

POLITICAL CULTURE AND THE SCIENCE OF POLITICS

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THE SOUL OF LATIN AMERICA: THE CULTURAL AND POLITICAL TRADITION. By Howard J. Wiarda. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. Pp. 417. \$35.00 cloth.)

LATIN AMERICA AT THE END OF POLITICS. By Forrest D. Colburn. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. Pp 152. \$35.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.)

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF PALACE WARS: LAWYERS, ECONOMISTS, AND THE CONTEST TO TRANSFORM LATIN AMERICAN STATES. By Yves Dezalay and Bryant G. Garth. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. Pp. 352. \$50.00 cloth, \$20.00 paper.)

CITIZEN VIEWS OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA. Edited by Roderic Ai Camp. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001. Pp. 304. \$45.00 cloth, 22.95 paper.)

In an oft-quoted line from his 1973 book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Clifford Geertz wrote, "One of the things that everyone knows, but no one can quite think how to demonstrate is that a country's politics reflect the design of its culture."¹ Farther down the page, though, Geertz asserts:

Above all, what the attempt to link politics and culture needs is a less breathless view of the former and a less aesthetic view of the latter . . . The two being thus reframed, determining the connection between them becomes a practicable enterprise, though hardly a modest one.²

Taking Geertz's dictum to heart, this review article examines four recent works that attempt to make general statements about contemporary political culture in Latin America. Rather than presenting an exhaustive

*The author would like to thank Bianca Premo and Kirk Bowman for their helpful feedback on this essay.

1. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 311.

2. *Ibid.*, 311–312.

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overview of Latin American political culture, I illustrate the diversity of methodological approaches and ontological starting points that social scientists use to study political culture. The approaches represented here might broadly be categorized as intellectual history; interpretive essays; studies of elite culture; and public opinion research. It is this last approach that tends to be found within mainstream political science—when issues of political culture are addressed at all within the discipline.

Before discussing the books under review, it would be worthwhile to step back and briefly examine the last few decades of scholarship on political culture within political science. If, as Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman contend, the three main approaches to comparative politics are rationalist, culturalist, and structuralist, then the culturalist approach is clearly the black sheep of the family.³ It is the least well represented in the leading disciplinary journals. Of course, interesting work, particularly on Latin American political culture, is being produced in anthropology and cultural studies. But the leading authors in these fields are not widely read by political scientists.⁴ Even when political scientists have concentrated their energies on questions of culture, they have tended to focus on subjective rather than intersubjective approaches—that is, on individual attitudes and values rather than socially shared identities and meanings.⁵ Cultural approaches are dismissed for being vague about the object of study and the units of analysis; for blurring the line between culture and other categories such as behavior and institutions; and for failing to explain political change. What is more, causal mechanisms—how and why a given cultural attribute leads to one political outcome and not another—are often indiscernible.

For these reasons, research programs focused on political culture have emerged only in fits and starts. Prior to the discipline's "behavioralist revolution," political science studies of political culture usually "offered

3. Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, eds., *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, Structure* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

4. Important recent works include Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López, trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Román de la Campa, *Latin Americanism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Jean Franco, *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). One anthropological work on Latin America that *was* read somewhat widely by political scientists over the past decade is Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

5. See Marc Howard Ross, "Culture and Identity in Comparative Political Analysis," in Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, eds., *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, Structure* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

a unique exegesis of political behavior within a given state," portrayed in terms of national character or cultural personalities.⁶ Likewise, many of the modernization theorists of the 1960s and 70s emphasized—but had trouble proving—the cultural "determinants" of economic development. In addition, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's 1963 breakthrough book, *The Civic Culture*, identified a cluster of attitudes and values that they dubbed "civic culture;" certain cultural traits, they argued, led to stable democracies.⁷

Ronald Inglehart subsequently pioneered cross-national research that built on, and empirically tested, Almond and Verba's assertions.⁸ In his model, the prevalence of a few specific individual attitudes and values—overall life satisfaction, interpersonal trust, and a disdain for revolutionary change—strongly increased the likelihood that democracy would persist in any given country. But Edward Muller and Mitchell Seligson argued that Inglehart had it backwards: democratic experience causes the development of civic culture—or at the very least, there is a reciprocal relationship here. These authors successfully tested their alternate model on a broader dataset, which included many more Latin American cases than Inglehart's.⁹ Similarly, Robert Jackman and Ross Miller noted that Inglehart's early work analyzed mostly advanced industrialized democracies. When Inglehart's data were reanalyzed by Jackman and Miller, cultural explanations did not prove significant.¹⁰

This debate continues to unfold. In a recent article, Seligson argued that Inglehart's findings were a classic case of the "ecological fallacy," or imputing macro-level findings with micro-level significance.¹¹

6. Robert W. Jackman and Ross A. Miller, "A Renaissance of Political Culture?" *American Journal of Political Science* 40, no. 3 (August 1996): 632–59 (633). For examples of these national culture studies, see Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York: Free Press, 1958); Lucian W. Pye, *Politics, Personality, and Nation Building: Burma's Search for Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962). As recently as 1995, a review essay commented that the study of political culture—notwithstanding a few exemplary works—was still mired in techniques that could not pass social scientific muster. See David D. Latin, "The Civic Culture at 30," *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 1 (March 1995): 168–73.

7. See, for example, work by David McClelland, Alex Inkeles and D.H. Smith, and—on Latin America—Lawrence Harrison. Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

8. Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990).

9. Edward N. Muller and Mitchell A. Seligson, "Civic Culture and Democracy: The Question of Causal Relationships," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (September 1994): 635–54.

10. Jackman and Miller, *op. cit.*

11. Mitchell A. Seligson, "The Renaissance of Political Culture or the Renaissance of the Ecological Fallacy?" *Comparative Politics* 34 (April 2002): 273–92.

Controlling for economic development, the influence of culture largely disappears from the model—and looking specifically at data from Central America, Seligson finds no “civic culture syndrome” at all.¹² Inglehart countered by shifting the terms of the debate and presenting a new conceptualization of democracy.¹³

Parallel to this debate over civic culture, political scientists have also been arguing over the concept of “social capital.” In Robert Putnam’s 1993 study of regional governments in Italy, he finds that what best explains the performance of democratic institutions is not socioeconomic development, but rather “civic community”: participation in public affairs, conditions of political equality, norms of trust and solidarity, and above all the existence of a vibrant civil society.¹⁴ Taken together, Putnam dubs these individual and collective civic attributes “social capital.” The concept of social capital garnered a great deal of attention in U.S. policy circles and think-tanks in the 1990s.¹⁵ But notwithstanding the buzz that it created, this approach, too, has come under fire. When Jackman and Miller test Putnam’s indicators as separate variables, they find no statistically significant relationship between political culture and the effectiveness of government institutions.¹⁶ Building on this critique, Frederick Solt finds that broad citizen participation in politics is itself facilitated by more advanced and egalitarian economic development, not by civic associations.¹⁷

Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson provide a more recent and less controversial attempt to build an empirically sound theory of political culture.¹⁸ These European scholars assess the impact of a wide range of cultural variables—ethnicity, religion, historical legacies, social structures, and individual values and attitudes—on political outcomes at the national, regional and individual level. The authors do find that “culture matters,” but it apparently “matters” in different ways across different societies.

12. Instead, Seligson finds support for the impact of education and other elements of the “conventional socioeconomic status explanation” for democracy in Central America (287).

13. Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, “Political Culture and Democracy: Analyzing Cross-Level Linkages,” *Comparative Politics* 35 (October 2003): 61–79.

14. Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

15. It was also taken up by several widely-read authors; see Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

16. Jackman and Miller, op. cit.

17. Frederick Solt, “Civics or Structure? Revisiting the Origins of Democratic Quality in the Italian Regions,” *British Journal of Political Science* 34, no. 1 (2004): 123–35.

18. Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson, *Culture and Politics: A Comparative Approach* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2002).

So we may be, in a sense, back where we started: studying culture within regional and national units of analysis. But area studies in the social sciences—including Latin American studies—increasingly demand empirical rigor and a rethinking of what we thought we knew. (One of Inglehart's co-authored pieces on political culture was pointedly titled "Does Latin America Exist?" Answer: it does.)¹⁹ Phenomena such as authoritarian attitudes, mass support for democracy, or trust in institutions are offhandedly cited too frequently by Latin Americanists for political culture to be left unexamined. And social scientists *are* looking at Latin American political culture, albeit under very disparate methodological guises. It is in this light that I examine the four works under review here.

The Soul of Latin America, by Howard Wiarda, traces Iberian and Latin American political thought and political culture from ancient Rome through to the present day. Wiarda produced this magnum opus after decades of scholarship on Latin American politics. This study is grounded in an argument about the importance of foundational political philosophies in shaping political culture. And unlike other sweeping works on the "essence" of Latin America—such as Carlos Fuentes' non-fiction *The Buried Mirror*—Wiarda is refreshingly up front about both the leverage and the limitations of such an approach.

He begins by comparing the foundational philosophies and political cultures of Latin America and the United States—and refers back to this comparison at various junctures throughout the book.²⁰ According to Wiarda, the founders of the United States were fleeing absolutism and feudalism, while colonists of what became Latin America recreated these systems on far flung shores. While early North Americans valued individual rights and political moderation, their Ibero-American counterparts supposedly valorized group privilege—corporatism—and political extremism. And the philosophers who inspired and innovated Latin American political culture (Augustine, Aquinas, Suárez, and especially Rousseau) are compared—unfavorably, it sometimes seems—with Locke, Montesquieu and Madison.

The key aspects of Iberian and Latin American political culture that Wiarda returns to throughout this book include inequality, hierarchy, collectivism, militarism, religious orthodoxy, and mercantilist economics. The author looks for—and, with remarkable consistency, finds—these cultural threads woven through the centuries. All historical influences on

19. Ronald Inglehart and Marita Caballo, "Does Latin America Exist? (And is There a Confucian Culture?): A Global Analysis of Cross-Cultural Differences," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30, no. 1 (March 1997): 34–47.

20. In my own experience using this text in the classroom, US college students find the comparative element helpful in understanding Latin American political thought.

Latin American political culture are retrospectively portrayed as leading in the same direction. Hispania adopted the militarism of Sparta rather than the democracy of Athens, and the hierarchy of the Roman empire without the republican ideals. The prolonged Christian reconquest of Moorish Iberia engendered militaristic feudalism, concentration of land and wealth, religious intolerance, and group (rather than individual) rights. This was exacerbated by the Counter-Reformation and the Inquisition, which kept liberal ideas from spreading to Spain's colonies.

Wiarda never sees a clear break in this pattern. Spanish American independence was a separation from Spain without a real shift in political thought; early democracy meant enforcing collective rights, not affirming individual rights. Where liberal political thought gained ascendancy in nineteenth-century Latin America it was often under the guise of positivism—order and progress, not liberty and equality—which Wiarda views as elite control with a liberal facade. In Latin American nationalism, Wiarda similarly sees implicit values of racism, hierarchy, and exclusivity. Even twentieth-century shifts in Latin American political culture—broader definitions of citizenship, the influence of Marxism, and the various waves of democratization—are viewed as being guided and constrained by the influence of Iberian political thought.²¹ For Wiarda, democracy and economic development in contemporary Latin America are perpetually hampered by seemingly immutable facets of its political culture.

The Soul of Latin America is a comprehensive synopsis of Iberian and Latin American intellectual history as it relates to questions of politics. (And in the classroom, I found this book to be an excellent catalyst for discussion.) But the bibliography that Wiarda draws upon seems slanted towards politically conservative works from the 1960s and 1970s. A generation of scholarship, including both revisionist histories and accounts of popular sector political cultures in different periods, is poorly represented.²² Furthermore, if cultural heritage is destiny, Wiarda would

21. One modern political philosophy that garners a great deal of attention from Wiarda, in this book and in his life's work, is corporatism: a hierarchical relationship between a centralized state and officially recognized groups within society, organized in top-down fashion.

22. For example, Wiarda's assertion that Latin America was "born feudal" and stayed feudal has been a topic of vociferous debate among historians and historical sociologists such as Ernesto Laclau, Steve Stern, Immanuel Wallerstein, and others. Furthermore, Wiarda self-consciously chooses to focus on elite culture. Yet recent scholarship indicates that, throughout history, non-elite Ibero-Americans had their own political cultures too, distinct from—though always tied into—the power centers of church, crown and landowner. Consideration of historical arguments offered by Sarah Chambers, Sergio Serúlnikov, Steve Stern, Sinclair Thompson, Eric Van Young, and Charles Walker—and these are exemplars of just the English-language authors writing in this vein—might have broadened Wiarda's perspective.

need to account for the drastic late twentieth-century changes in the political cultures of Spain and Portugal, the mother countries. He also employs too many blanket statements about “Latin America” and “Latin Americans” (as an undifferentiated whole), despite promising to avoid such stereotypes and generalizations.²³ Finally, this book could have presented a more explicit causal explanation of how foundational philosophies can, in fact, shape societies and political cultures.

Where Wiarda sees a great deal of continuity in Latin American political culture over time, Forrest Colburn perceives a severe disjuncture in the late twentieth century. In *Latin America at the End of Politics*, Colburn argues that the region has come to the end of one paradigm—the ideological contest between the great “isms” of the twentieth century (liberalism, Marxism, nationalism, etc.)—but lacks a well-articulated replacement for this paradigm. While Wiarda argues that these ideologies never strongly took root in Latin America, Colburn views the *contestation* over these ideologies as a stable feature of Latin American political culture—until recently, that is. The apparent victory of liberal democracy in formal politics and neoliberalism in the economic sphere, Colburn fears, has rendered Latin American political systems “unprepared to offer public solutions to serious collective problems” (7).

Colburn runs through a range of issues and themes in no particular order and with little consistency in analytical frames. Two introductory chapters are followed by brief, often anecdotal chapters on urbanization, ideological shifts, democratization, entrepreneurship, the environment, consumerism, crime, poverty, gender inequality, U.S. influence, art, and migration. While this approach has produced a book that is easily digestible and very accessible to non-experts, it also omits noteworthy empirical research findings on the themes with which he grapples. In the chapter on democratization, for example, he writes: “Surprisingly, there are no socio-economic indicators, such as per-capita income, that predict political outcomes” (35). Yet this has been the subject of multiple research programs, ongoing debates in scholarly arenas, and dozens (if not hundreds) of books, articles, and papers.²⁴

23. One example: “It is not at all clear, in the nineteenth century and later, if Latin America wanted North American-style liberalism and pluralism” (143); see also pp. 25, 319, 322, and 357, among others.

24. See Adam Przeworski et. al., *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950- 1990* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2000); Robert Barro, “Determinants of Democracy,” *The Journal of Political Economy* 107 (1999): 158–83; Mark J. Gasiorowski, “Economic Crisis and Political Regime Change: An Event History Analysis,” *The American Political Science Review* 89 (1995): 882–97; Ross E. Burkhardt and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, “Comparative Democracy: The Economic Development Thesis,” *American Political Science Review* 88 (1994): 903–10; Kenneth Bollen and Robert Jackman, “The Economic and Noneconomic Determinants of Political Democracy in the 1960s,” *Research in Political Sociology* 1 (1985): 27–48; and many others.

Colburn does offer his readers a number of very perceptive observations. For example, public opinion in Latin America is increasingly reacting and responding to issues of governance and corruption. But the author ultimately laments that the absence of a unifying ideological framework results in piecemeal reforms rather than sweeping political change. Colburn attributes causal power to political culture, but he does not fully explore the ways in which ideologies transform political outcomes. Nor does he adequately support his assumption that big, unifying ideas have a salutary effect on political systems. In fact, other scholars have argued that twentieth century Latin American political culture had a surfeit of ideology—that the region was a “living museum” of accumulated ideologies.²⁵ Colburn’s overarching critique seems to be that Latin America’s historically tumultuous political culture has simply become less colorful.

These new realities of electoral democracy and neoliberalism also provide the backdrop for Yves Dezalay and Bryant Garth’s study of elite politics and political ideas, *The Internationalization of Palace Wars*. This book is a structured comparison of four case studies (Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Argentina), contextualized within larger regional and global transformations. According to the authors, the professions of law and economics, in both the global North and in Latin America, have altered the cultures and practices of Latin American politics. Their main argument is that late twentieth-century changes in the roles of law and lawyers—an economic approach to law, as well as a new emphasis on human rights—have engendered “palace wars” within both the United States and Latin American states. They also assert a connection between the emergence of neoliberalism and the rise of human rights discourses.²⁶ Local and national actors in Latin America use these shifting transnational resources (material and ideological) to build and consolidate power at home.

In all four countries, there was a decline in the power of “gentleman lawyers” with elite family ties to the state, and a rise in the power of economists (and some lawyers and social scientists) trained and legitimized by US and international institutions. Yet there remain important differences in legal and political cultures among the four cases, based not only in longer-term historical patterns but on divergent experiences with authoritarianism and democratization as well. Chile under Pinochet is portrayed largely as a laboratory for international ideas:

25. Charles Anderson, *Politics and Economic Change in Latin America: The Governing of Restless Nations* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1967).

26. These trends may now be intertwined, but it seems to me that human rights were already being internationalized when Keynesianism was still hegemonic in the North and statist economic policies were more common in Latin America.

first for monetarist economists, then for exporters of human rights and democracy. By contrast, Brazil's palace wars were more internally oriented; bar associations played a prominent role in opposing the 1964–85 military regime, and thus local and national elite networks of lawyers were able to make a comeback after democratization. Argentina exhibited a milder version of this same trend. In Mexico, the Revolution had pushed the “gentleman lawyers” out of the state and into the private sector, but neoliberal reforms and the rise of firms specializing in international business law are allowing these elite networks to recoup their influence.

In fact, across Latin America, national elites with “cosmopolitan” skills are increasingly valued as international interlocutors and power brokers. Business lawyers have gotten involved in electoral reform and anticorruption efforts, and the World Bank is sponsoring the study of governance in Latin America—more evidence of the synergies between neoliberalism and discourses of human rights and the rule of law.²⁷ But this power to export legal and political culture is not absolute; for example, international efforts at promoting judicial reform and the rule of law in Latin America are “bound to be a limited success at best” (250).

The Internationalization of Palace Wars is a highly original and detailed work, but is unfortunately hampered by disorganization and methodological fuzziness. Sections are roughly in chronological order, but chapters leap from theme to theme and from North to South, with only tenuous links among them. More seriously, the conclusions that the authors draw about people and organizations often have an air of conspiracy theory. Lists of names and chronologies of events are presented as if they were evidence of causal processes. Admittedly, it is extremely difficult to do the kind of analysis that the authors have undertaken. But there are models upon which they could have drawn, such as the “ideas-in-politics” literature in political science and network analysis in sociology. Nonetheless, this book embeds a wealth of detail about twentieth-century transformations in Latin America within a fresh approach to larger global processes of change.

Unlike Dezalay and Garth, the contributors to *Citizen Views of Democracy in Latin America* study political culture from the ground up, by analyzing individual level attitudes, values and beliefs about what politics is and what it should be. Collectively, these authors seek to explain how shared political cultures affect individual attitudes and behaviors and the development of particular institutions—as well as how democratic practices and institutions, and their lived experience by citizens, shape individual attitudes and shared cultural values. The contributors

27. The authors examine the role of NGOs and think tanks as well.

worked with data from surveys administered in Mexico, Costa Rica and Chile.²⁸ Overall, their findings suggest both uniquely national differences in citizens' definitions and expectations of democracy, as well as the salience of individual factors that transcend national boundaries.

Citizens' ideas about democracy and the state do vary by country. Roderic Camp notes that Costa Ricans, like US citizens, tend to identify democracy with liberty or freedom, while Chileans and Mexicans additionally associate democracy with equality and "progress." Furthermore, Mitchell Seligson finds that nationality has by far the strongest impact on individual *preferences* for democracy over other systems, and that demographic variables (race, class, gender, etc.) have little or no impact on these preferences. Miguel Basañez and Pablo Parás argue that race and ethnicity do, in fact, matter—but their impact is difficult to measure because their meaning and social structures vary widely from country to country. Perhaps most strongly, Timothy Power and Mary Clark conclude that, while "civic culture" values matter more than demographic traits, national context far outweighs the causal power of individual-level variables. As they put it, "political socialization is from the top down and from the past to the present, whether it occurs within the family or via the state" (68).

In a separate chapter, Mary Clark confirms long-standing beliefs about the depth and breadth of democratic culture in Costa Rica. But curiously, she finds a relatively low level of overall *satisfaction* with democracy—with whiter, wealthier, and urban respondents even less satisfied than poorer, rural Costa Ricans or those in ethnic/racial minorities. Examining political culture in Mexico—and comparing it with their neighbor to the north—Frederick Turner and Carlos Elordi find that Mexicans express stronger support for authoritarianism than U.S. citizens, and conceptualize democracy differently than their *gringo* counterparts do. The data further suggest that historical and institutional legacies filter individual-level attitudes and values, such that they do not translate into political outcomes the same way in different countries. Chapters by Joseph Klesner and Louis Goodman reach similar overall conclusions. In Chile, a history of political polarization followed by the traumatic experience of the Pinochet regime has created an electorate divided not only in their support for democracy, but in their conceptualization of it as well. In Mexico, Klesner finds that decades of single party rule has led to low levels of trust in government, across political party preferences and demographic groups—a finding supported as well in a chapter by Matthew Kenney. (And in another chapter,

28. Surveys by MORI international, July 1998. Other current cross-national survey research projects being conducted in Latin America include the World Values Survey and the Latinobarometer.

Kenneth Coleman notes that Mexicans are more open to neoliberalism and privatization than their Costa Rican and Chilean counterparts.)

Alejandro Moreno's contribution highlights individual-level variables across national contexts. He finds that higher socioeconomic status (income, occupation and education) is the strongest determinant of *support for* democracy. Yet an additional factor, age, significantly shapes how individuals *conceive of* democracy: older Latin Americans tend to hold to a minimalist, electoral definition, while younger ones highlight the inclusion and protection of minorities as a crucial aspect of democracy. In addition, education and knowledge of politics tend to lead to more abstract conceptions of the tasks of democracy (liberty, protection of minorities) rather than more limited or pragmatic conceptions (electing rulers; solving problems).

This diversity of arguments and findings speaks to one of the great strengths of this collection. While the contributors sometimes disagree with one another, they provide empirically-based evidence for their disparate findings—from the same data set, no less. What is more, this edited volume embodies a remarkable degree of self-reflection. The concluding chapter was penned not by a political scientist but by renowned historian Alan Knight. It is a respectful but sharp-eyed outsider's critique of both methodological individualism and national scope in the study of political culture. Knight notes that several chapters confirm the relevance of sub-national political cultures, and argues that survey researchers should tailor their questions to address them. He also criticizes public opinion scholars for assuming common understandings of political and cultural concepts across time and space, and for ignoring the possibility that their "data" might well be rote responses based on social discourses rather than individual attitudes.²⁹ Furthermore, Knight argues that survey questions do not necessarily gauge the concepts that researchers claim. Thus, respondents who say that they are dissatisfied with democracy may be dissatisfied with the *idea* of democracy overall (i.e., prefer authoritarianism), or may be dissatisfied with actually existing democracy because they are staunch democrats, or may simply be expressing latent satisfaction/dissatisfaction with recent political outcomes, such as whether their preferred candidate had won or lost an important election. Attitudes expressed by respondents may be conjunctural reactions to contemporary political contexts, rather than durable values that we might call political culture. As Knight muses, "we may even question whether any profound cultural attributes, relevant and useful for our understanding of

29. In defense of survey research, I would argue that these are empirical, rather than theoretical questions, and might be resolved by reanalyzing the existing data.

democracy, can be genuinely discerned, let alone measured" (241). It is truly refreshing that this outstanding collection of empirical studies is capped off by such an inspired and critically-minded essay.

Having examined these recent works on political culture, it seems that they raise as many questions as they answer. This is, on the whole, a good thing. We have seen that Latin American political culture—or more accurately, political cultures, plural—do exist, and our understanding of them has surely been enhanced by these four very different scholarly works. It nonetheless remains difficult to speak coherently about political culture without falling into conceptual traps. It is even more difficult to make rigorous empirically-based arguments on cultural themes. Yet, as several recent works have demonstrated, progress in this area is both possible and necessary. On the other hand, political culture cannot and should not be the exclusive domain of quantitative scholars, lest political science impoverish itself by accumulating a wealth of meticulous but ahistorical and ungrounded knowledge of Latin America. Renewed interest in Latin American political culture, from myriad schools of thought using a remarkably diverse array of analytical tools, bodes well for future breakthroughs in a rich but challenging field of research.