POLITICAL CULTURE” is potentially a powerful, unifying concept of political science. When it was first proposed by Gabriel Almond (1956) and subsequently employed in The Civic Culture (Almond and Verba 1963), the term promised to solve in a scientific, cross-culturally valid way the micro-macro problem: the classic problem of specifying how people affect their political system, and vice-versa.1 “Culture” (and thus political culture) was understood to transcend the individual, but not to the extent that it negated individual action entirely. True, individuals were socialized into their culture, but they also produced and reproduced it. Culture was also understood to constrain political systems, without being identical to them: only certain systems could “fit” a given culture,2 but the unintended consequences of institutions might alter the culture that created them. The success of anthropologists in studying culture assured political scientists that, properly defined, “political culture” could be studied in all societies. Although formalizing and operationalizing the concept might require new methods, new data, and new theories, the concept itself seemed unproblematic.

1. POLITICAL CULTURE HAS THEORETICAL PROBLEMS

Despite its surface simplicity, political culture has presented surprisingly complex conceptual problems. Almond’s (1956: 396) initial formulation defined political culture as the “particular pattern of orientations to political action.” Almond and Verba (1963) revised this definition to

1 “Political culture may provide us with a valuable conceptual tool by means of which we can bridge the ‘micro-macro’ gap in political theory. . . . Political culture by revealing the patterns of orientations to political action helps us connect individual tendencies to system characteristics” (Almond and Powell 1966: 51-52).

2 Almond (1956: 396) speaks of this constraint as an “embedding.” See also Almond and Powell’s (1966: 21-25) discussion of the relationship between structure and culture.
the "distribution of patterns of orientation" — a more individual-level definition. Since those formulations, many theoretical works have noted problems in defining, measuring, and testing hypotheses in political culture. This stream of criticisms parallels and to some extent overlaps a second stream of new definitions of the concept. These new definitions do not retire older ones; they only jostle them for attention. Such a proliferation of definitions is natural for an important, widely used concept like political culture, but thirty years of definitions and theoretical criticisms have now passed without the earlier promise of the concept being redeemed. Political culture remains a suggestive rather than a scientific concept.

The problem is twofold: social scientists seek both consensus over the term's meaning and redemption of the term's promise. Consensus can be achieved by fiat, by predominant usage, and by analysis. But consensus by fiat is not possible, because social scientists acknowledge no philosophical Leviathan. Even if they did, such a Leviathan would not necessarily create a definition possessing the theoretical characteristics that social scientists expect of it. Consensus by predominant usage is also not possible. Political culture is currently in a state where the leading approach (that of Almond and Verba 1963) has only a modest plurality and may have that only because of its methodological ease. In any case, the predominance of a definition does not guarantee its usefulness.

An analytical approach may be able to create both consensus and usefulness, however. This essay takes such an approach. First, it sets forth nine criteria for political culture conceptions. Analysts of political culture, whether theoreticians or empirical researchers, have long shared common expectations of the concept, despite imperfect satisfaction of those expectations by the analysts' conceptions. Even when such expectations have seemed impossible to fulfill, the many critiques of previous conceptions have clarified them. The nine criteria should, then, provide a common starting point for evaluating alternative conceptions. In addition, if the criteria indeed represent theoretically central problems, their satisfaction should yield a useful conception. Given widespread agreement on theoretically central issues, an analytic approach could create consensus on a definition that redeems political culture's theoretical promise.

Second, this essay evaluates two major previous conceptions against these criteria. Neither conception satisfies all nine criteria, although Lowell Dittmer's "symbol system" approach is able to satisfy seven of the nine.

Third, looking at social behavior from the perspective of symbolic interactionism, the essay proposes a new conception of political culture in terms of patterns of meaningful action ("ways of relating") that are

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3 "Such a definition is convenient for those interested in comparing and measuring the political cultures of different societies via the survey method; but it suffers from allowing one's methodological preference to define one's theoretical formulations" (Lehman 1972: 362).
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ambiguously encapsulated in symbols. The proposed conception employs the Piagetian cognitive structure of these patterns to satisfy the two criteria not satisfied by Dittmer's conception, while otherwise retaining its strengths.

Finally, the essay examines its proposed conception's consequences for research. Data gathering methods change when studying relationships instead of symbols. Since cognitive development does not appear to stop until well into adulthood, socialization studies must be both greatly extended and refocussed to detect cognitive-structural changes. Hypotheses about cognitive structure can require different forms than, say, those about group distributions of individual orientations, and such hypotheses must be tested in a different manner.

Following earlier theoretical works, this essay concentrates on the "culture" portion of the term "political culture." "Culture" is the wider concept and so logically must be clarified before the more specific problems of defining "political culture" can be resolved. Accordingly, pending resolution of our current difficulties with "culture," I adopt a broad view of "the political." I shall return to this issue in Section 8.

2. Nine Criteria for Political Culture Conceptions

The analytical approach has two different logics: an internal logic, concerning the validity of the set of criteria chosen, and an external logic, concerning the validity of the criteria individually. From the point of view of internal logic, we require very little of the set of criteria beyond non-self-contradiction. We need not justify our selection of any particular set of criteria, as long as the reader is persuaded of the individual validity of some of the criteria, thus allowing evaluation of alternative conceptions of culture. The internal logic also does not require criteria exclusive of one another: it requires only criteria of sufficient variety to evaluate alternative conceptions. Finally, the internal logic can admit the possibility of additional criteria as yet undiscovered. I do not believe I neglect any important criteria, but of course others may advance new, generally accepted criteria to evaluate the conception developed here. By the internal logic, conceptions either satisfy or do not satisfy the set of criteria as a whole: no attempt is made to score conceptions for partial correctness, particularly when this paper will propose a conception satisfying all criteria.

The external logic of the analytic approach requires that each criterion express firm, widely shared, theoretical expectations of what a political culture conception should do. Broadly, the criteria arise from three general concerns: that political culture offer distinctively new forms of analysis (criteria 1, 2, and 5), particularly those appropriate to the micro-macro problem (1 and 2); that the concept not be limited to specific cul-

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4 I do restrict my discussion to "social culture" (how people relate to one another) as opposed to "physical culture" (how people relate to their physical world).

5 Of course, a greater variety of criteria means a greater certainty of result.
tures or predicated upon a priori empirical assumptions (criteria 3, 6, and 7); and that it be of scientific value (criteria 4, 5, 8, and 9). The specific criteria come from Almond’s Parsonian definition of culture6 (criteria 1, 2, 3, and 5) and from the necessities of comparative politics (criteria 6-8) and of social science in general (criteria 4 and 9).7 Specific justifications for each criterion’s validity appear below:

1. **Supramembership**

The conceptualization of culture must distinguish culture from mere aggregates of individuals considered in isolation. As Lehman (1972) insists, culture is a “supramembership” (emergent) property. Kavanagh (1972: 63) notes that arguing “from the aggregated features of individuals to the global characteristics [i.e. culture] of a group of which the individuals are members” is the individualistic (or composition) fallacy. As Dittmer (1977: 555) points out, “If political culture can be reduced to the distribution of attitudes among a given population, wherein lies the need for a distinct conceptual framework and line of inquiry?” The very different cultures of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich both arose from the same German population.

2. **Sharedness**

The conception of culture must refer specifically to something shared among people. The importance and uniqueness of culture lie in its role as a common framework of mutual orientation. In what sense could people have a culture if it were not something shared among them? The response of contextual analysis, that people in a group all equally confront the distribution of characteristics found in that group, will not do: that position makes any arbitrary collection of people a culture.

3. **Inequality**

The conception of culture must allow for the possibility that different people have different degrees of influence over the culture. “In reality, the political culture is almost certainly differentially determined by individuals according to their political weight and the intensity behind their particular orientations” (Kavanagh 1972: 61). Such inequality is the raison d’être of studies of elite political culture (e.g., Putnam 1976). Even if one believes that all actors do have equal influence, directly or indirectly, this should be an empirical conclusion, not a premise built into culture’s definition.8

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6 "The terms which I shall use... have emerged out of the Weber-Parsons tradition in social theory" (Almond 1956: 393). See also Almond (1956: *passim*); Almond and Verba (1963); Bunch 1971; Dittmer 1977; Kavanagh 1972; Lehman 1972; and Pateman 1971.

7 Dittmer (1977); Kavanagh (1972); Pye (1972); and Scheuch (1968).

8 The above is sufficient justification of the criterion, but a further argument can be made that this criterion is crucial to solving the micro-macro problem. Conceptions that insist all actors equally determine the culture do not permit an analysis of emergent, unintended, or unrecognized effects of macro structure on individuals and culture. Specifically, such conceptions cannot even frame the micro-macro issues of false consciousness, nondecision-making or structural power.
4. Behavioral

The conception of culture must be such that culture's effects can be observed in public behavior — actions performed when taking other people into account. "[B]ehavior itself gives obvious clues to the sorts of orientations with which [political culture] is associated" (Almond and Powell 1966: 51). Social scientists are interested only in concepts that are at least potentially determinative of observable behavior. This criterion permits non-behavioral definitions, but by insisting on behavioral consequences it prohibits merely metaphysical abstractions.

5. Post-Behavioral

The conception must distinguish culture from mere regularities of behavior. Factors other than culture — physical geography springs to mind — can cause regularities of behavior, so even if culture is observed in behavioral regularities, it is not defined by them. Geertz (1973: 3-30) terms baldly factual reports of behavior "thin description" in contrast to "thick description," which situates behavior in its web of cultural meaning. (See also the discussions in Lehman 1972: esp. 361-62; Dittmer 1977: esp. 555-56; McAuley 1984; and Section 7 below.) To paraphrase Dittmer's previously cited remark, if political culture can be reduced to empirical regularities of behavior, wherein lies the need for a distinct framework and line of inquiry? Note that this criterion does not contradict the previous one, though satisfaction of both may be difficult.

6. Unrestricted Applicability

The conception must apply to the entire range of human social organization, so that social scientists may use the concept without restriction. Political culture conceptions in terms of, say, attitudes toward the military would be meaningless for societies without an institutionalized military or for most forms of social organization smaller than nation-states. (See the discussions in Dittmer 1977: 558ff, and Scheuch 1967, 1968.) The point of using a broad concept like culture is to permit our theories the widest possible scope. Empirical variations in social organization may ultimately limit us to "mid-range" theories, but we can never hope for anything greater if our conceptions build in limitations.

7. Non-Reductionism

Beyond wide applicability, the conception must also permit full attention to the unique aspects of any culture's approach to politics. In particular, a conception in terms of some lowest common denominator of all societies would be unsatisfactory, because it would prevent social scientists from comprehending the richness and uniqueness of different cultures (Scheuch 1967, 1968).

8. Comparability

The conception must permit meaningful comparisons of cultures, and within a single society, meaningful comparisons of different facets of its culture. Many important hypotheses implicitly require meaningful cross-
cultural comparisons: for example, "Societies with cultural form X have more internal conflict than societies with other cultural forms." Social scientists also need to compare different facets of the culture in order to predict intra-society dynamics, as in hypotheses like Marx's famous "superstructure theorem," which relates the culture of economic relations to the culture of intellectual production; or like Geertz's (1973: 452) speculations about the relationship of the Balinese cockfight to the later Balinese "intra-village slaughter."

9. **Objective Testability**

The conception must be capable of producing hypotheses that are testable by objective standards against empirical data. Pye (1972: 73-76) notes the current lack of objective standards for testing political cultural hypotheses. (See also Kavanagh 1972; and Pateman 1971.)

We now employ these criteria to assess two conceptions of political culture: the classic *Civic Culture* approach, discussed in Section 3, and Lowell Dittmer's "symbol system" approach, covered in Section 4. Because this paper's primary concern is the evaluation rather than the description of different approaches to political culture, it presents these approaches only to the extent required to assess their satisfaction of the nine criteria. It also evaluates the conceptions of these earlier approaches, not the value of their research findings. Theoretical definitions are not neutral media for conducting researchers' intuition: rather, they are active, if often unrecognized, guides to significant questions and insightful discoveries. In the case of political culture, these significant questions concern the connection, in cross-cultural perspective, of individuals and broader social organization. The nine criteria tell us whether a definition directs or misdirects our research efforts toward those ends. The conceptions analyzed below have both produced findings of such scope and suggestiveness as to be ample testimony to their originators' intuition, but our hope is that greater theoretical clarity will lead to deeper insights. It is in this spirit that the theoretical critiques below must be read.

3. **Theoretical Evaluation of The Civic Culture**

Researchers in the tradition of *The Civic Culture* define political culture as the distribution of aggregated individual characteristics in a population. Research in this tradition typically employs sample surveys. For example, subjects in five countries were asked how they would feel if their sons or daughters were to marry opposition-party supporters; the responses show that the five countries differ in the distribution of responses. However, the conception of political culture represented by this approach fails to satisfy criteria 1, 2, 3, and 9: supramembership,
sharedness, inequality, and objective testability. It identifies political culture with the aggregate characteristics of individuals, so it does not satisfy the supramembership criterion. The only thing social actors "share" in their political culture, according to this conception, is their common existence within a society having the given distribution of individual characteristics. This is the concern of contextual analysis, not political culture: the political culture in the Civic Culture formulation is not "shared" in any interpersonal sense, and thus does not satisfy the sharedness criterion. Since each respondent is weighted equally in determining the political culture, it also does not meet the inequality criterion. And because no non-problematic standards exist for the characterization of political culture, this approach does not fulfill the objective testability criterion (Kavanagh 1972: 56 and elsewhere; Pateman 1971).

In addition, Civic Culture-type definitions may not satisfy the unrestricted applicability criterion if the individual characteristics studied are not found in all societies. For example, Almond and Verba studied "attitude toward inter-party marriage," but a party system may not exist in every polity or may have different meanings in different polities. Researchers have no transcendent justification for identifying social objects in different societies with one another. Such methods certainly show that individual, cultural, and social-structural differences exist, but cannot determine whether such differences make any substantial difference to the political process (Scheuch 1967, 1968). For these and the reasons given in the previous paragraph, Civic Culture-type definitions satisfy only four or five of the nine criteria.

4. LOWELL DITTMER'S CONCEPTION: POLITICAL CULTURE AS SYMBOL SYSTEM

Lowell Dittmer (1977: 566) defines political culture as "a system of political symbols, and this system nests within a more inclusive system that we might term 'political communication'." This definition turns sharply away from the weaknesses of individual-centered definitions like Almond and Verba's, and yet remains distinguished from (non-universal) political institutions. The definition accordingly differs from previous definitions in satisfying all but the last two theoretical criteria.

The definition satisfies the supramembership criterion because the symbols of political discourse are used in communication, which by definition goes beyond the individual. It fulfills the sharedness criterion to

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10 "Our classification does not imply homogeneity or uniformity of political cultures" (Almond and Verba 1963: 20).

11 Elite studies (e.g., Putnam 1976) attempt to meet the inequality criterion by aggregating the responses of a putative elite. As argued earlier, the conception of political culture lying behind these methods fails to satisfy criteria 1, 2, and 9. Insofar as the elite studies are attempting to determine elite culture, they also fail to satisfy the inequality criterion: all elite actors are given equal weight, and no allowance is made for hegemonic control within the elite. Nor does a differential weighting scheme offer a solution, because the weights themselves can be assigned only ad hoc or — an infinite logical regression — based on prior knowledge of the culture.
the extent that these symbols have common meaning. Dittmer does not say what a symbol's status is if, as some studies show, it means different things to different people. Note that the definition's problem with sharedness is different from that of The Civic Culture, which makes the distribution of differences the very centerpiece of its definition. Dittmer hopes his symbols are shared, but cannot prove they are; in The Civic Culture, the issue is irrelevant.

A long research tradition discusses how people have, or might have, differential degrees of control over the meaning and use of symbols; accordingly, Dittmer's definition meets the inequality criterion. Dittmer's definition also satisfies the behavioral criterion, since people's symbolically mediated understanding of the political world determines in part their political behavior (Hewitt 1979). Moreover, although symbols affect behavior, they are not identical with it: neither defined in terms of it, nor a perfect empirical determinant of it. Thus Dittmer's definition also meets the post-behavioral criterion.

Symbols appear to have similar functions in all societies. Therefore, as long as social scientists do not restrict themselves to any particular medium of communication or class of symbols, Dittmer's definition satisfies the unrestricted applicability criterion.

Each culture deals uniquely with the objective conditions it faces, and this uniqueness is expressed in its symbols. Symbolic meaning within the culture must be accurately understood, of course: researchers must not use an ethnocentric interpretive framework to establish meanings. Assuming this caveat is heeded, the study of culture in terms of symbols does justice to the uniqueness of each culture, and Dittmer's definition meets the criterion of non-reductionism.

Dittmer's conception has difficulty satisfying the comparability criterion, however. Comparison of symbols between cultures is difficult, because each symbol is meaningful only within a larger symbol system or subsystem of the culture (Geertz 1973). Intercultural comparisons consequently require the comparison of entire symbol systems (or subsystems), not individual symbols; and as in past national character studies, social scientists are reduced to comparing these systems/subsystems through intuitive global judgments. A similar problem arises in assessing the internal coherence of a culture by comparing symbol subsystems.

Global characterizations of culture allow cross-cultural testing only if culture-free dimensions of comparison can be found. Such culture-free dimensions are notoriously scarce. Global characterization also offers no way to test whether specific aspects of the symbol system are consonant with the global characterization. For example, Pye (1972: 294) asks, referring to Clifford Geertz's (1973) description of the Balinese cockfight, what is the relationship between the important place that cockfighting oc-

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12 Cuthbertson (1975: 11) notes the importance of myths, one symbolic form: "Having myths is a shared characteristic of all societies. Indeed myth is the prerequisite of society." Dittmer (1977: 565-83 passim) notes the interest of social anthropologists in symbols.
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cupies in Balinese culture and the violent intra-village slaughtering of Balinese [by] each other after the unsuccessful Communist coup of 1965’? It is ‘‘plausible’’ that the two are related, as Pye notes, but social scientists desire a more objective criterion than plausibility. Dittmer’s definition, thus, does not meet the objective testability criterion.

Despite not meeting the two last criteria, Dittmer’s approach is a considerable theoretical advance. Whereas work using Civic Culture-type definitions fails to satisfy four or five of the nine criteria, Dittmer’s approach satisfies all but two. Counting criteria does not establish theoretical superiority, of course: only conceptions satisfying all criteria are admissible. To what formulation should we then turn? The remainder of this essay shows how, by transforming Dittmer’s definition into a slightly different framework, its advantages can be preserved and its disadvantages overcome, resulting in a fully admissible conception.13

5. Political Culture as Publicly Common Ways of Relating

Every cultural symbol stands for, justifies, describes, or otherwise contemplates a culture’s ‘‘way of relating’’ — the organized system of mutual expectations by which social behavior is informed and made meaningful.14 Different actors may attach different meanings to the symbol, but their references are all to ways of relating. A little later I will discuss the implications of the possible conflict between interpretations; right now let us examine one well-known symbol — the U.S. flag — in order to pursue the connection between symbols and ways of relating.

The U.S. flag signals an area where people relate to one another in a special way. Flown in a VFW Hall, it signals the dominance of intensely patriotic ways of relating. Flown elsewhere, the flag may signal the dominance of particular official ways of relating: e.g., the relations constitut-

13 The nine criteria are also not satisfied by the formulations of Daniel Elazar (1966, 1970), Archie Brown (1977), and Kenneth Jowitt (1974). Unfortunately, space does not permit a presentation and analysis of these interesting and suggestive approaches.

14 By social behavior I mean all action undertaken in coordination with other actors, whether or not those actors are present. Even private behavior — writing this essay, for example — contemplates an imagined audience, a ‘‘Generalized Other’’ (Hewitt 1979: 59-60). A way of relating is a standard for engaging in interaction: a method of defining situations, selecting alternatives, and acting. Weber’s ideal-typical bureaucracy provides a concrete example of one ‘‘way of relating.’’ A bureaucrat’s action is interpreted in terms of its bureaucratic meaning: legal within the rules; not legal; or irrelevant to the rules — in which latter case it is outside the way of relating. Action within the rules can be judged as more or less rational, giving bureaucrats a way of selecting specific actions within a broad array of alternative courses permitted under the rules. Judgments of rationality even apply when choosing rules themselves, thus allowing bureaucrats to make and adapt their organizational framework to changing circumstances. This example shows that a way of relating is not any specific set of actions but is rather a way of understanding and coordinating action. Ways of relating involve not simply isolated actions but rather many actual and potential actions integrated in a web of meaning, as Geertz (1973: 3-30) argues. Thus the phrase ‘‘ways of relating’’ focuses simultaneously on the intended mutuality of behavior, whether or not the Other is present, and on the complete network of action alternatives.
ing a military post, city government, or other specially regulated institution. In all these cases the flag indicates not so much a physical as a social territory: a region where certain social relations obtain. The decoding of a cultural symbol is simply the elucidation of these implied social relations.

Such decoding is necessary, of course, to eliminate the ambiguity of the symbol: two citizens can both wear American flag lapel pins and still come to blows over political differences. If symbols had one meaning, social scientists would not have to interpret them and politicians could not fight over them. Ways of relating thus seem to be a deeper and less ambiguous level of analysis than symbols.

How people relate to one another is both the general subject of empirical social science (how do people relate to one another) and the central concern of normative social theory (how should they relate to one another). We are thus fascinated by Geertz’s (1973) description of the Balinese cockfight in the context of Balinese village life only incidentally because it describes strange and interesting practices, but more importantly because it reveals how the Balinese relate to one another. The cockfights do not just symbolize how the Balinese relate — they are an actual medium of relationship. If Geertz had simply viewed the cockfight as a symbol of Balinese life, or had described the Balinese “believes, attitudes and values” concerning the cockfight, he would have led his readers away from the cockfight’s immediate significance as one medium in which the Balinese relate to one another. It is Geertz’s description of this way of relating as a way of relating that makes it of such theoretical interest and, not by accident, human interest.

Given this central concern with ways of relating, and given the (one-to-many) correspondence between symbols and ways of relating, this essay recasts Dittmer’s definition of political culture in terms of ways of relating. This recasting does not deny the importance of symbols, which Dittmer has already shown, but rather points more exactly to the nature of their importance. Symbols are an intermediate level of analysis, indicating what ways of relating the culture (or the observer) finds important enough to encapsulate in symbolic form. To conceive culture in terms of ways of relating rather than symbols is therefore to go more directly to the object of interest. In addition, even though all ways of relating are of potential interest to social scientists, do we know that all are represented symbolically? If some ways of relating are not symbolized, as seems likely, then “ways of relating” defines more accurately than “symbol systems” the field of inquiry.

Let us define culture in terms of ways of relating. I first propose to call “a culture” only groups of people sharing, in the special way described below, a way of relating. Note that this “bottom-up” approach is opposite to earlier, “top-down” approaches. These latter approaches take collectivities (e.g., countries) a priori, term them cultures, and examine afterwards whether their members have anything in common. The present approach looks for commonality before bestowing the name “culture” on a collectivity.
I next propose to term a way of relating "shared" only if it is *publicly common* within the collectivity. "Publicly common" means that the way of relating is both (a) understood by all in the culture (a common understanding) and (b) in fact used by all actors to orient to one another (the public focus of orientation). It follows that a large, diverse collectivity may well have no political culture — may, properly speaking, not be a political culture. The concept of public commonness — the actual use of a way of relating — makes analysts more aware of who does and who does not "participate in the culture." Even in such a highly selective and self-conscious institution as Congress, for example, certain members exhibit inappropriate behavior. Social science must differentiate a congressman’s strategic power, available to all 535 members, from participation in Congress’ dominant culture, which may be shared by only 534, or 533, etc. Nothing guarantees that any given agglomeration of people will have a culture.

The insistence on public commonness is necessary for four theoretical reasons. First, it eliminates ad hoc specifications of which social aggregates are cultures. Social scientists loosely term the United States a culture, but what criterion beyond our own judgment shows that it is? *The Civic Culture* finds quite disparate views in the United States: by what right do researchers assume this diversity to be one culture? Researchers have justifications only truculent ("Because I say it’s a culture"), tautological ("Because it’s all the United States"), or question-begging ("Because it has one government"). The public commonness restriction insists that a culture extends only so far as people choose the same way to relate to one another, which seems to be the unity referred to when we say people "participate in" a culture.

Second, the public commonness restriction allows cultures to be studied and characterized as wholes, because by definition all actors in the culture work within shared, and acted-upon, ways of relating. The analyst can reintroduce the natural complexity of a mixed society through concepts of subculture and cultural conflict, while allowing analytic power to be applied to truly homogeneous cultures.

Third, the insistence upon publicness distinguishes acquiescence from approval, acknowledging that cultural expectations can differ from individuals’ preferred ways of relating. This distinction frees the conception of political culture from Talcott Parsons’ much-criticized faith in value consensus. "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" could be the official motto of political culture: one might like to deal with people in a certain way, but prior, publicly common expectations constrain one’s behavior. The existence of a political culture is not defined by all people liking the culture, or regarding it as legitimate. Rather, it is defined by the ways of relating that people actually use to coordinate their dealings.

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15 Note that "public" does not mean "official." Widespread bribery may in certain countries be "public" — that is, adopted without discussion and with perfect understanding by all concerned in any transaction — even as it is "officially" condemned.
with one another. Culture is what is publicly expected and subscribed to, not what is individually preferred.

Consider race relations in the United States before and after the intense Civil Rights movement of the fifties and sixties. Clearly U.S. society now deals with racial issues far differently than in the past: race relations have been irreversibly altered, even if private attitudes have in many cases remained unchanged. The rapid evolution and political achievements of the Civil Rights movement reflected not a sudden change of heart by millions of Americans but rather the mobilization of people already dissatisfied with existing race relations. Surveys tell us that individual attitudes about racial issues have gradually become more liberal, but the standard expectations of how to relate to different races changed suddenly. Individual preferences obviously influence what ways of relating can become publicly common, and the nature of such influence is of much interest to us, but individual preference and public commonness are logically distinct.

This distinction is the theoretical port of entry for considerations of social power. Culture is established and maintained not just from people's preferences (and moral reasoning, as I argue in Section 7) but also from their relative ability to make those preferences publicly common. This is the domain of economic control, military power, media access, and all the other powers through which a relatively unpopular way of relating might become the focus of orientation.

Fourth, considerations of public commonness underlie two important social phenomena: socialization and cultural change. Public commonness is difficult to maintain, and so is responsible for society's immense investment of labor in schooling and other socialization. Public commonness is also difficult to establish and alter. Immense social upheavals are required for cultural change, perhaps not initially while new ways of relating become common, but certainly later while they become publicly common. Researchers can understand fully neither socialization nor social change without adducing the concept of public commonness. (Chilton 1988 applies to political development the present conception of political culture.)

Although the insistence on public commonness is necessary for the above reasons, will there be any new costs from this insistence? One such cost might be that culture can be determined only ex post facto and provisionally. Cultures can shift rapidly as people adopt (or fall away from) an existing publicly common way of relating. This is, however, only a practical nuisance to the researcher, not a theoretical drawback. Indeed, everyday observation regularly confirms that people drop in and out of social movements. The occasional bumps of social life show us that people cannot be certain that others share their orientation. The above point is then not a cost of the proposed conception but evidence that it captures an ordinary circumstance of social life.

A second apparent cost of the conception is that societies are no longer seen as coherent cultures. Emphasis on the establishment of public commonness and on the choices people make among competing ways of relat-
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Does this not focus our attention unduly on conflict rather than consensus? I think, however, that it is more accurate to say that once one does not assume consensus, one recognizes the possibility of conflict. The conception requires a focus neither on consensus nor on conflict, but rather allows the researcher to study their presence without preconceptions. And it does seem, furthermore, that the nature of conflict contemplated by the conception — conflict over general ways of relating to one another — is of immense social importance. (For example, such conflict is central to the dynamics of political development.) The apparent cost to researchers of a loss of coherence is in fact a gain in the sensitivity and importance of the resulting analyses.

6. The Proposed Definition Satisfies Criteria 1-7

The definition of political culture as "all publicly common ways of relating within the collectivity" satisfies the supramembership criterion, because the public commonness of a way of relating is not a characteristic of the individual (or of arbitrarily aggregated individuals). One cannot determine if a culture exists by examining individuals in isolation. The definition satisfies tautologically the sharedness criterion, because a culture is defined to exist only insofar as its ways of relating are publicly common — i.e., shared.

In this sense the Civic Culture's participant, subject, and parochial orientations may be the basis of actual cultures, but their associated ways of relating must be identified. Even if identified, it is still unclear whether the participant and subject cultures together make a new "civic culture," because the authors do not show on what common basis they can relate to one another. Carole Pateman (1971, 1980), in particular, wants very much to know how "participants" relate to "subjects," because this relationship will evidence such class domination as exists, and she criticizes Civic Culture-type conceptions for their neglect of that relationship.

The proposed definition fulfills the inequality criterion, because it does not assume that social actors have equal ability to establish public commonness. One can at least imagine the possibility that differentials of power could give social actors differential control over what way of relating is publicly common. The present definition assumes neither equality nor inequality, but simply points to the empirical issue of how public commonness is established and maintained.

The proposed conception obviously meets the behavioral criterion, because the definition of any social situation makes some behaviors more appropriate than others. The way people define situations, and those definitions' effect on behavior, constitute the subject matter of symbolic interactionism.

Because not all empirical regularities of behavior arise from ways of relating, the definition also meets the post-behavioral criterion. For example, travelers crossing the desert stop at water holes not out of shared culture but out of physical necessity. Nor do empirical regularities of social behavior always show the presence of a culture. A person who obeys
the law because a policeman is standing nearby does not have the same way of relating as a person who obeys the law because it is sacred. The behaviors of the two may resemble one another in some circumstances, but they share no broad cultural basis for behavior.

Just as all cultures have symbols, all cultures have ways of relating, and the concept of ways of relating is naturally applicable cross-culturally. Thus the proposed definition fulfills the unrestricted applicability criterion.

And just as symbols express the uniqueness of a culture, so ways of relating express that uniqueness. Symbols such as the flag or the name "U.S.A." represent distinctions, made within the cultural ways of relating, by which the culture demarcates itself. Symbols encapsulate the way of relating: indeed, to explain the way of relating often requires reference to the symbols.¹⁶ Thus the proposed definition satisfies the non-reductionism criterion.

We have not yet discussed the comparability and objective testability criteria. The concept of "ways of relating" recognizes culture's richness but not what is comparable between cultures. If no cross-culturally valid characterization of cultures is available, then social scientists cannot test hypotheses of intercultural regularities. If cultural ways of relating can only be characterized as wholes, then each configuration merely receives a different name, and social scientists cannot test hypotheses of intra-cultural coherence.

The following sections argue that these problems with comparability and testability can be overcome by recognizing that ways of relating are constituted in reasoning, which has Piagetian cognitive structure,¹⁷ and which therefore can be analyzed in the powerful ways unique to cognitive structure. Note that our pursuit of political culture has led us first to symbols, then to the ways of relating "underneath" symbols, and now to the reasoning structures "underneath" ways of relating. Here the analysis touches bottom, in the form of solid empirical work, but the reader must be aware that a new level is being discussed.

7. WAYS OF RELATING HAVE MORAL REASONING STRUCTURE

The term "ways of relating" has a nice behavioral ring to it, raising images of objective, observable patterns of behavior. Such images must be rejected, however. Social behavior comes not out of fixed behavior patterns but rather as people engage social situations by interpreting them.

¹⁶ Hence our ability to move easily back and forth between Dittmer's "symbol" definition of political culture and the present "ways of relating" definition.

¹⁷ The term "structure" has been applied to individual cognition, cultural ways of relating, and empirical patterns of behavior. The resulting terminological confusion is unfortunate but unavoidable. The term "structuralism" is sometimes applied to the approaches of the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and the linguist Noam Chomsky. Piagetian structuralism differs significantly from those structuralisms in Piaget's "functionalist" attention to explaining how structures originate and develop (Piaget 1970, esp. chapters 5 and 6).
People identify, interconnect, and consequently make meaningful their own and others’ actions. Whether their reasoning involves simple actions or complex internalized representations of action, it remains reasoning. Ordinary discourse recognizes such a preliminary process organizing action: we ask people how they see things, why they did that, and how they came to that conclusion, and expect a coherent response.\textsuperscript{18}

Fixed environments may induce recurrent responses, but environmental changes quickly reveal these responses’ foundation in reasoning. Some people believe, for example, that bureaucratic behavior arises solely from following regular, mindless bureaucratic procedures. But as any bureaucrat can attest, even obedient clients can present problems calling for interpretation. Moreover, as Danet (1971) points out, some clients also use extra-legal appeals: sob stories, bribes, and even threats. Such appeals require the bureaucrat to re-reason his/her use of the rule-book by asking, “What is the value of following the rules when set against (e.g.,) a monetary gain for myself?” The answer may appear obvious to the reader, but the long history of bureaucratic corruption shows it is not inevitably obvious to bureaucrats. In short, any way of relating, including that represented by the most structured bureaucracy, is founded on reasoning rather than fixed rules. Researchers must, therefore, inquire into people’s understandings of their behavior, not the behavior alone.

Reasoning about one’s social behavior is \textit{ipso facto} moral reasoning, because it shows how one takes the claims of others into account — what claims, in what way, and to what extent. When one decides how to behave in relation to others, one is of necessity making a moral judgment. This is true even of relations like ethnicity or gender, which appear based in biology rather than moral reasoning. Such relations are cultural constructions. For example, in New Mexico I would be one of an undifferentiated group of “Anglos.” In Minnesota, however, I am not “Anglo” but “Norwegian” — and hence the ancient foe of the “Swedes.” My ethnic status and consequent relationships are thus not so much biological facts as they are the moral expectations of my cultural surroundings regarding how I am to identify and treat other people. Cultural constructions like ethnicity and gender are so pervasive that it is easy to forget their basis in moral reasoning.

An extensive body of longitudinal, cross-cultural, and cross-sectional research has shown that moral reasoning has Piagetian cognitive structure. The following claims, all supported by that research, are relevant to the present argument:\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} Habermas (1983) discusses how the theoretical status of social science is affected by the unique necessity of social scientists studying action systems in what he calls the “performative attitude.” He also discusses the role that justification in discourse plays in social action.

\textsuperscript{19} Flavell (1968), Selman (1971), Piaget (1977), Habermas (1979, esp. pp. 69-129), Higgins, Ruble, and Hartup (1983), and Overton (1983) discuss various aspects of the general connection among moral reasoning, role-taking, and social behavior. See Piaget (1932), Kohlberg (1984a), and Colby et al. (1983) for general discussions of the moral development research tradition. See Kohlberg (1981) and Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer (1984a)
1. Moral reasoning varies in its structure (the logical interrelationships of the concepts). There are six possible structures, called "stages."20

2. The stages can be hierarchically ordered such that each stage represents a differentiation and coordination of the previous stage. (Kohlberg 1981, 1984a; Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer 1984a.)21

3. Stages are acquired in hierarchical order, with no skipping of stages and no retrogression to lower stages. (Colby et al. 1983.)

4. Progression through the stages depends initially on the successive recognition of the relativity of each stage to different moral concerns and perspectives and ultimately on an appropriate reorganization of that stage to embrace and coordinate those perspectives. Thus progression is not inevitable, but it is possible — for any person, at any stage, whenever s/he perceives such relativity. (Kohlberg 1981, 1984a.)

5. The above statements apply uniformly to all societies. (Kohlberg 1981; Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer, 1984a; Nisan and Kohlberg 1984; Snarey, Reimer, and Kohlberg 1984; Weinreich 1977; Edwards 1975.)22

The research can support these strong claims because it studies the structure of moral reasoning, not the content. For example, one structure of moral reasoning involves a "Golden Rule" maintenance of interpersonal relations through mutual role-taking. Consider the following two for a discussion of the claims presented here. Attacks on these claims can be found in Fishkin (1982), Gilligan (1982), Gibbs (1977), and other authors cited in Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer (1984b). The latter work contains Kohlberg's replies to those attacks. In view of the arguments surrounding Kohlberg's work, I note that the present conceptualization only requires that some sequence of stages satisfy the five claims given in the text below. Critics like Gilligan (1982) and Gibbs (1977) only attack Kohlberg's particular sequence, conceding that some such sequence must exist. That is all this paper requires. (Some critics, like Geertz 1984, deny the possibility of any such sequence.) I personally have only the most minor quarrels with Kohlberg's specific stage definitions.

20 Specific definitions of the stages are lengthy and are not required for the purposes of this essay. The interested reader should consult Kohlberg (1984) or Colby and Kohlberg (1987). The six stages are termed Stage 1, Stage 2 . . . Stage 6. Cognitive stages below Stage 1 differentiate morality so little from other concepts that they are not of much theoretical or (given their rarity in the adult population) practical interest, and Stage 6 does not occur with sufficient frequency to allow an empirical test of Kohlberg's philosophical argument for its developmental location or even its existence. Colby and Kohlberg (1987) present Kohlberg's method of stage scoring, and Colby et al. (1983) present data on scoring reliability.

21 The stages of moral reasoning are not evaluations of people's moral worth. A person employing Stage 1 reasoning is no less and no more worthy of having his claims to moral treatment respected than a person employing Stage 6 reasoning. Just as philosophers critique one another's positions as being ambiguous and having unfortunate implications, without thereby condemning one another as evil people, so does the sequence of stages systematize and abstract the critiques in terms of reasoning structures, without thereby condemning the various reasoners (Kohlberg 1981, esp. Parts One and Two).

22 Different societies have different mixtures of stages. Research suggests that moral reasoners in pre-literate societies rarely or never develop beyond Stage 3. (See Chilton 1988 for a description of the interactions among social structural change, cultural change, and individual development.)
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answers to the question of whether a judge should give jail terms to conscientious objectors:

"The judge should put them in jail because that's what’s expected of judges."

"The judge should put himself in the conscientious objector’s place and have a heart."

Both answers are structured in terms of the maintenance of good interpersonal relations and mutual role-taking. The first answer tells the judge to role-take with other members of society, while the second answer tells him to role-take with the accused. The role-taking perspective is ambiguous in its application, and the diversity of content thus stems from the ambiguity of the cognitive structure. If a reasoner were equally sympathetic to both relationships, the apparently major content difference could arise from small, even accidental shifts in the way the issue is presented. This distinction between content and structure is especially crucial in cross-cultural work, where content differences are extreme.25

8. MEASUREMENT TECHNIQUES

Cognitive psychologists have several standard ways to measure cognitive structure. In Piaget’s *methode clinique*, the subject is given some task requiring cognitive operations, and the researcher alters the task and/or questions the subject to determine the latter’s understanding of what s/he is doing. This method has two practical drawbacks. First, even though Piaget used the method to excellent effect, the lack of a fixed questionnaire makes the method’s success entirely dependent on the skill and theoretical grasp of the researcher. Second, the method requires interviews or controlled observations, which are unfeasible in much social-scientific or historical research.

Kohlberg eliminates the first of the above problems, though not the second, by using a standard set of moral dilemma stories (e.g., should a poor husband steal a drug necessary to save his wife’s life) and follow-up probes (e.g., “What if the husband didn’t love his wife?”) to elicit his subjects’ moral reasoning. The researcher can interview subjects individually, or can administer the stories as a group written test. The responses are scored according to a detailed manual (Colby and Kohlberg 1987). The method’s coverage of the various universal “issues” (Kohlberg 1984: 189-90) and “aspects” of moral judgment permits both Kohlberg’s test and scoring system to be applied systematically to any culture. (See, for example, Nisan and Kohlberg 1984, and the references therein; and Snarey, Reimer, and Kohlberg 1984.)

This scoring system can also be applied to materials other than Kohlberg’s standard moral judgment interview. Moral reasoning appears in

25 Kohlberg, Levine, and Hewer (1984a) discuss the structure-content distinction. Cross-cultural studies of reasoning obviously will have many methodological difficulties, but such difficulties alone do not constitute theoretical impossibilities.
many forms — inaugural addresses, letters, etc. — and can be scored wherever it appears. (Scoring reliability will vary directly with the explicitness and extensiveness of the available material.) This permits social scientists and historians to conduct cognitive-structural analysis without interviewing their subjects.

While the above methods measure the moral reasoning of individuals, the present discussion concerns cultural moral reasoning, which is publicly common. In particular, people must use cultural reasoning to communicate with and persuade each other in the context of their culture. As survey researchers know well, one must observe special precautions to get people to respond *outside* their cultural constraints — that is, to speak from the position of their individual preferences instead of from their understanding of what expressions are "in order." Cultural reasoning is the rule, not the exception. Students of culture therefore enjoy at least one advantage: cultural reasoning is easy to obtain.

Cultural materials containing such reasoning are already the subject of social-scientific (albeit generally noncognitive-structural) study. To mention only a few examples, social scientists have studied presidential inaugural addresses (Yeager 1974) and press conferences (McMillian and Ragan 1983), strike demands (Shorter and Tilly 1974), theological arguments (Radding 1979), children’s stories (McClelland 1976), congressional speeches (Rosenwasser 1969), television shows (Lichter and Lichter 1983), introductory college textbooks (Bertilson, Springer, and Fierke 1982), public prayers (Medhurst 1977), advertisements (Williamson 1978), editorials (Sinclair 1982), and newspaper stories (Van Dijk 1983). Each of these materials contains cultural moral reasoning insofar as it attempts to persuade the audience of, or explain to it, a desired course of action. Only the application of cognitive-structural analysis to these materials would be at all unusual.24

Researchers may also elicit cultural moral reasoning experimentally by interviewing respondents in a public setting. Respondents could be asked to write persuasive appeals to other members of their culture. Or, respondents could be asked to study issues, meet in small groups, and decide as a group on the best argument for a course of action. Respondents could be interviewed about the reasoning behind their choices in Prisoner’s Dilemma games. Respondents could be interviewed about their moral reasoning in front of their peers. In general, cultural reasoning is easier to study than private reasoning because the researcher can cast aside the classical experimental strictures to isolate the respondent. After all, if a respondent alters his/her responses in others’ company, this indicates something about the group’s conduct of politics in other settings.

Let me return briefly to the issue raised at the end of Section 1, of the distinction between political and other culture. If ways of relating are grounded in moral reasoning, then we must look to the nature of morality itself to make our distinctions. This is particularly true for cross-

24 Even here structural analysis is anticipated by McClelland’s (1976) and Aronoff’s (1967, 1970) theme analyses. Radding’s (1978, 1979) arguments are directly cognitive-structural.
cultural analytic concepts, where many different lines between the political and the (e.g.,) economic are found. It may be true that the morality of the marketplace will differ from that of the public forum, and if so, the proposed definition of culture will break cleanly into "political culture" and (e.g.,) "economic culture." But if such distinctions are built into our definition a priori, they may easily not have cultural universality, and thus may not be theoretically helpful.

The major difficulty in cultural research will be determining the intended audience, i.e., the cultural context within which such materials or responses are produced. In his inaugural addresses, whom was President Reagan addressing? His campaign staff? Campaign contributors? People who had voted for him? Those who didn't vote for him? Republicans? The nation as a whole? All human beings? Since the chosen way of relating will vary with the situation, the researcher must identify which culture is operative. If the researcher is interviewing people directly, she can easily find out how they see their imagined (or actual) audience. This task will be more difficult with historical records and, more generally, all expressions where the researcher cannot question the participants. These problems are only methodological, however; they do not affect the validity of the theoretical formulation. The major theoretical claim of this section is simply that culture as defined here is in principle measurable. Where researchers can question people directly, such measurement should also be quite straightforward in practice.

9. The Proposed Definition Satisfies Criteria 8 and 9

This essay started by noting the proliferation of political culture conceptions and has worked its way around to proposing another. The burden of proof is accordingly on the new conception to demonstrate marked advantages. Both Dittmer's and the present conception satisfy criteria 1-7; however, Dittmer's does not offer a ready way to satisfy criteria 8 and 9, comparability and objective testability. This section shows that the proposed conception does satisfy these last two criteria.

We have established that (1) each culture consists of publicly common ways of relating; (2) the ways of relating are constituted in the reasoning that people use to apply them; (3) this reasoning is moral; (4) moral reasoning has cognitive structure; and (5) cognitive structure can be meaningfully compared between different cultures. The cognitive-structural analysis of culture is then meaningful cross-culturally. Moreover, cognitive structure is an important characteristic to study. In a very real sense, one cannot study a culture at all until one has come to grips with the cognitive structure ordering it. The cultural content is important, of course, but it is not independent of the framework of the culture's cognitive structure. (Geertz 1973: 3-30.)

The extraction of structure from content shows social scientists what is comparable across cultures. Structural statements do not, however, describe specific cultural content. In the example of the judge who must sentence conscientious objectors, a structural analysis of a Stage 3 cul-
ture would reveal that actors resolve this moral dilemma in terms of mutual role-taking and maintenance of good interpersonal relations. The structural analysis by itself could not say whose role social actors would take or which interpersonal relationship they would maintain.

This content ambiguity means that cognitive-structural factors do not directly predict behavior. Such factors are far from useless in explanation, however. First, social scientists have already correlated cognitive stage with a variety of behaviors, e.g., altruistic behavior. (See Blasi 1980 for a review of pre-1980 research, and Candee and Kohlberg 1983, 1984 for two later examples.) Second, beyond acting as a predictor of behavior, cognitive stage can serve more usefully as a control variable. The different reasoning structures are qualitatively different, and so causal connections between variables may differ greatly between cognitive stage groups. For example, the maintenance of reciprocal, ideal relationships is the major element of Stage 3 judgments of interpersonal obligations but is irrelevant to earlier stages. Thus a researcher relating, say, marital expectations and education would be well advised to control for cognitive stage in the statistical analysis. Regrettably, most current behavioral studies neglect reasoning structure, combine incommensurable elements, and thus unnecessarily weaken their results.

Content differences are meaningless until structural differences are understood. Cognitive-structural analysis offers one means of cross-cultural comparison, and the comparability criterion is to that extent satisfied. Content differences between cultures remain to be explained, of course, but such explanations are logically subsequent to structural analysis. Empirical research into culture will remain confused until social scientists control for cognitive-structural differences.

Pye and other theorists have noted the peculiar nature of the explanatory potential of political culture. When reinterpreted in cognitive-structural terms, political culture hypotheses become more straightforward. Hypotheses of intra-cultural coherence (i.e., that a political culture is unified in its many facets) become claims of cognitive-structural consistency (i.e., that the political culture has the same cognitive structure in all facets). One such hypothesis is advanced by Pye (1972: 294) when he posits a "relationship between the important place that cockfighting occupies in Balinese culture and the violent intra-village slaughtering of Balinese [by] each other after the unsuccessful Communist coup of 1965." Rewritten in cognitive-structural terms, the hypothesis is that the culture of the cockfight and the culture of the slaughter have the same underlying cognitive structure. Pye names the explanatory connection "plausibility," but in the structural interpretation it is the more objective "cognitive-structural isomorphism." The sense of plausibility comes from perceiving the basic cognitive-structural unity present.

The concept of cognitive-structural explanation also clarifies Geertz's (1973: 452) statement:

This is not to say, of course, that the killings were caused by the cockfight, could have been predicted on the basis of it, or were some sort of enlarged version of it with real people in the place of the cocks — all of
which is nonsense. It is merely to say that if one looks at Bali — as the Balinese themselves do — through the medium of its cockfight, the fact that the massacre occurred seems, if no less appalling, less like a contradiction to the laws of nature.

In cognitive-structural terms, the killings were not caused by the cockfights, because the connection is not one of agency but of structural isomorphism. The killings also could not be predicted on the basis of the cockfights, because structure does not determine content. Thus the killings were not merely an enlarged version of the cockfights: structural isomorphism need not imply content similarity.

Instead, the cognitive-structural explanation connects events in its assumption that the people who operate at a given cognitive stage will evince its structure in many aspects of their lives. Such an explanation rarely predicts specific behavior, but it does limit the potential range of behavior exhibited in a culture. Consider the cognitive structure underlying Kohlberg's 'Stage 3.' This structure consists of the mutual maintenance through reciprocal role-taking of an ideal relationship between two parties. Moral decisions, and the behavior they impel, are limited to a choice of which pair-relationship one seeks to maintain, without consideration of the wider social consequences of such particularistic concerns. (The specific nature of the relationship being maintained could vary from culture to culture or even situation to situation. Friendship, godparenting, certain patron-client relationships, and late-feudal fealty all have this structure, despite their different contents.) Lehman (1972: 368) can be read as referring to the limitations imposed by these cognitive levels when he argues that cultural variables are "specifying variables": A specifying variable "has only a 'modified' explanatory impact, i.e., it 'specifies' the conditions under which more strategic correlations will exist in greater or lesser intensity. Seen in this light, culture should be viewed as one of the conditions of the broader 'context' that encourage or inhibit the interaction of social system properties."

Cognitive-structural analysis can generate hypotheses of intercultural comparison as well as hypotheses of intracultural coherence. The historian Charles Radding, for example, has argued directly that cognitive-structural changes caused the decline of the medieval ordeal (1979) and had more general effects on medieval society (1978). The anthropologist C. R. Hallpike (1979) discusses directly the role of cognitive structure in the cultural forms of primitive societies. I personally believe that patron-client systems only appear in Stage 2 (and, in a different form, in Stage 3) cultures. Whether true or not, these hypotheses refer to specific, measurable variables. They can be tested and evaluated by standard statistical methods, thus demonstrating that the proposed conception satisfies the ninth and last criterion of objective testability.

10. Conclusion

This essay argues three points. First, it advances nine criteria in terms of which social scientists can evaluate alternative conceptions of politi-
cal culture. The criteria arise from earlier, well-known theoretical critiques and from standard canons of social research. Though the list of criteria can be disputed, the use of a list permits rational discourse about adding or removing specific criteria.

Second, the essay examines two major current definitions of political culture and finds them subject to various theoretical objections. Of course, this critique of definitions does not necessarily invalidate the previous research findings. The critique questions how the studies relate to political culture, but it does not attack the accuracy or importance of their results.

Third, the essay proposes a definition claimed to satisfy all nine theoretical criteria. The proposed definition’s use of cognitive-structural analysis requires special forms of hypotheses and hypothesis-testing. In particular, the distinction between content and structure alters the way social scientists conceive of cross-cultural comparability: researchers must compare structures first, and contents only among identical structures.

The proposed definition currently lacks two elements: a means of handling content differences; and empirical illustrations. The content-structure distinction is important and natural, but clearly social science cannot rest with purely structural analysis. Ultimately, after due attention is given to the distribution, development, and measurement of various structures, social scientists will still wish to know similar things about the actual contents being structured. The proposed definition of political culture may be only a way-station on the route to that complete analysis, but it is a necessary way-station: social science cannot develop a clear theory of content until it comes to grips with the structures, which give contents meaning.

The argument for the proposed definition is mainly theoretical: while a clear conception will usually produce clear and insightful results, and certainly Kohlberg’s studies have produced such results for individuals, this definition still requires an empirical demonstration of its fruitfulness. In particular, to understand either publicly common ways of relating or their cognitive structure, social scientists must undertake three projects. First, we must develop and validate methods, like those suggested above, for studying cultures, especially their cognitive structures.

Second, we must apply these methods to current and past societies to draw a rudimentary cultural map of the world. Such analyses would differ from (most) current studies in that they would focus on cognitive stages. Different cultures will be organized in different cognitive structures, and the stage classification offers what promises to be a useful superordinate classification within which we can better understand the unique contents of cultures. Such methods would, among other differences, recognize that socialization studies must extend well into adulthood, since moral reasoning development is known to continue, at least for some people, well beyond their twenties. Potentially, such development could occur at any time of life. Socialization researchers thus have additional theoretical support for studying life-long learning.
Third, the analyses would closely examine the degree to which a society is a unified culture. In cases where cultural penetration is incomplete and where significant alternative cultures are present, the analyses would focus on the resulting intra-societal conflicts. Analyses of such conflicts would be framed in terms of two separate dynamics. (a) The relative cognitive stage of the competing cultures would produce one set of dynamic forces. If the two stages differed from one another, the conflict would be marked by incomprehension of one culture by another, since the more complex structure cannot be expressed in terms of the less complex structure. If the two cultures are at the same cognitive stage, their conflict will be unresolvable on strictly moral/cognitive grounds. Though the conflict may be ended by some sort of forceful subjugation of one culture by the other, the possibility will also always exist for a higher-stage resolution of the conflict. People who recognize the logical equivalence of the competing structures will feel a pressure, arising from their own intellectual integrity, to discover that resolution. (b) Another set of dynamic forces would arise from the requirements of establishing any way of relating as publicly common. Analyses here would focus on strategic and tactical advantages possessed by the members of the alternative cultures: control over the means of violence; economic power; immersion in traditional symbolism; and so on.

The analyses would look not just at a society’s “extensive coherence” — the proportion of people adhering to a single culture — but also its “internal coherence” — the extent to which the cognitive structure of, say, economic relationships matches that of, say, governmental relationships. Kohlberg’s studies of individual cognitive development show that an individual’s moral development proceeds fairly uniformly across a wide range of moral issues; social scientists must examine whether the same is true of cultural ways of relating across the range of social relationships.

Social scientists also must study how subcultures relate to their cultures and to other subcultures. Which subcultures employ ways of relating differing in cognitive structure from the remainder of the culture? What role do such differences play in dissent and cultural change? Both cultural diffusion and revolution surely are affected by cognitive-structural considerations, and social scientists will have to look afresh at culture change theories.

The reward of such efforts is not just the theoretical virtue of using a well-defined concept of culture. An even greater reward comes in the rich hypotheses made possible by the formulation. Political development, for example, can be defined in terms of the cognitive structures of political cultures; this approach yields new hypotheses about developmental dynamics and stages of political society (Chilton 1988). Even apart from such comprehensive theories, political scientists can study how politics varies across different cultures that have the same cognitive structure: i.e., what content variation is possible when structure is held constant? For example, are all Stage 2 cultures feudal in nature? Are Stage 2 feudal systems different from Stage 2 patron systems; if so, does this difference
have political importance? Social scientists need a taxonomy of cultural possibilities in order to understand whether challenges to a culture will create new cognitive structure or mere cultural shifts within the same cognitive structure. For example, in what way is the new Soviet political culture simply old autocratic wine in new Communist bottles, as theorists of Soviet political culture have asked?

Transposing the analytic matrix, social scientists can study how politics varies within a single cultural tradition when the structure changes. To what extent is there a "modernity of tradition," where traditional institutions bend to, but do not break against, new modes of thought? This hypothesis contradicts the above-mentioned "old wine in new bottles" hypothesis, and a rigorous cognitive-structural analysis could directly test these competing hypotheses.

In sum, the proposed reconceptualization of culture has implications throughout social science and particularly political science. If the political involves power and legitimacy, as Weber has it, then the concept of culture advanced here is quintessentially political: incorporating legitimacy in its study of how moral reasoning is structured; incorporating power in its study of how public commonness is established.²⁵

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²⁵ Cognitive development and the establishment of public commonness are the two central dynamics of political development. See Chilton (1988).
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