

**Political Culture and Regime Type: Evidence from Nicaragua and Costa Rica**



Mitchell A. Seligson; John A. Booth

*The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Aug., 1993), 777-792.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-3816%28199308%2955%3A3%3C777%3APCARTE%3E2.0.CO%3B2-E>

*The Journal of Politics* is currently published by Southern Political Science Association.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/spsa.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# *Political Culture and Regime Type: Evidence from Nicaragua and Costa Rica*<sup>1</sup>

Mitchell A. Seligson  
University of Pittsburgh  
John A. Booth  
University of North Texas

Political science has long attempted to link the development of a civic culture to the emergence and stability of democratic political systems. This paper uses recent survey data from Nicaragua and Costa Rica to examine this linkage by testing the thesis that Costa Rica, Latin America's oldest democracy, should exhibit higher levels of support for democratic norms than would Nicaragua, a country that up through the date of the survey (1989) had not experienced full formal democratic governance. The findings refute this thesis and suggest, instead, that democratic values are far more utilitarian than have been previously suggested.

**I**n recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in how mass political culture affects regime type (Harrison 1985; Pye 1985; Diamond and Linz 1989; Harrison 1992). Although critics of the political culture approach have been numerous, one supporter, Eckstein (1988, 789), has argued that testing the utility of the "culturalist" school (as opposed to the "rationalist" school) "may be the single most important item now on the agenda of political science." Perhaps the best known of the recent efforts to link political culture to regime type is the work of Ronald Inglehart (1988, 1990), who employs a large crossnational, longitudinal data base to argue that

[C]ertain societies are characterized relatively strongly by a durable set of orientations that roughly corresponds to the "civic culture" discussed by Almond and Verba and that this cultural pattern shows a strong empirical linkage with stable democracy even when I control for related aspects of social structure and economic development. (1988, 1221)

<sup>1</sup>This is a revision of an earlier version presented at the meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 30, 1990, San Francisco, CA, at which it was nominated for the Pi Sigma Alpha Best Paper Award. It was also presented at the Japan Latin American Studies Association, Tokyo, Japan, June 2, 1990. The collection of Costa Rican data was supported in part by grant No. SES 85-21098 from the U.S. National Science Foundation and the University of Pittsburgh Central Research Development Fund. We thank Ricardo Córdova, Charles Davis, Samuel Freeman, James Malloy, John Peeler, Kurt Von Mettenheim, and the graduate students in the Latin American Politics Workshop of the University of Pittsburgh for comments on an earlier draft of this paper. We would also like to thank Miguel Gómez B. of the University of Costa Rica for his extensive collaboration in gathering the Costa Rican data set.

Inglehart's approach has been criticized on methodological grounds (Clarke and Dutt 1991; Shively 1991). This paper continues the exploration of the putative link between mass political culture and regime type by using a most-similar-systems design to compare political cultures in two Latin American cases, Costa Rica and Nicaragua. These countries are remarkably similar in many respects. They are poor, small, predominantly Catholic, and share a common border. During their colonial period they were part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico). Until the nineteenth century, a major section of present-day Costa Rica (Guanacaste province) formed part of Nicaragua. With relatively few Indians, both nations developed predominantly mestizo cultures. After Independence (1823-1838) both were provinces of the federated Central American Republic. Both have long specialized in agroexport commodity production, with large populations working on plantations. Both nations also have had many small subsistence farmers among their populations. In recent years, however, urban migration has predominated in both countries, and close to half of their populations now live in cities and towns. Both nations joined the Central American Common Market (CACM) in the early 1960s, spurring economic growth and industrialization.<sup>2</sup>

Despite such similarities, their political regimes have long been distinct. Costa Rica is Latin America's oldest, most stable democracy, with elected governments for nearly all of the twentieth century and with uninterrupted electoral probity, constitutionalism, and peaceful transfers of executive power since 1950 (Seligson 1987; Booth 1989). Nicaragua has had one of Latin America's most violent political traditions, lengthy periods of dictatorial rule, and prior to 1990 had never experienced a peaceful interparty transfer of power following a free election. From 1936 through 1979 the Somoza dynasty ruled Nicaragua, to be supplanted by the Marxist-led Sandinista National Liberation Front's revolution, which struggled against the U.S.-backed contra insurgency (Booth 1985; Milett 1977; Walker 1981).

Given these histories, the political culture literature would lead one to expect Costa Rican political culture to be far more democratic than Nicaragua's. Indeed, impressionistic comparative studies (Busey 1958, Diamond and Linz 1989, 11) have so concluded.

Whether regime type is either the cause or the effect of political culture, the use of Inglehart's reasoning would suggest that Costa Rican political culture should be more democratic than that of Nicaragua. Inglehart (1988, 1215) readily acknowledges that the determination of the direction of causality is problematical without historical data, but he suggests that culture begets structure, i.e., from a civic culture to a democratic system. Several scholars (Morse 1954; Dealy 1974; Smith 1974) have argued that Latin America inherited from Spain an antidemocratic culture. Howard Wiarda (1974, 269), for example, describes Latin America as "Catholic, corporate, stratified, authoritarian, hierarchical, patrimonialist, and semi-feudal to its core." This suggests that since both Costa Rica and Nicaragua were

<sup>2</sup>See Booth and Walker (1989, 15-24) for further discussion of the common histories of Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

colonies of Spain, they inherited this antidemocratic culture. Following the Inglehart logic, in Costa Rica an embryonic civic culture would have had to supplant its initial Iberian authoritarianism, thus leading to today's democracy. In contrast, Nicaragua presumably never developed a civic culture, its protracted institutional authoritarianism nourished from deep authoritarian cultural roots.

Cultural theorists who have reversed the "causal arrows" would likely argue that Costa Rican democratic institutions might have first emerged independently of mass culture, and then gradually helped democratize political culture. Civic culture theorists argue that there is a natural movement toward congruence between culture and political system, even though periods of discrepancy may occur—especially during episodes of rapid change (Almond and Verba 1963, 21–23). According to this thesis, Costa Rican culture and regime type would have at first been incongruent, given the country's Hispanic tradition and two centuries of colonial rule, but mass culture eventually would have become more democratic. The strength of Costa Rica's twentieth-century institutional democracy is evidenced by its standing as the oldest democracy in all of Latin America. Its democratic rule is as old or older than in 11 of Inglehart's 24 cases, including Japan, Italy, Austria, West Germany, and France. As a result of this strength, proponents of the thesis that democratic political institutions produce democratic political cultures would expect to find in Costa Rica today a democratic political culture. In Nicaragua, on the other hand, with centuries of authoritarian administration, no such culture should have emerged. At the time of our survey in 1989, the elections that installed Nicaragua's first democratic regime had not yet taken place.

A third possibility is that of reciprocal causation between political culture and regime type (Inglehart 1988, 1204). In his reexamination of the *Civic Culture*, Almond (1980) argues that "It is quite clear that political culture is treated as both an independent and a dependent variable, as causing structure and as being caused by it" (29). The thesis of reciprocal causation reinforces our hypothetical expectation; given Costa Rica's long democratic experience Nicaragua's historical authoritarianism and turbulence, there should have been considerable reciprocal reinforcement between structure and culture. Democratic political institutions in Costa Rica should have strengthened and deepened the civic culture pattern, which in turn should have reinforced institutional democracy. Similarly, authoritarian political culture and structures in Nicaragua should have reinforced each other.

In short, all directions of causality suggest congruence between structure and culture in these two Central American countries. If political culture is either a determinant, a concomitant, or a consequence of regime type, one would expect to find a political culture in Costa Rica far more democratic than in Nicaragua.

#### MEASUREMENT OF DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL CULTURE AND DATA

In *Polyarchy*, Dahl (1971) argued that two key mass attitudes underlie a political culture that supports liberal, representative institutions: support for a system of widespread political participation and support for the right of minority dissent.

In other terms, a democratic political culture is one that is both Extensive and Inclusive. *Extensive* cultures support democratic participation, while *inclusive* cultures support civil liberties for unpopular groups. We selected a set of 10 items measuring democratic attitudes that had been tested in the United States, Mexico, and most thoroughly in Costa Rica (Seligson and Muller 1987; Seligson and Gómez B. 1989).

Both studies were conducted under the supervision of the authors of this paper. The Nicaraguan sample totaled 1,150, and was based on personal interviews conducted in August 1989 by the Fundación Manolo Morales of Managua. The sample was drawn from four major cities: Managua, Masaya, León, and Estelí, with *N*s proportional to city population. The Costa Rican data were collected in May and June 1987 by the University of Costa Rica and consist of a national probability sample of 927 respondents. As the Costa Rican sample included both urban and rural areas, whereas the Nicaraguan included only the major cities of the country, we are careful in each of the analyses reported here to run the tables first with the entire Costa Rican sample and then once again with only the major urban areas included.<sup>3</sup> The Right to Dissent items were not included in the 1987 Costa Rican national sample but were included in a 1985 urban sample ( $N = 506$ ) comparable to the Nicaraguan sample. The 1985 survey used the same sampling frame as did the 1987 survey and was conducted by the same organization.

#### FINDINGS

Our analysis proceeds by first exploring the bivariate relationships between regime type and political culture. The findings are quite clear-cut, and we then proceed to multivariate analysis in which key demographic and socioeconomic variables are included as controls. The bivariate analysis of the Extensive Participation items<sup>4</sup> (table 1) show that, as expected, Costa Ricans overwhelmingly supported these democratic liberties.<sup>5</sup> The responses of the Nicaraguans surprised us, however. While fewer Nicaraguans supported extensive participation than Costa Ricans, a strong majority of Nicaraguans did support each activity. One might argue that although support for extensive participation is vital to a democratic political culture, these forms of participation are so conventional that they are easy to

<sup>3</sup>This meant limiting the sample to the metropolitan area of San José, the nation's capital, and the provincial capitals on the *meseta central*. This limitation reduced the Costa Rican sample to the *N* of 388. A broader "urban" sample could have included towns as well as cities outside the *meseta* (e.g., Limón, Puntarenas). These comparisons were in fact made, but the results were not altered.

<sup>4</sup>For simplicity, the items have been recoded and reworded so that we report responses as demonstrating support for democratic norms, even though the original item wording varied the polarity on some of the items.

<sup>5</sup>The Nicaraguan sample consistently has more nonresponse than the Costa Rican sample. The long tradition of public opinion surveying in Costa Rica compared to its very recent introduction in Nicaragua, combined with the very stable political atmosphere in Costa Rica compared to that in Nicaragua is likely responsible for this difference. Our tables take a conservative position by reporting nonresponse and calculating percentages based on all replies rather than on only those who responded.

TABLE 1  
EXTENSIVE PARTICIPATION

	Country		%	(N)	Sig. <sup>b</sup>
	Costa Rica	Nicaragua			
	%	(N)	%	(N)	
I am going to read you a list of actions people can take to accomplish their political objectives. Do you approve or disapprove of:					
Participation in an organization or group in order to try to resolve a community problem?					
Approve .....	98.0%	(908)	84.9%	(976)	
Disapprove .....	2.0%	(19)	7.0%	(81)	
DK <sup>a</sup> .....	.0%	(0)	8.1%	(93)	
Total .....	100.0%	(927)	100.0%	(1,150)	<.001
Working in election campaigns for a political party or candidate?					
Approve .....	93.5%	(866)	74.7%	(859)	
Disapprove .....	6.5%	(60)	9.7%	(112)	
DK <sup>a</sup> .....	.3%	(3)	15.6%	(179)	
Total .....	100.0%	(927)	100.0%	(1,150)	<.001
Participating in protest marches?					
Approve .....	76.8%	(712)	60.3%	(693)	
Disapprove .....	23.2%	(215)	25.0%	(288)	
DK <sup>a</sup> .....	.0%	(0)	14.7%	(169)	
Total .....	100.0%	(927)	100.0%	(1,150)	<.001

<sup>a</sup>This category includes "don't know," "no response," and "indifferent" responses.

<sup>b</sup>Chi-square significance.

support. More stringent tests of the depth of commitment to democratic norms come from the Inclusive Participation items, which have two dimensions. First, Opposition to the Suppression of Democratic Liberties (OSDL) includes three items as presented in table 2. Note that for this table, recourse was made to the 1985 urban Costa Rican sample, as the 1987 national sample did not contain these items. The Nicaraguan sample remains the same. Once again, the Costa Rican results were expected—three-fourths of urban Costa Ricans opposed restrictions on demonstrations, meetings, and censorship of the mass media. Surprisingly, however, more than three-fourths of urban Nicaraguans opposed restrictions on civil liberties. Indeed, on two of the three variables, significantly more Nicaraguans than Costa Ricans opposed restrictions on civil liberties.

A more stringent test of commitment to democratic liberties (table 3) involves the rights of dissidents. Fewer Nicaraguans than Costa Ricans support the right of dissidents to demonstrate, but the difference between the samples is not statistically significant. Moreover, a *smaller* proportion of Nicaraguans as compared to Costa Ricans would restrict this right. On the remaining items, Nicaraguans supported the rights of regime critics significantly more than did Costa Ricans.

TABLE 2  
 INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION: OPPOSITION TO THE SUPPRESSION  
 OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES

	Country				Sig. <sup>c</sup>
	Costa Rica (1985) <sup>b</sup>		Nicaragua		
	%	(N)	%	(N)	
Do you think that the government ought to take the following actions:					
Prohibit demonstrations?					
No .....	72.9%	(369)	78.3%	(900)	
Yes .....	24.3%	(123)	15.0%	(172)	
DK <sup>a</sup> .....	2.8%	(14)	6.6%	(78)	
Total .....	100.0%	(506)	100.0%	(1,150)	<.001
Prohibit meetings of groups that criticize the government?					
No .....	77.1%	(390)	76.8%	(883)	
Yes .....	20.2%	(102)	17.8%	(205)	
DK <sup>a</sup> .....	2.8%	(14)	5.4%	(62)	
Total .....	100.0%	(506)	100.0%	(1,150)	NS
Censor newspapers, radio and TV?					
No .....	78.3%	(396)	80.1%	(921)	
Yes .....	19.4%	(98)	12.7%	(146)	
DK <sup>a</sup> .....	2.4%	(12)	7.2%	(83)	
Total .....	100.0%	(506)	100.0%	(1,150)	.002

<sup>a</sup>This category includes "don't know" and "no response" categories.

<sup>b</sup>As explained in the section above on "data," for these items, only a 1985 urban Costa Rica sample was available.

<sup>c</sup>Chi-square significance.

Findings so contrary to expectation merit explanation and even raise the possibility of spuriousness. There are differences between the two samples that might explain the findings: The Costa Rican sample was national, but the Nicaraguan was confined to major cities. If rural Costa Ricans support democratic norms sharply less than urbanites, their inclusion could well affect the overall results. Since education is often associated both with urbanization and support for democratic norms, especially those related to political tolerance (Muller, Seligson, and Turan 1987), one might expect democratic support to be lower in the countryside. Finally, age and gender distributions could influence the results. Should rural areas of Costa Rica contain a larger proportion of females (because of differential migration rates) and older individuals, we might expect less support for democratic norms there if patterns seen elsewhere prevail.

Since the inclusion of rural populations in the Costa Rican sample is the major difference between the two designs, we explore its possible impact first. As already noted, however, on OSDL (table 2) we utilized an urban sample for Costa Rica and found virtually no differences between the countries' respondents. For the

TABLE 3  
INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION: RIGHT TO DISSENT

	Country		%	(N)	Sig. <sup>b</sup>
	Costa Rica	Nicaragua			
There are people who say only bad things about our system of government. Do you support or oppose their:					
Organizing a demonstration?					
Support	63.4%	(588)	58.0%	(667)	
Oppose	36.0%	(334)	30.6%	(352)	
DK <sup>a</sup>	.5%	(5)	11.4%	(131)	
Total	100.0%	(927)	100.0%	(1,150)	NS
Right to vote?					
Support	60.1%	(557)	84.7%	(974)	
Oppose	39.6%	(367)	9.9%	(114)	
DK <sup>a</sup>	.3%	(3)	5.4%	(62)	
Total	100.0%	(927)	100.0%	(1,150)	<.001
Speaking out against the government?					
Support	43.6%	(404)	70.3%	(808)	
Oppose	56.1%	(520)	19.7%	(226)	
DK <sup>a</sup>	.3%	(3)	10.1%	(116)	
Total	100.0%	(927)	100.0%	(1,150)	<.001
Running for office?					
Support	34.4%	(319)	52.0%	(598)	
Oppose	65.0%	(603)	30.9%	(355)	
DK <sup>a</sup>	.5%	(5)	17.1%	(197)	
Total	100.0%	(927)	100.0%	(1,150)	<.001

<sup>a</sup>This category includes "don't know," "no response," and "indifferent" responses.

<sup>b</sup>Chi-square significance.

other two dimensions, however, we used the Costa Rican national sample, 55% of which was rural.<sup>6</sup> However, none of the three variables comprising extensive participation showed statistically significant differences (Chi-square) between urban and rural Costa Rica, thereby ruling out a differential urban/rural impact between nations. For the Right to Dissent variables we found no statistically significant difference on two of four. On the remaining two there was a significant difference. As suspected, support for the right to dissent was lower in rural than urban Costa Rica. Yet, even though the urban Costa Ricans clearly supported the right to dissent more than rural Costa Ricans, urban Nicaraguans still manifested markedly greater support for the Right to Dissent than their urban Costa Rican counterparts.

<sup>6</sup>We coded as urban all respondents in the metropolitan area of San José, the national capital, and those in the provincial capitals of Alajuela, Cartago, Heredia, Limón, and Puntarenas. All remaining respondents lived in towns or rural areas.



To test for contribution of demographic and socioeconomic factors as a possible explanation of the surprising results for Nicaragua, we created a summated index for each of the three democratic culture series and regressed each on age, sex, education, and a dummy variable for country (table not shown). This revealed in every case that by far the most important predictor of each democratic culture index was nationality.<sup>7</sup> Thus, we conclude that neither gender, age, nor education explain the unexpectedly high levels of support for democratic norms we have encountered in Nicaragua.

### *The Impact of Ideology on Democratic Norms*

Several studies of Canada, Israel, New Zealand, and the United States have found that those on the political left exhibit higher levels of political tolerance than those on the right (Altemeyer 1988, 239–52); McClosky and Brill 1983, 260–65, 338–40; Seligson and Caspi 1983; Stouffer 1955; Sullivan, et al. 1985, 197–99). A systematic difference in the distribution of ideological preferences between Costa Rica and Nicaragua might help explain the surprisingly high support for democratic norms in the latter. Specifically, if Costa Ricans were ideologically further to the right than Nicaraguans and if the political right in both nations were less supportive of democratic norms, then it could account for Nicaraguans' greater support for democratic norms.

To test this proposition we first need to show that ideology and democratic norms are associated in both countries in the predicted direction. In the Costa Rican survey we used a conventional eight-point "Left-Right scale" question to tap ideological orientation. All but 12% of Costa Ricans interviewed responded, revealing a far larger proportion of the sample on the Right (46.1%) than on the Left (6.0%), the remainder clustered in the center. To determine if the Right expresses lower support for democratic norms than the Left, we correlated ideological self-identification scores with the 10 democratic norms variables. Contrary to expectation, ideology reveals no consistent correlation with democratic norms. On only Right to Dissent, was there a clear relationship to ideology in the predicted direction (table 4). However, since this relationship occurred on the most stringent test of support for democratic norms, Right to Dissent, it gives some support for the hypothesis. For each item Costa Rica conforms to other crossnational evidence—those on the Right consistently are more likely to oppose key civil liberties than those on the Left. Here then we have some evidence that Costa Ricans are both ideologically conservative and, in consequence, less tolerant of dissent.

Table 5 and table 6 subdivide the Nicaraguan sample into those who were supporters of the emergent right-wing opposition coalition (UNO), those who supported the leftist ruling party (FSLN), and those who did not express any preferences to the interviewers (assumed to be centrists).<sup>8</sup> Since the survey was conducted

<sup>7</sup>The regression results produced a multiple *R* of .39 for the Right to Dissent index, .14 for Extensive Participation, and .13 for Opposition to the Suppression of Democratic Liberties. In every case, most of the explained variance was attributed to the "country" variable.

TABLE 4

## LEFT-RIGHT IDEOLOGY AND SUPPORT FOR THE RIGHT TO DISSENT, COSTA RICA

	Left		Middle		Left-Right Ideology		Right		No opinion	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
<b>Organizing a demonstration<sup>a</sup></b>										
Support	73.2%	(41)	72.3%	(243)	57.4%	(245)	54.6%	(59)		
Oppose	26.8%	(15)	27.7%	(93)	41.9%	(179)	43.5%	(47)		
DK	.0%	(0)	.0%	(0)	.7%	(3)	1.9%	(2)		
Total	100.0%	(56)	100.0%	(336)	100.0%	(427)	100.0%	(108)		
<b>Right to vote<sup>a</sup></b>										
Support	64.3%	(36)	68.8%	(231)	54.1%	(231)	54.6%	(59)		
Oppose	35.7%	(20)	31.0%	(104)	45.7%	(195)	44.4%	(48)		
DK	.0%	(0)	.3%	(1)	.2%	(1)	.9%	(1)		
Total	100.0%	(56)	100.0%	(336)	100.0%	(427)	100.0%	(108)		
<b>Speaking out against the government<sup>a</sup></b>										
Support	51.8%	(29)	53.0%	(178)	36.5%	(156)	38.0%	(41)		
Oppose	48.2%	(27)	46.7%	(157)	63.0%	(269)	62.0%	(67)		
DK	.0%	(0)	.3%	(1)	.5%	(2)	.0%	(0)		
Total	100.0%	(56)	100.0%	(336)	100.0%	(427)	100.0%	(108)		
<b>Running for office<sup>b</sup></b>										
Support	50.0%	(28)	36.6%	(123)	32.1%	(137)	28.7%	(31)		
Oppose	50.0%	(28)	63.1%	(212)	67.2%	(287)	70.4%	(76)		
DK	.0%	(0)	.3%	(1)	.7%	(3)	.9%	(1)		
Total	100.0%	(56)	100.0%	(336)	100.0%	(427)	100.0%	(108)		

<sup>a</sup>Significant at <.001 ( $\chi^2$ ).<sup>b</sup>Significant at <.03 ( $\chi^2$ ).

**TABLE 5**  
**IDEOLOGY AND INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION: OPPOSITION TO THE SUPPRESSION OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES**

	Opposition		No vote/NR		Party Orientation in Nicaragua <sup>a</sup>		Costa Rica	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
<b>Prohibit demonstrations</b>								
No	89.2%	(214)	78.0%	(366)	72.6%	(320)	72.9%	(369)
Yes	9.2%	(22)	12.2%	(57)	21.1%	(93)	24.3%	(123)
DK <sup>b</sup>	1.7%	(4)	9.8%	(46)	6.3%	(28)	2.8%	(14)
Total	100.0%	(240)	100.0%	(469)	100.0%	(441)	100.0%	(506)
<b>Prohibit meetings of groups that criticize the government</b>								
No	89.2%	(214)	77.6%	(364)	69.2%	(305)	77.1%	(390)
Yes	8.8%	(21)	13.2%	(62)	27.7%	(122)	20.2%	(102)
DK <sup>b</sup>	2.1%	(5)	9.2%	(43)	3.2%	(14)	2.8%	(14)
Total	100.0%	(240)	100.0%	(469)	100.0%	(441)	100.0%	(506)
<b>Censor newspapers, radio, and TV</b>								
No	94.2%	(226)	81.2%	(381)	71.2%	(314)	78.3%	(396)
Yes	4.2%	(10)	8.7%	(41)	21.5%	(95)	19.4%	(98)
DK <sup>b</sup>	1.7%	(4)	10.0%	(47)	7.3%	(32)	2.4%	(12)
Total	100.0%	(240)	100.0%	(469)	100.0%	(441)	100.0%	(506)

TABLE 6

## IDEOLOGY AND INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION: RIGHT TO DISSENT

	Opposition		Party Orientation in Nicaragua <sup>a</sup>		FSLN		Costa Rica	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
<b>Organizing a demonstration</b>								
Support	75.0%	(180)	57.4%	(269)	49.4%	(218)	63.4%	(588)
Oppose	20.4%	(49)	24.9%	(117)	42.2%	(186)	36.0%	(334)
DK <sup>b</sup>	4.6%	(10)	17.7%	(83)	8.4%	(37)	.5%	(5)
Total	100.0%	(240)	100.0%	(469)	100.0%	(441)	100.0%	(927)
<b>Right to vote</b>								
Approve	94.6%	(227)	84.0%	(394)	80.0%	(353)	60.1%	(557)
Disapprove	3.8%	(9)	6.8%	(32)	16.6%	(73)	39.6%	(367)
DK <sup>b</sup>	1.7%	(4)	9.2%	(43)	3.4%	(15)	.3%	(3)
Total	100.0%	(240)	100.0%	(469)	100.0%	(441)	100.0%	(927)
<b>Speaking out against the government</b>								
Approve	82.5%	(198)	68.7%	(322)	65.3%	(288)	43.6%	(404)
Disapprove	12.1%	(29)	15.4%	(72)	28.3%	(125)	56.1%	(520)
DK <sup>b</sup>	5.5%	(13)	16.0%	(75)	6.3%	(28)	.3%	(3)
Total	100.0%	(240)	100.0%	(469)	100.0%	(441)	100.0%	(927)
<b>Running for office</b>								
Approve	68.3%	(164)	50.7%	(238)	44.4%	(196)	34.4%	(319)
Disapprove	19.6%	(47)	23.7%	(111)	44.7%	(197)	65.0%	(603)
DK <sup>b</sup>	12.1%	(29)	25.6%	(120)	10.9%	(48)	.5%	(5)
Total	100.0%	(240)	100.0%	(469)	100.0%	(441)	100.0%	(927)

<sup>a</sup> Sig. < .001 ( $\chi^2$ ).<sup>b</sup> This category includes "don't know," "no response," and "undecided."

very shortly after UNO formed, it is not surprising that approximately two-fifths of the respondents did not indicate any party reference. The proportion of the sample indicating support for the well-established FSLN, however, was very close to the share of votes the party eventually received in the 1990 election. Table 5 and table 6 also contain the Costa Rican data for comparison. We first note that, as expected, many more Nicaraguans identified with the left (39%) than do Costa Ricans (6%). If the Left in Nicaragua were more supportive of democratic norms than the Right, then we would have found the key to Nicaraguans' high support for democratic liberties.<sup>9</sup> However, while we had expected a greater proportion of leftists (FSLN supporters) to support democratic norms than rightists (UNO supporters), table 5 and table 6 reveal just the reverse.

Ideology does affect democratic norms in both Costa Rica and Nicaragua, but the impact is in opposite directions—an apparent paradox. Traditional explanations hold that leftists are more supportive of civil liberties because of their overall political philosophy, but these data suggest that one's position vis-à-vis power may be more important than political philosophy. In Nicaragua, at the time of the study, the Left (FSLN) was in power and the Right (UNO) sought to capture it. The strong support for civil liberties expressed by the Right, we believe, stemmed from its greater momentary need for fundamental civil liberties in order successfully to compete for office and power. On the other hand, with their party in power some sympathizers of the Left may well have viewed certain civil liberties as a threat to their own position.

Further direct support of the relative nature of support for democracy is that among the Nicaraguan Right nearly half of those who both supported UNO and expressed low support for the system of government<sup>10</sup> approved of such confrontational acts as taking over factories, churches, and public buildings (see table 7). In marked contrast, less than one-fifth of FSLN supporters who expressed high support for the system of government approved of such actions.<sup>11</sup> In Costa Rica, in contrast, only 6% of the 1987 sample approved such civil disobedience. No doubt the disaffected Nicaraguans viewed civil disobedience as appropriate against a regime they perceived as undemocratic and illegitimate.

#### CONCLUSION

Eckstein (1988) has challenged us to test the political culture thesis. In this paper we do so, and the evidence suggests that the influence of political culture on

<sup>9</sup>Though UNO included a small number of tiny left-wing elements within its umbrella coalition, it was firmly identified with an anti-FSLN position and on balance much to the ideological right of the FSLN.

<sup>9</sup>In fact, a multiple regression of these data demonstrates that ideology is so important a determinant of democratic norms in Nicaragua that it is the only significant predictor of each of the three dimensions of democratic norms when included in equations with education, age, and sex. The multiple *R*'s are: Extensive Participation, .10; OSDL, .25; Right to Dissent, .30.

<sup>10</sup>These are 152 UNO supporters who scored low on a "diffuse support" scale (see Seligson 1983).

<sup>11</sup>These were 364 FSLN supporters out of a total of 441 FSLN supporters.

TABLE 7  
APPROVAL OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

	Party and System Support Orientation <sup>a</sup>		UNO Opposers		Costa Rica <sup>b</sup>	
	FSLN Supporters of the system %	(N)	of the System %	(N)	%	(N)
What means do you think citizens could take to defend their interests . . . taking over factories churches and public buildings?						
Approve . . . . .	17.0%	(62)	47.4%	(72)	6.3%	(58)
Neutral . . . . .	8.5%	(31)	10.5%	(16)	5.0%	(46)
Disapprove . . . . .	73.6%	(268)	41.4%	(63)	88.8%	(823)
DK/NR . . . . .	.8%	(3)	.7%	(1)	0.0%	(0)
Total . . . . .	100.0%	(364)	100.0%	(152)	100.0%	(927)

<sup>a</sup>Includes only those respondents who indicated that they plan to vote for either FSLN or UNO in the upcoming elections and who, in the case of FSLN supporters believe that the nation's laws protect the basic rights of its citizens or in the case of UNO supporters believe that such rights are not protected. Results significant at <.001 ( $\chi^2$ ).

<sup>b</sup>Includes entire sample.

regime type is far less clear than the recent literature suggests. The unexpectedly high levels of support for democracy in Nicaragua, a country with virtually no democratic tradition, confirms as we have argued elsewhere (Booth and Seligson 1984) that authoritarian regimes are not necessarily supported by citizens with an authoritarian political culture. Conversely, the Costa Rican data show that despite enjoying Latin American's longest experience with democracy, majorities in that country express intolerant attitudes toward certain rights for opposition groups (especially their right to run for office). Indeed, on some dimensions of support for democratic liberties Costa Rica was significantly lower than Nicaragua, a country that had been ruled by authoritarian regimes for centuries.

Inglehart (1988, 1990) argues that long-term forces of religion (especially Protestantism) and economic development slowly serve to increase interpersonal trust and life satisfaction, out of which he believes eventually emerges a civic culture supportive of democracy. Our results, in contrast, show considerable independence of culture from these long-term forces. Rather, we have found two Catholic and relatively poor counties with dramatically different regime types yet similarly democratic political culture.

This finding raises important questions about the thesis argued in the *Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963) that political culture and structure evolve toward congruency. If regime type shapes mass political culture, the case of our urban Nicaraguans is highly problematical. In 1989 Nicaragua had yet to experience any sustained period of democratic governance, the revolutionary government's democratizing pretensions notwithstanding, yet the people in our survey manifested strong support for democratic liberties. On the other hand, if a civic culture arises, as Inglehart (1988, 1207-15) argued, as a long-term outcome of

economic growth, resulting in increased life satisfaction and interpersonal trust, then the Nicaraguan results are equally disturbing. From 1965–1990, Nicaragua's per capita GNP declined at an annual rate of 3.3%, a drop greater than any of the other 125 countries in the world for which data exist, and food production per capita, a variable that easily can be seen as having a direct impact on life satisfaction, declined in the 1980–1990 period by 42%, a rate that far exceeds the declines experienced anywhere else in the world including sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 1992, 218–19, 224–25). From whence, we must ask, came the Nicaraguan people's democratic values?

Our findings suggest an answer to this question. We interpret them to suggest rather strongly that political culture is far more contingent, utilitarian, and malleable than has previously been assumed. We have found that a citizen's position in the political system strongly influences his or her attitudes toward democratic liberties. In Nicaragua, where at the time of our survey the very nature of the regime was at stake, those whose party was in power proved notably less willing to grant civil liberties to the opposition than those who were members of that opposition. Even though those in power were on the political Left, an ideological position frequently associated in the United States and Europe with greater political tolerance, their views were less civil libertarian than those on the Right. The opposition Right, on the other hand, expressed the somewhat contradictory position of supporting both democratic norms and approval of violent civil disobedience to express their views. It is also revealing that many Sandinistas in Nicaragua, who came to power vowing to bring about democracy and end the Somozas' political repression, once in power opposed extending to others the very democratic liberties they supposedly sought. We believe that these findings demonstrate the contingent nature of attitudes toward democracy.

The overall high levels of support for democratic liberties in authoritarian Nicaragua is probably best explained by the long struggle against the Somoza dictatorship. The demand for democracy was on the lips of almost every Nicaraguan during that struggle. Later, when repression again rose as the victorious Sandinistas struggled against the effort by the U.S.-supported "contras" to overthrow their regime, opponents of the FSLN too would have had reason to value democratic liberties. All Nicaraguans who wanted to topple either the Somozas or the FSLN, or both, would have benefitted from or to some extent utilized extant civil liberties in their political struggles, which could have raised their utilitarian commitment to such rights. In Costa Rica, on the other hand, where all but a tiny proportion of the population is committed to the extant political system (as shown by the high levels of system support found there), granting critics of that system the right to run for office is likely seen as endangering that system. The Stouffer (1955) studies showed that intolerance toward communists in the United States reflected a fear that if allowed to influence the system, Marxists might eventually threaten democratic rule.

Whatever the source of democratic attitudes in Nicaragua, the country clearly constituted a case of very significant incongruity between structure and mass

political culture. This, plus the existence of strong support for democratic liberties among Nicaraguans in an authoritarian setting, and among both Costa Ricans and Nicaraguans in relatively poor Latin American nations, at a minimum call for further refinement of culturalist theories of the etiology of democracy.

*Manuscript submitted 19 September 1991*

*Final manuscript received 7 November 1992*

#### REFERENCES

- Almond, Gabriel. 1980. "The Intellectual History of the Civic Culture Concept." In *The Civic Culture Revisited*, ed. Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Almond, Gabriel, and Sidney Verba. 1963. *The Civic Culture*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Altemeyer, Bob. 1988. *Enemies of Freedom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Booth, John A. 1985. *The End and the Beginning: The Nicaraguan Revolution*. 2d ed. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Booth, John A. 1989. "Costa Rica: The Roots of Democratic Stability." In *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America*, ed. Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Booth, John A., and Mitchell A. Seligson. 1984. "The Political Culture of Authoritarianism in Mexico: A Reevaluation." *Latin American Research Review* 19:106–24.
- Booth, John A., and Thomas W. Walker. 1989. *Understanding Central America*. Boulder: Westview.
- Busey, James L. 1958. "Foundations of Political Contrast: Costa Rica and Nicaragua." *The Western Political Quarterly* 11:627–59.
- Clarke, Harold D., and Nitish Dutt. 1991. "Measuring Value Change in Western Industrialized Societies: The Impact of Unemployment." *American Political Science Review* 85:905–22.
- Dahl, Robert A. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Dealy, Glen. 1974. "The Tradition of Monistic Democracy in Latin America." In *Politics and Social Change in Latin America: The Distinct Tradition*, ed. Howard Wiarda. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Diamond, Larry, and Juan Linz. 1989. "Politics, Society and Democracy in Latin America." In *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America*, ed. Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Diamond, Larry, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds. 1989. *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Eckstein, Harry. 1988. "A Culturalist Theory of Political Change." *American Political Science Review* 82:789–804.
- Harrison, Lawrence E. 1985. *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind: The Latin American Case*. Lanham, MD: Madison Books and the Center for International Affairs, Harvard University.
- Harrison, Lawrence E. 1992. *Who Prospers? How Cultural Values Shape Economic and Political Success*. New York: Basic Books.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1988. "The Renaissance of Political Culture." *American Political Science Review* 82:1203–30.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- McClosky, Herbert, and Alida Brill. 1983. *Dimensions of Tolerance: What Americans Believe about Civil Liberties*. New York: Sage.
- Millett, Richard L. 1977. *Guardians of the Dynasty*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Morse, Richard. 1954. "Toward a Theory of Spanish Government." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 15:71–93.



- Muller, Edward N., Mitchell A. Seligson, and Ilter Turan. 1987. "Education, Participation and Support for Democratic Norms." *Comparative Politics* 20:19–33.
- Pye, Lucian. 1985. *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Seligson, Mitchell A. 1983. "On the Measurement of Diffuse Support: Some Evidence from Mexico." *Social Indicators Research* 12:1–24.
- Seligson, Mitchell A. 1987. "Costa Rica and Jamaica." In *Competitive Elections in Developing Countries*, ed. Myron Weiner and Ergun Ozbudun. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Seligson, Mitchell A., and Dan Caspi. 1983. "Arabs in Israel: Political Tolerance and Ethnic Conflict." *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 19:55–66.
- Seligson, Mitchell A., and Miguel Gómez B. 1989. "Ordinary Elections in Extraordinary Times: The Political Economy of Voting in Costa Rica." In *Elections and Democracy in Central America*, ed. John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Seligson, Mitchell A. and Edward N. Muller. 1987. "Democratic Stability and Economic Crisis: Costa Rica, 1978–1983." *International Studies Quarterly* 31:301–26.
- Shively, W. Philip. 1991. Review of *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*, by Ronald Inglehart. *The Journal of Politics* 53:235–39.
- Smith, Peter. 1974. "Political Legitimacy in Latin America." In *New Approaches to Latin American History*, ed. Richard Graham and Peter H. Smith. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Stouffer, Samuel A. 1955. *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties*. New York: Doubleday.
- Sullivan, John L., Michal Shamir, Patrick Walsh, and Nigel S. Roberts. 1985. *Political Tolerance in Context: Support for Unpopular Minorities in Israel, New Zealand, and the United States*. Boulder: Westview.
- Walker, Thomas W. 1981. *Nicaragua: The Land of Sandino*. Boulder: Westview.
- Wiarda, Howard J. 1974. "Social Change and Political Development in Latin America: Summary, Implications, Frontiers." In *Politics and Social Change in Latin America: The Distinct Tradition*, ed. Howard Wiarda. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- World Bank. 1992. *World Development Report, 1992*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mitchell A. Seligson is professor of political science and research professor, University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.

John A. Booth is regents professor of political science, University of North Texas, Denton, TX 76203–5338.