poses several challenges for researchers. Normally, political institutions and the basic principles of a regime are constant; thus, it is difficult to study the interaction between institutional and cultural change. However, the recent shifts in regime form in many nations create new opportunities to study the relationship between culture and institutional choices—and how congruence is established (e.g., see Evans & Whitefield, 1995; McDonough, Barnes, & Lopez Pina, 1998; Rohrschneider, 1999; Rose, Haerpfer, & Mishler, 2000).

Equally important, because the world is in flux, many current research questions involve the creation of cultural norms and political identities and the overlap between personal preferences and perceived social norms (e.g., Laitin, 1998). Changing political norms in Western democracies enable us to study political culture as a dynamic process. Attempts to test theories of cultural change or theories on the nonpolitical origins of political culture are fer-

tile research fields during this unusual period of political change (e.g., Eckstein et al., 1998).

Finally, the democratization process and changing democratic expectations in the West raise other questions. It is now apparent that there is not just one civic culture that is congruent with the workings of a democratic system. Experience suggests that there are a variety of democratic cultures, as well as ways to define culture, that require mapping and further study (Flanagan, 1978; Seligson & Booth, 1993). Just as the institutionalists have drawn our attention to the variations in the structure of democratic politics and the implications of these differences (e.g., Lijphart, 1999; Powell, 2000), we need to develop a comparable understanding of how citizen norms can create and sustain alternative democratic forms.

Culture, as we have used it in this section, is still a term with many possible elements. Thus, the remainder of this article focuses on several specific aspects of citizen attitudes and political behavior that highlight the changes now occurring in the world and the research implications raised by these changes.

POLITICAL COGNITION AND SOPHISTICATION

Any discussion of citizen political behavior is ultimately grounded on basic assumptions about the electorate's political abilities—the public's level of knowledge, understanding, and interest in political matters. For voters to make meaningful decisions, they must understand the options that the polity faces. Citizens must have a sufficient knowledge of the workings of the political system if they intend to influence and control the actions of their representatives. Almond and Verba (1963), for example, considered cognition important in defining a political culture, and they focused attention on the variations in political awareness and understanding across their five nations.

Debates about the political abilities of the public remain one of the major controversies in political behavior research. The early empirical surveys found that the public's political sophistication fell far short of the theoretical ideal (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954, pp. 307-310; Butler & Stokes, 1969; Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). For most citizens, political interest and involvement barely seemed to extend beyond casting an occasional vote in national elections. Furthermore, citizens apparently brought very little understanding to their participation in politics. It was not clear that voting decisions were based on rational evaluations of candidates, parties, and their issue positions.

This image of the uninformed and unsophisticated voter began to reshape our view of the citizenry and democratic politics: It was argued that it was beneficial to democracy if many people remained unconcerned and uninvolved in the political process. If this was beneficial to democracy, other scholars were anxious to argue the benefits of political order in less developed nations (Huntington, 1968).

However, a new wave of revisionist research soon questioned whether democratic publics were so distant from politics. The highly politicized and ideological nature of American campaigns in the 1960s and early 1970s seemed to increase the public's "level of political conceptualization" (Nie, Verba, & Petrocik, 1976, chap. 7). Other research found that the consistency of Americans' issue preferences had risen over time, suggesting that political beliefs were becoming more ideologically structured. In general terms, researchers argued that the sophistication of voters was significantly affected by the political environment. In the halcyon days of the 1950s, Americans displayed less interest or involvement in politics; in the politicized decade of the 1960s, citizens seemingly responded by becoming more interested in politics and more sophisticated in their understanding of politics. This contextual explanation of political sophistication was further supported by cross-national studies indicating that the level of conceptualization of the public varies sharply across nations, with the relatively nonideological American system yielding one of the least ideological publics (Klingemann, 1979; Westholm & Niemi, 1992).

In addition, dramatic postwar increases in the political resources and educational levels of contemporary publics produced a more cognitively mobilized citizenry (Dalton, 1984; Inglehart, 1990, chap. 10). To the extent that these traits partially translate into politics, this should produce publics that are more interested and sophisticated about political matters and less dependent on blind reliance on external political cues.

This debate on the sophistication of mass publics has continued. For instance, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1991) claim that political information is limited and not increasing among Americans. In contrast, Fiorina (1990) suggested that citizens have more information than should be reasonably expected. In part, it is a debate about expectations (What do we expect of citizens in democracies?), and it is a debate over empirical evidence (What levels of political sophistication do voters actually possess?). When both factors are intermixed, it is easy to yield contrasting conclusions with the same empirical evidence.

I think a new line of research has taken a more productive approach to these questions. Rather than asking if voters meet the expectations of democratic theorists, this research observes that people are making political

choices on a regular basis and asks how these choices are actually made. One approach based on schema theory attempts to identify specific cognitive structures (or schema) that are relevant for subsets of individuals, such as a foreign policy schema, or racial schema, or the schema for evaluating political candidates (Conover & Feldman, 1984; Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuk, 1986; Rohrschneider, 1992; Sniderman, Brody, & Kuklinski, 1984; Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991). Schema theory also examines how citizens process political information (e.g., Lau, 1986). Schema assists in organizing existing knowledge and in processing new information. In short, schema theory argues that even if people are not sophisticated on all political topics, they may have logical and structured beliefs within specific domains that enable them to manage the political decisions they must make as citizens.

Another approach focuses on decision-making heuristics. Instead of expecting that citizens will be fully informed about their political decisions, this approach accepts that "the use of information shortcuts is . . . an inescapable fact of life" (Popkin, 1991, p. 218). Some individuals may rely on social group cues to guide their behavior, and in the right context, this may yield highly efficient methods of decision making (Lupia, 1994). Other individuals may turn to political parties, political leaders, or even politically informed friends or neighbors. There is a curious argument in this approach because it builds on Downs's (1957) insight that it is not rational for the typical citizen to be fully informed, and thus, the individual should use decision-making shortcuts. This approach also claims that decision-making heuristics can lead to reasonable political choices in most instances. This leads to research on how cue givers are selected and the nature of this cueing process (Huckfeldt, Dalton, & Beck, 1998; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998).

A notable feature for comparative politics is the limited attention to these questions in the non-American literature. Much of the primary research on political cognition and political sophistication is based on the American public. One may argue that many of the cognitive processes being studied transcend national boundaries: Americans presumably think about politics in ways that are similar to other publics. However, we also know that institutional structures can affect political perceptions and cognition. The nonideological and complex structure of American electoral politics, for example, creates much different dynamics for electoral choice than a polarized parliamentary system. Thus, greater attention to these questions in the comparative literature can only strengthen our theoretical and empirical understanding of how people think about politics.

Still, the debate on the political sophistication of contemporary electorates has reshaped our understanding of how people make their political choices. The lofty ideals of classic democratic theory presumed a rational

decision-making process by a fully informed electorate. Even given more positive judgments about the political sophistication of contemporary electorates, most voters (and even some political scientists) still fall short of the standards of classic democratic theory. However, we now understand that this maximalist definition of the prerequisites for informed decision making is unnecessary. Instead, our models should look at whether citizens can manage the complexities of politics and make reasonable decisions given their political interests and positions. That is, we emphasize a satisficing (PLEASE CLARIFY: *satisfying?*) approach to decision making in which models ask what are the pragmatic ways in which individuals actually make their political choices. Current research argues that using political cues and other decision-making shortcuts, individuals can make reasonable decisions at modest cost and without perfect information.

ELECTORAL CHOICE

One of the central roles of citizens in democracies and other political systems is to make decisions about political matters. In democracies, this involves decisions about which parties or candidates to support in an election, as well as decisions about which issue positions to hold, how to participate in politics, and so forth. In other political systems, this may involve indirect forms of these same choices—or the choice not to become politically involved.

The study of electoral choice has thus been a core theme in research on citizen politics in democratic nations, and past research has yielded dramatic advances in our knowledge about how voters reach their decisions. Scholars from the Columbia School defined the sociological parameters of electoral choice (Berelson et al., 1954), and the Michigan School extended this knowledge to include the sociopsychological influences on political choice (Campbell et al., 1960; Miller & Shanks, 1996). Both traditions shared a common starting point. They began with the assumption that many voters were ill prepared to deal with the complexities of politics; thus, voters relied on shortcuts—such as group cues or affective partisan loyalties—to simplify political decision making and guide their individual behavior. The sociological approach also stressed the underlying stability of party competition because people supposedly based their political decisions on enduring social cleavages. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) summarized this position in their famous conclusion: “The party systems of the 1960s reflect, with but few significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s” (p. 50). Early electoral research largely substantiated Lipset and Rokkan’s claims.

During the 1980s, this model of stable cleavage-based or partisanship-based voting first came under challenge. Within a decade, the dominant question changed from explaining the persistence of electoral politics to explaining electoral change (Dalton, Flanagan, & Beck 1984). Decreases in class and religious divisions were the first prominent indicators that electoral politics was changing. Franklin, Mackie, and Valen (1992) tracked the ability of a set of social characteristics (including social class, education, income, religiosity, region, and gender) to explain partisan preferences. Across 14 Western democracies, they found consistent erosion in the voting impact of social structure. The rate and timing of this decline varied across nations, but the end product was similar. Nieuwbeerta (1995) similarly found a general erosion of class voting across 20 democracies. Franklin et al. (1992) concluded with the new "conventional wisdom" of comparative electoral research: "One thing that has by now become quite apparent is that almost all of the countries we have studied show a decline . . . in the ability of social cleavages to structure individual voting choice" (p. 385). One of the major findings from the last generation of electoral research holds that social position no longer determines political positions as it did when social alignments were solidly frozen.⁷

In many Western democracies, the declining influence of group cleavages on electoral choice has been paralleled by a weakening of affective party attachments (or partisan identifications) that were the basis of the Michigan model of electoral choice. In nearly all the advanced industrial democracies for which long-term survey data are now available, partisan ties have weakened over the past generation (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000). Similarly, there has been a decrease in party-line voting and an increase in partisan volatility, split-ticket voting, and other phenomena showing that fewer citizens are voting according to a party line. Perot's strong showing in the 1992 American presidential election, the collapse of the Japanese party system, Berlusconi's breakthrough in Italian politics, or Haider's success in the recent Austrian elections provide graphic illustrations of how weakened party ties open up the potential for substantial electoral volatility.

The decline of long-term predispositions based on social position or partisanship should shift the basis of electoral behavior to short-term factors, such as candidate image and issue opinions. There is evidence that the new electoral order includes a shift toward candidate-centered politics. Wattenberg

7. Of course, in social science, nothing is undisputed. On the question of class decline, see the recent contributions in Evans (1999). I do not find Evans's arguments convincing, especially since Nieuwbeerta updates his cross-national evidence of declining class voting with a chapter in this book.

(1991) documented the growing importance of candidate image in Americans' electoral choices, and comparable data are available for other Western democracies (e.g., Bean, 1993). Furthermore, there are signs of a growing personalization of political campaigns in Western democracies: Photo opportunities, personalized interviews, walkabouts, and even televised candidate debates are becoming standard electoral fare (Swanson & Mancini, 1996).

The decline in long-term influences on the vote also has increased the potential for issue voting.⁸ In reviewing the evidence from their comparative study of voting behavior, Franklin et al. (1992) conclude, "If all the issues of importance to voters had been measured and given their due weight, then the rise of issue voting would have compensated more or less precisely for the decline in cleavage politics" (p. 400; also see Dalton, 1996, chap. 10; Evans & Norris, 1999; Knutsen, 1987).

Although there appears to be a consensus that issue voting has become more important, there has been less consensus on a theoretical framework for understanding the role of issues in contemporary political behavior. A large part of the literature continues to work within the sociopsychological approach, examining how specific issues affect party choice in specific elections or how issues beliefs are formed (Budge & Farklie, 1983; Mutz, Sniderman, & Brody, 1996; Zaller, 1992). Other scholars have focused on the systemic level, examining how aggregate electoral outcomes can be predicted by the issue stances of the parties (Iverson, 1994; Merrill & Grofman, 1999). In a sense, this part of the research literature reminds me of the story of the blind men and the elephant: Several different research groups are making progress in explaining their part of the pachyderm, but there is not a holistic vision of the role of issues for contemporary electoral choice.

For advanced industrial democracies, the increase in candidate and issue voting has an uncertain potential for the nature of the democratic electoral process. It is unclear whether these changes will improve or weaken the quality of the democratic process and the representation of the public's political interests. Public opinion is becoming more fluid and less predictable. This uncertainty forces parties and candidates to be more sensitive to public opinion, at least the opinions of those who vote. Motivated issue voters are more likely to have their voices heard, even if they are not accepted. Furthermore,

8. There is considerable debate on the content of this new issue voting. Some issues represent the continuation of past social conflicts, now without a group base. Other issues tap the new political controversies of advanced industrial societies. Yet another approach argues that such position issues have been overtaken by a new emphasis on valence issues that assess the performance of government on broadly accepted goals, such as judging parties on their ability to guide the economy or foreign policy. Thus, the growth of issue voting has created new questions on what issues are important.

the ability of politicians to have unmediated communications with voters can strengthen the link between politicians and the people. To some extent, the individualization of electoral choice revives earlier images of the informed independent voter that we once found in classic democratic theory.

At the same time, there is a potential dark side to these new forces in electoral politics. The rise of single-issue politics handicaps a society's ability to deal with political issues that transcend specific interests. In addition, elites who cater to issue publics can leave the electorally inactive disenfranchised. Too great an interest in a single issue or too much emphasis on recent performance can produce a narrow definition of rationality that is as harmful to democracy as frozen social cleavages. In addition, direct unmediated contact between politicians and citizens opens the potential for demagoguery and political extremism. Both extreme right-wing and left-wing political movements probably benefit from this new political environment, at least in the short term.

In summary, comparative political behavior research has made major contributions to our understanding of citizen politics. First, this is another area in which political behavior research began with limited empirical evidence—national election studies were still quite rare in the 1960s, and comparable cross-national analyses were exceedingly rare.⁹ Second, as the empirical evidence has accumulated, it has become more apparent that we are experiencing a period of substantial electoral change. Contemporary research demonstrates how the old order is fading. However, Gramsci's saying provides a fitting summary of this field: The old order is dying, but the new order is not yet apparent. The current research challenge is to define the nature of the new electoral order that will emerge.

ELECTORAL CHOICE IN EMERGING DEMOCRACIES

There is an apparent similarity between the portrait of voting choice we have just described and the situation in emerging democracies in Eastern Europe and east Asia. Emerging party systems are unlikely to be based on stable group-based cleavages, especially when the democratic transition has occurred quite rapidly, as in Eastern Europe.¹⁰ Similarly, new electorates are also unlikely to hold long-term party attachments that might guide their be-

9. To illustrate this point, Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) pathbreaking volume was based on single surveys in a handful of nations. The study by Franklin, Mackie, and Valen (1992) is based on national election studies time series in 14 nations. In several instances, the series extend over three or more decades.

10. The exception may be the party systems of Latin America and east Asia (Taiwan and South Korea), which might be able to integrate existing social cleavages because of the different nature of these democratic transitions (e.g., Chu, 1992; Remmer, 1991; Shin, 1999).

havior. Thus, the patterns of electoral choice in many new democracies may involve the same short-term factors—candidate images and issue positions—that have recently gained prominence in the electoral politics of advanced industrial democracies (e.g., Barnes & Simon, 1998; Harper, in press; Rose, White, & McAllister, 1997).

The apparent similarities between the electorates in advanced industrial and emerging democracies are only superficial, however. They do not reach below the surface of the electoral process. Advanced industrial democracies are experiencing an evolution in the patterns of electoral choice that flow from the breakdown of long-standing alignments and party attachments, the development of a more sophisticated electorate, and efforts to move beyond the restrictions of representative democracy. The new electoral forces in Western democracies also are developing within an electoral setting in which traditional group-based and partisan cues still exert a significant, albeit diminishing, influence.

The new democratic party systems of Eastern Europe and east Asia face the task of developing the basic structure of electoral choice—the political frameworks that Lipset and Rokkan examined historically for the West. This presents an unique opportunity to study this process scientifically, that is, to examine how new party attachments take root, the relationships between social groups and parties form, party images develop, and citizens learn the process of representative democracy. The venerable Lipset-Rokkan framework may provide a valuable starting point for this research, and the Michigan model of party identification may provide a framework for studying how new political identities form (Rose & Mishler, 1998). However, now we can study these processes with the scientific tools of empirical research. In addition, the creation of party systems in the world of global television, greater knowledge about electoral politics (from the elite and public levels), and fundamentally different electorates are unlikely to follow the pattern of Western Europe in the 1920s.

Answering these questions will require a dynamic perspective on these processes of partisan and electoral change. It is frankly too soon to determine how political scientists will respond to these challenges. There has already been an impressive development of the empirical base of research in these new democracies—a development that took decades in some Western democracies.¹¹ There are many encouraging signs and impressive empirical studies

11. The most important survey resources are the New Democracies Barometer, directed by Richard Rose at the University of Strathclyde, the Central and East European Barometers, collected by the Commission of the European Communities, and the comparative data collected by the series of WVSs (see Note 1).

emanating from Eastern Europe and east Asia. The true test, however, is whether scholarship focuses on these broad questions or simply replicates earlier scholarship in the West.

PARTICIPATING IN POLITICS

Virtually all polities expect the public to be involved in the political process. Democracy expects an active citizenry because it is through discussion, popular interest, and involvement in politics that societal goals should be defined and carried out in a democracy. Without public involvement in the process, democracy lacks both its legitimacy and its guiding force. Communist regimes also engaged the public in the political process, although this primarily served as a means to socialize and mobilize the populace. Even in authoritarian regimes, the citizenry has wants and needs that they hope the government will address.

The major empirical advance in this field has documented the levels of participation across nations and highlighted the distinction between different modes of political action. Verba and his colleagues (Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978; Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995) demonstrated that various forms of action differ in their political implications and in the factors that stimulate individuals to act. This was extended by others to include the growth of unconventional political action that occurred since the 1960s (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Jennings & van Deth, 1990; Klingemann & Fuchs, 1995). This theoretical framework of participation modes has become the common foundation of participation research.

Having identified the modes of action, researchers sought to explain individual and cross-national patterns of participation. This was once an area intensely debated by rationalist and sociopsychological theories of political behavior. The rationalist approach framed decisions to participate in simple cost-benefit terms, best represented in Olson's (1965) *The Logic of Collective Action*. The analytic power of the rationalist approach made this an attractive theoretical approach (Grofman, 1993), but I would argue that this approach created false research paradoxes and actually limited our understanding of citizen action.¹² Although cost-benefit calculations are one ele-

12. The rationalist perspective argued that there were major paradoxes in political participation that needed to be explained, such as the free-rider problem and the irrationality of voting. However, these were paradoxes only if one accepted the narrow assumptions of cost-benefit calculations as the driving force for decisions on whether to vote. With a more comprehensive model of citizen choice or by simply observing reality, it was clear that these were false para-

ment of citizen choice, a simple rationalist approach falls short of explaining decisions to become politically involved. More productive has been the sociopsychological approach that stresses the influence of personal resources, attitudes, and institutional structures in explaining patterns of action (e.g., Verba et al., 1978; Verba et al., 1995).

Attempts to explain cross-national differences in participation have most often focused on voting, a natural development given the availability of turnout data and the importance of elections within the democratic process. Research finds that national turnout rates are affected by a complex set of institutional factors, such as voter registration systems, electoral procedures, and the degree of political competition in the society and the party system (e.g., see Crepaz, 1990; Jackman & Miller, 1995; Powell, 1986). In short, national turnout levels reflect a variety of institutional factors and political conditions that are relatively independent from the vitality of the underlying democratic process. Further research has compared these analyses to other forms of political action, ranging from the conventional to the unconventional.

For the past several years, the most intense debate has focused on whether political participation is systematically decreasing in Western democracies. As supporting evidence, the longstanding paradox of participation has noted that turnout in the United States has decreased since the 1960s, even when educational levels and the affluence of the nation have dramatically increased (Brody, 1978; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Others have debated the cross-national evidence of declining turnout in advanced industrial democracies (Gray & Caul, in press; Klingemann & Fuchs, 1995). Other measures of partisan activity, such as party membership, also show clear downward trends in most nations (Scarow, 2000).

Putnam (1995) has provocatively argued that declining turnout is part of a broader trend that has us "bowling alone." Putnam claims that social engagement is dropping in advanced industrial societies because of societal changes, such as changing labor patterns among women, rising television usage, and the decline of traditional social institutions. These trends have supposedly lead to a decline in social capital—the skills and values that facilitate democratic participation—and thereby to declines in the citizenry's participation in politics.

A considerable body of cross-national evidence conflicts with Putnam's thesis. For instance, the affluence and social development of the postwar era have generally expanded citizen engagement in most advanced industrial

doxes. Thus, the many attempts to restructure the rationalist argument to accommodate reality seem to be a regressive research approach.

democracies. Thus, social group membership and the formation of social capital seem to be increasing in Japan, Britain, and other democracies (Hall, 1999; Pharr, 1997; Wessels, 1997). Similarly, general political interest seems to be increasing, not diminishing (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000, chap. 4). In addition, there is an intense debate over whether Putnam's description is accurate for the United States (Ladd, 1999; Putnam, 2000).

This controversy touches the very vitality of the democratic process, and the resolution of the controversy is as yet unclear. It appears that the evidence of decreasing group involvement and declining social capital formation is strongest for the United States, but this might not be a general feature of advanced industrial societies. Furthermore, although turnout rates have been declining, there has been a considerable expansion of citizen participation in protests, voluntary public interest groups, and other forms of unconventional political action (Jennings & van Deth, 1990; Klingemann & Fuchs, 1995). New social movements, such as environmental groups and the women's movement, expanded the repertoire for political action and legitimated direct-action methods of participation for the affluent middle class.¹³ These methods have diffused across other political groups and have now become a standard element of political participation. Moreover, the policy potential of direct action methods represents a significant expansion of the public's means of influencing the democratic process.

In my view, participation levels and the various methods of political action are generally expanding in most advanced industrial societies—even when participation in political parties and electoral politics is decreasing. Because expanded political participation is generally a positive goal of democracies, increases in citizen-initiated activities generally should be welcome developments. This new style of citizen participation places more control over political activity in the hands of the citizenry and increases public pressure on political elites. Citizen participation is becoming more closely linked to citizen influence.

The expanding repertoire of action also may raise potential problems, however. For example, Verba et al. (1995) asked whether the changing nature of political participation will increase inequalities in political involvement and thus in influence in the democratic process (also see Parry, Moysen, & Day, 1992; Verba et al., 1978). Direct action methods require greater personal initiative and greater political skills. Consequently, political involvement is

13. Some have claimed that the Internet provides new opportunities for political learning and political participation. For instance, the decline in traditional forms of party membership can be partially replaced by virtual party membership through participation in Internet chat rooms and other online activities. I think the extent of such participation and its democratic implications have been too optimistically discussed in the literature.

becoming even more dependent on the skills and resources represented by social status. This situation may increase the participation gap between lower status groups and higher status individuals. As the better educated expand their political influence through direct action methods, less-educated citizens might be unable to compete on the same terms. Indeed, the participation rates of lower status individuals may even decrease as party-mobilized activities diminish. The politically active may become even more influential, whereas the less active may see their influence wane. Ironically, overall increases in political involvement may mask a growing social-status bias in citizen participation and influence, which runs counter to democratic ideals.

The challenge for established democracies is to expand further the opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process and meaningfully affect the decisions affecting their lives. Meeting this challenge means ensuring an equality of political rights and opportunities that will be even more difficult to guarantee with these new participation forms.

PARTICIPATION IN EMERGING DEMOCRACIES

The questions involving political participation are obviously different in emerging democracies and nondemocratic nations. Here, the challenge is to engage the citizenry in meaningful participation after years of ritualized engagement or actual prohibitions on participation.

Election turnout was often fairly high in the immediate posttransition elections in Eastern Europe but has subsequently declined in most nations.¹⁴ Similarly, party membership and other forms of institutionalized participation in the electoral process have also atrophied as democratic institutions have developed. East Europeans obviously had engaged in unconventional politics during the democratic transitions of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Indeed, at the beginning of the 1990s, the WVS found high levels of protest participation by the publics in several East European states (Inglehart, 1990). Data from the 1995 to 1998 WVS, however, suggest that participation in unconventional forms of political action is also waning. These patterns are not surprising, given the waning of the emotional symbolism of the first democratic elections and the disenchantment about the unfulfilled promises of democracy. However, the implication is that Eastern Europe still faces the challenge of integrating citizens into democratic politics and nurturing an understanding of the democratic process.

14. A valuable source of current data on turnout and election outcomes is the Parline database maintained by the Interparliamentary Union (see the Web page: <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parline.htm>).

The challenges of citizen participation are, of course, even greater in non-democratic nations. The advance of survey research has provided some unique insights into participation patterns in these environments. Shi's (1997) study of political participation in Beijing, for example, found that there was much more extensive public involvement than might have been expected from external observation. Furthermore, political participation can occur in more varied forms in political systems in which citizen input is not tolerated and encouraged through institutionalized channels (also see Jennings, 1997). If this occurs in the People's Republic of China, then we should accept a greater role for the citizen even in transitional political systems. The desire to participate in the decisions affecting one's life is common across the globe, but political institutions can shape whether these desires are expressed and how.

CHANGING PUBLICS: A CONCLUSION

In each of the areas examined in this article, research can be described in two terms. First, there has been a fundamental expansion of our empirical knowledge over the past generation of research. Until quite recently, a single national survey provided the basis for discussing the characteristics of citizen behavior, and even such evidence was frequently limited to the larger advanced industrial democracies. Indeed, there were large parts of the world where our understanding of the citizenry, their attitudes, and their behavior were based solely on the insights of political observers—which can be as fallible as the observer. Contemporary comparative research is now more likely to draw on cross-national and cross-temporal comparisons. Research has developed the foundations for the scientific study of the topic.

Second, we have noted the ironic development that our expanding empirical evidence has occurred during a time when many basic features of citizen attitudes and behaviors are changing in ways that make modeling citizen politics more complex. In part, these trends reflect the tremendous social and political changes that have occurred in the world during the past generation. Modernization has transformed living conditions throughout the world, altered the skills and values of contemporary publics, and offered new technological advances that change the relationship between citizens and elites. In addition, the global wave of democratization in the 1990s transformed the role of the citizenry in many of the new democracies in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa.

This makes our task as scholars more difficult. Even as our research skills and empirical evidence have expanded, the phenomena we study have been evolving—something that physicists and chemists do not have to deal with.

These changes produce uncertainty about what new styles of political decision making or what new forms of political participation are developing. In addition, the nature of citizen politics is becoming more complex—or through our research, we are now realizing that greater complexity exists. This produces real irony: Although we have greater scientific knowledge, our ability to predict and explain political behavior may actually be decreasing in some areas. For instance, we know much more about electoral behavior than we did in the 1950s, but simple sociodemographic models that were successful in predicting electoral behavior in the 1960s are much less potent in explaining contemporary voting behavior.

This observation leads to a description of political behavior in advanced industrial societies that stresses the individualization of politics. Citizens are more interested and sophisticated about political matters—but this makes them more likely to pursue their own political interests. Consequently, electoral decision making based on social group and/or party cues gives way to a more individualized and inwardly oriented style of political choice. Instead of depending on party elites and reference groups, more citizens now deal with the complexities of politics and make their own political decisions. Similarly, instead of depending on structured and institutionalized methods of political participation, more citizens are turning to various methods of direct democracy, ranging from community groups to social movements. What is developing is an eclectic and egocentric pattern of citizen action. Rather than socially structured and relatively homogeneous personal networks, contemporary publics are more likely to base their decisions on policy preferences, performance judgments, or candidate images.

The individualization of politics also displays itself in the increasing heterogeneity of the public's issue interests. The postmaterial issues of environmentalism, women's rights, and life styles choices have joined the already full agenda of advanced industrial democracies. In addition, citizens are becoming fragmented into a variety of distinct issue publics. Rather than group interests structuring politics, which often led to socially based voting, citizens now focus on specific issues of immediate or personal importance.

Patterns of action are also becoming more diverse. As participation in elections and voting decreases in most advanced industrial democracies, other activities are increasing in frequency. Political institutions are also responding to citizen demands for a more participatory democracy. Where once the average citizen did little beyond voting and had few other opportunities for influence if they tried to participate, now there are a nearly bewildering array of citizen groups and participatory channels that confront the citizen. In addition, virtual participation through the Internet is further expanding the options.

When taken together, these developments suggest that the nature of citizen politics in advanced industrial societies is in the process of transformation. Contemporary politics will become more fluid as the framework for political decision shifts from societal institutions to individuals. Moreover, individuals are shifting their decision-making criteria from long-term factors, such as group loyalties and affective party attachments, to short-term considerations of policy preferences and performance evaluations. Many citizens also are more willing to act on their preferences, and they possess the political skills and resources to use both conventional and unconventional political means. In short, both the volatility and velocity of political change seem to be increasing, and this pattern of change has become the dominant trend of our time.

These trends are creating a new dynamism within the democracy process, but it is a dynamism that we have not fully captured in our political behavior models. Furthermore, a part of this dynamic process is a call for new institutional forms of democracy. Thus, the public's declining involvement in electoral politics is linked to the increase in more direct forms of political participation. In addition, changes in public acceptance of the democratic process and institutions may reflect a partial rejection of old institutional styles and a yearning for new forms (Norris, 1999; Pharr & Putnam, 2000). Understanding these processes is one of the major research challenges facing the study of political behavior in advanced industrial democracies.

As these changes in advanced industrial societies go forward, we have just lived through what are arguably the most significant political events of our lifetimes: the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the global democratization wave of the 1990s. As advanced industrial societies are evolving into a new form of democratic politics, we are witnessing the initial development of democracy in a new set of nations.

The democratization waves in Eastern Europe, east Asia, and Africa touch at the very core of many of our most basic questions about the nature of citizen politics and the workings of the political process. Normally, we study democratic systems that are roughly at equilibrium and speculate on how this equilibrium was created (or how it changes in minor ways). Moreover, during the earlier waves of democratic transition, the tools of empirical social science were not available to study political behavior directly. The current democratization wave thus provides a virtually unique opportunity to address questions on identity formation, the creation of political cultures (and possibly how cultural inheritances are changed), the establishment of an initial calculus of voting, and the dynamic processes linking political norms and behavior. These questions represent some of the fundamental research issues

of our time. The answers will not only explain what has occurred during this democratization wave but also may aid us in better understanding the basic principles of how citizens function within the democratic process.

Perhaps the most important lesson that has been learned so far is that the political legacy of Communist regimes for citizen politics is much different from the legacy of right-wing authoritarian regimes. The legacy of Communism, ironically, seems to be more positive for democracy than the legacy of fascism and other authoritarian regimes. Many citizens in formerly Communist states seem to favor democratic forms that are different from the institutions of representative democracy as practiced in the West. The patterns of civil society and volunteerism that reinforce citizen action movements in the West are seen as reflections of the mobilized society of the Communist era. At the same time, many Eastern Europeans are disillusioned by the competitive style of electoral politics practiced in the West. Even democratic political parties labor under the stigma of party symbolism that was practiced by the old regime. Thus, one sees many East Europeans longing for alternative models of democratic participation, although the precise form remains unclear.

Thus, the overarching lesson from the political behavior field is different from that often drawn from the end of history literature. Even if democratic forms appear to be the predominant model of politics in the contemporary world, there is increasing divergence on how this model should be applied. Citizens in advanced industrial democracies have accepted the democratic credo, but they are looking for ways to expand the democratic process and to broaden public involvement in the decisions affecting their lives. Simultaneously, many individuals in the democratizing nations of Eastern Europe and east Asia are seeking variants of democracy that are more congruent with their historical and cultural traditions. In both instances, citizen attitudes and behaviors will be prime factors in determining how and whether these democratization processes continue.

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