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A CRITICAL HISTORY OF BELIEF SYSTEMS RESEARCH IN POLITICAL
SCIENCE

The Ohio State University

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A CRITICAL HISTORY OF BELIEF SYSTEMS RESEARCH IN POLITICAL
SCIENCE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of
The Ohio State University

By

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1981

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The study of belief systems in political science represents an arena of considerable academic debate. A wide variety of approaches to that study can be found, as well as an equally diverse set of findings. As W. Lance Bennett has observed: "Our knowledge of ideology and mass belief systems has evolved from a fairly general consensus about findings, the theoretical implications of findings, and the agenda of future research questions, to a state of increasing disagreement about these matters." [Bennett 1977, 465] Time and again the discipline's journals present articles carrying academic accusations recriminations back and forth from one party to another. Recently, one party to the debate has opted out, saying that little is to be gained from "drafting comments on rebuttals to rejoinders" and from disputes wherein "substance is quickly displaced by form with an accompanying degeneration in scholarly tone." [Nie and Rabjohn 1979b, 193] Bennett himself believes that the many attempts to clarify and resolve matters in dispute have led only to further confusion and debate. [Bennett 1977, 465]

How then does one account for this sorry state of affairs? How did research into political belief systems come

to degenerate to the point where some practitioners in the field think the game is no longer worth the candle? Such questions raise serious issues about the growth of knowledge in social scientific inquiry, but few scholars have undertaken to address these issues. [Bennet 1977; Cobb 1973; Nelson 1977] The usual response to these growth of knowledge problems is to lay the blame on failures in intradisciplinary communication. How many times have we heard since the publication of Thomas Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions that two groups of scholars are talking past one another, that if only we had (or re-established) a paradigm then we could get on with the business of science? In this essay, however, I will offer an alternative account of the lack of progress in the belief systems field. It is my thesis that progress has been impeded not so much by failures of communication as by a simple neglect of heuristics, by a failure to fully consider one's research or problem context. [Lakatos 1976]

JUSTIFICATION

As many scholars have noted, the field of belief systems studies contains a good many essays of either substantive or epistemological nature. Why make yet another contribution to the literature on current research into political belief systems? The main answer is that in one respect or another existing analyses of the field and its debates are inade-

quate. The main focus of this remark is Bennett's work, which is by far the most serious attempt to resolve the growth of knowledge problems that beset the field.

Bennett is concerned about identifying conceptual and methodological difficulties, as well as communicational pathologies, that inhibit the growth of knowledge in mass belief studies. He thus offers "a model of the basis of scientific consensus" by which he "explains the emergence of the central breakdowns in knowledge, and suggests alternatives for the future development of the field." [Bennett 1977, 465] Relying on a background of Kuhnian philosophy of science, Bennett argues that research into belief systems during the "behavioral era" represents the routine activities of scholars in a period of normal science. More specifically, that period was (for belief systems research) a "paradigmatic era" characterized by broad agreement on the field's basic knowledge (the nature and organization of public opinion) and by recognition of scientific "achievements" that made the work of the scholarly community both common and cumulative. [Bennett 1977, 466-69]

In recent years, however, the field of belief systems research has become characterized by disputes about alternative conceptualizations and methods. The anomalies raised by such disputes have created a number of problems of communication which in turn have rendered the basic knowledge ac-

cepted during the 1950s and 1960s problematic. Given this situation, Bennett foresees four possibilities for the future: (1) decay--which emerges as a result of mounting anomalies responded to by a continuing proliferation of concepts, definitions and research findings; (2) the generation of counter-theories--which (without criteria for appraisal and choice) could "risk dividing the discipline [sic] into two potentially divergent and noncomparable lines of research" [Bennett 1977, 472]; (3) a full-blown scientific revolution comprising the replacement of the current paradigm by another; and finally, (4) the development of "a general, integrative, theory of mass beliefs ... constructed through the systematic identification and evaluation of the epistemological assumptions underlying disputed concepts and findings." [Bennett 1977, 473]

This account of the present state of research into political belief systems is, I think, misleading on a number of points. First of all, Bennett makes too much of the Kuhnian notion that divergent theories are thereby also "noncomparable" or "incommensurable"--a thesis that is itself subject to dispute. [Noble 1977] Moreover, Bennett not only assumes (or falls prey to the imputation of assuming) a strong thesis of incommensurability, but he also views proliferation of theories and concepts as a pernicious development. Yet it is perhaps the case that such proliferation is a major impetus for the growth (and not the stagnation and decay) of scientific knowledge.

The most serious defect in Bennett's account, however, is contained in the brief historical sketch that he provides.¹ Bennett seems too quick to assert that there was a paradigmatic consensus on which to base further research into political belief systems, without providing the necessary historical information. For example, he observes that the landmark achievements of the behavioral era (its paradigm) set "a clear agenda of normative and empirical problems" [Bennett 1977, 469] without specifying them or showing whether or how they were in fact pursued. Given the usual critiques of social science as pre-paradigmatic, it would seem to be more likely that the political belief systems field would contain from its beginnings a number of divergent traditions of research (and not the overarching paradigm that Bennett posits). Roger Cobb's own overview of the belief systems field finds this to be the case. According to Cobb, the

"belief-systems approach" is not an approach in the sense that it identifies a number of common research problems, all of which posit the same vocabulary or the same assumptions about a model of man.

Instead, the belief-systems perspective encompasses a great number of competing, not necessarily logically-related approaches. [Cobb 1973, 121-22]

¹ Bennett notes (apparently with some pride) that he has successfully resisted the "temptation" to provide a full history of the belief systems field. In what ways this is a temptation to be avoided is unclear, but he nevertheless proceeds in the next breath to offer a capsule sketch of that history. [Bennett 1977, 466n1ff]

Thus, it is important that a proper history of the field be done. Such a history is necessary, I believe, for three reasons. First, we need to decide whether an account of the field in terms of the rise and fall of a Kuhnian paradigm is indeed an accurate account. Second, an accurate history should provide us with enough material for assessing the reasons for the field's growth of knowledge problems. And finally, such a history would yield some explication of the assumptions underlying our inquiries, so that Bennett's ultimate aim of a general theory of political belief systems can be realized.

PREVIEW

Having established the problem as one concerning the development of research contexts and research traditions,² it is now important that we explore in some detail the contexts and traditions employed in the study of political belief

² At this point, I would like to say a word about the terminology to be used in this essay. "Research context" refers to the ensemble of influences upon a scholar's investigations, the factors that shape his or her inquiry. These influences include background knowledge, the work of exemplars, chosen research techniques, and the problems and goals of the inquiry. (This list should include those factors usually classified "external"—i.e., sociological and psychological factors. I will say more about these in the conclusion.) In using the term "research context," I hope to express much of what is common to the philosophies and historiographies of science of such figures as Thomas Kuhn, Imre Lakatos, Larry Laudan, and Stephen Toulmin, and yet avoid detailed explication and justification of any one particular framework. Given this definition, a "research tradition" will be conceived as the following through of a given research context.

systems. This is by no means an easy task insofar as the problem of identifying such entities has exercised the wits of historians and philosophers of science for some time. This difficulty is somewhat compounded by the obvious pluralism of political scientific research into belief systems. Though the term "belief system" came to be used as an alternative to the divergent uses and bad connotations of "ideology," its current usage by political scientists and others gives "belief system" meanings as broad and murky as those of "ideology." As a result, "Belief systems research now subsumes many of those studies formerly under the heading of ideology, as do some of the attitudinal studies as well--for example, the voting studies, public opinion research, and the like." [Cobb 1973, 124] If we are to make any headway in the study of political belief systems, we must come to grips with this plethora of concepts, methods and conclusions. And this coming to grips requires the sort of historical research I will undertake in this essay.

I am concerned here with an examination of the nature and consequences of the research contexts in which political science work on belief systems began. What have been the central research questions posed by Philip Converse, Robert Lane, and scholars inspired or influenced by them? Why did they begin the study of belief systems and what did they expect to learn from it? What has become of these researches, that is, have the important questions been answered and has there been progress in this area of political science?

In pursuing such questions as these, my main focus will be on the research contexts of the main figures in the belief systems field. Chapters two and three will be concerned with the work of Philip Converse. Converse's work can be located into two such contexts-- one concerning attitudes and their structuring into belief systems; the other concerning the transmission or communication of political information (including belief systems) in society. Lane's work, on the other hand, can be treated as falling within the boundaries of a psychofunctional context that is concerned with motivations, ego defenses and the like. Lane's work will be discussed then in chapter four. Within each chapter, I will offer an elucidation of the appropriate research context and discuss the heuristic³ problems that arise within each context. The concluding chapter will ascertain the lessons to be learned from the investigation--lessons not only for the history of science but also for the belief systems field itself.

³ The term "heuristic" is used in the sense of "referring to considerations and discussions of the research context," a sense derived from Imre Lakatos [1976]. Other senses do exist but I will not intend them.

Chapter II

ATTITUDE STRUCTURES AND BELIEF SYSTEMS

Common to the understandings of science and scientific progress held by contemporary philosophers is a focus on some broad commitments that scientists make (explicitly or implicitly) when they undertake any given type of research. These commitments are either to a certain body of theory, to the employment of certain methods, or even to a certain mode of seeing the world (a gestalt or metaphysic). The precise nature of these commitments and their role in inquiry is, however, a much-debated issue about which no consensus appears to have been reached. There have been numerous suggestions, though, ranging from Terence Ball's (following Imre Lakatos [1970] and Donald Moon [1975]) suggestion that social science research programs contain "hard cores" that consist of a conception of human nature [Ball 1976, 167], to Larry Laudan's concern with research traditions' ontological and methodological commitments [Laudan 1977, 78ff], to Alan Musgrave's assertion that perhaps commitment is too strong a concept for what actually occurs--a scientist's pursuit of his or her own individual work that can be grouped with other work only retrospectively [Musgrave 1976, 466, 483n10].

Fortunately, there is no immediate need to resolve the philosophical debate on the nature of commitment in science. After all, such a key issue ought not to be resolved a priori; rather, it should be explored only after we have considered actual cases of scientific inquiry. (That is indeed what shall be done, for I will return to this issue in the concluding chapter.) Moreover, there need be no compulsion to sift through many pages of print for an obscure clue to an even more recondite assumption about the way the world works in general. In the case of Converse, his writings provide fairly explicit indications of his research contexts. Since our task is made somewhat easier thereby, it is now time to explore in some detail the research contexts of Philip Converse.

One more word before we begin, though. In the last chapter, I noted that Converse's work can be treated in the framework of two research contexts. One such context concerns the diffusion of political information in society. That context will be discussed in the next chapter. In this chapter, I will explore Converse's work in terms of an "attitudinal" context--one concerned with attitude structures and belief systems. In the course of this chapter, I will elucidate the nature of this context, discuss Converse's conception of the principles of attitude structuring that underlie coherent belief systems, and examine his major conceptual innovation--the concept of constraint. As these

points are raised, attention will be focused on two major heuristic problems--namely, a facile abandonment of early commitments without discussion or evaluation, and inadequate follow-through resulting in stunted conceptual development.

THE ATTITUDINAL CONTEXT

Evidence that one of Converse's research contexts is an "attitudinal" one can be found in a definition of public opinion that he recently provided:

The term "public opinion" is a handy household word for what a psychologist might think of as an aggregation of certain types of attitudes across a community or constituency. An attitude, as classically analyzed, involves some kind of affect toward an object of cognition. Where public opinion is concerned, of course, the objects are assumed by definition to be public ones. [Converse 1975, 78]

It is clear from such a statement that Converse regards politics as comprising phenomena fit for study by means of psychological concepts, such as "attitude," and presumably by means of the methods employed by psychologists. The political aspect of the study of public opinion emerges in the fact that public opinion concerns social aggregates and public objects of cognition such as political parties, candidates and issues.

That Converse should approach political topics in this fashion is not surprising, since his training is that of the social psychologist. He received his Ph.D. from The University of Michigan in 1958 in Social Psychology, one of two

such programs in the country at that time. Though his dissertation does not deal with the subject of belief systems it is quite clear that attitude theory and research comprised a substantial part of Converse's training. This can be seen not only in the general state of social psychology at the time⁴ but also in the presence of such attitude theorists as Daniel Katz and Theodore Newcomb at Michigan during Converse's student days.

Since public opinion has been defined by Converse in terms of attitudes, let us briefly examine the state of attitude theory in the late 1950s and early 1960s. William McGuire and M. Brewster Smith have each provided brief histories of social psychological research during those years. McGuire notes that in the first two decades of this century social psychology was simply equated with the concept and study of attitudes. This identification lasted until the 1950s, having reached a peak in the 1930s. Though the study of attitudes declined in importance for a time, it began to flourish again in the late 1950s to the point where by the late 1960s it became the most popular research area in social psychology. [McGuire 1969, 137]

⁴ Evidence for this can be found in the capsule histories of the field in McGuire [1969] and Smith [1973], as well as in Converse's own recollection that social psychology "stressed at the time [of his graduate studies] the study of attitudes and attitude structures." [Converse 1981]

Whereas McGuire attributes this revival to the influence of Carl Hovland and to a cyclical return of interest (fashion?), Smith identifies a number of theoretical and technical developments that contributed to the renaissance. [Smith 1973, 60-62] Early research into attitudes had been predominantly descriptive and correlational, with the results largely uninteresting and insubstantial. But several developments in the 1930s and 1940s altered the shape of such research. First to occur was the invention of public opinion polls or sample surveys. This technique enabled researchers to end their reliance on college sophomores as subjects for study and to enter the territory of political life. The postwar years brought forth an academic interest in psychoanalytic theory and resulted in work delving into the psychodynamic or motivational bases of political attitudes. A final development during the war and immediately afterwards was the growth of a laboratory-based experimental social psychology. The focus then shifted to attitude change in response to propaganda, a focus rooted in general psychological theories. All has not been completely well in social psychology, however. Smith notes that for a time, "these process-oriented developments proceeded in virtual isolation from the content-oriented tradition of field research using survey methods." [Smith 1973, 62] This condition has left Smith wondering about the possibility of achieving a reconciling balance of research strategies.

Two points can now be made. First, it is apparent that attitude theory and research was a going concern in the years prior to the appearance of Converse's famous mass belief systems article. [Converse 1964] The second point concerns the survey research development credited by Smith with bringing attitude research face-to-face with political life. Survey studies, like experimental studies of attitude change, had received an impetus from the federal government. Two top figures in the history of survey research, Rensis Likert and Angus Campbell, were originally employed by the Department of Agriculture's Division of Program Surveys to study agriculture policies at first and then (during World War II) public finance policy. After the war the two helped to found the Survey Research Center and the Institute for Social Research at The University of Michigan. In the 1950s the attention of the ISR/SRC turned to political behavior in general and voting behavior in particular. This work paid less attention to the demographic predictors of voting than to "intervening variables"--the various "psychological factors thought to mediate between the individual's external world and his ultimate behavior." [Institute for Social Research, 12] These factors have since come to be described as partisan attitudes, i.e., attitudes toward political parties, issues, and candidates.

From an original concern with more or less isolated policy attitudes, the SRC election studies in 1956 began to give

"major emphasis to an exploration of the patterns of political belief which exist in the American electorate. Political ideologies were of primary concern rather than opinions regarding specific political issues. [Such studies] sought to illuminate ways in which these belief patterns are associated with perceptions of the parties as instruments of political action." [Institute for Social Research, 13] In short, the point to be made at this stage is that Converse was very much a part [Converse 1981] of a research effort directed as using presidential elections as a vantage point from which to treat phenomena such as political attitudes and political ideologies.

Before we move on, a word needs to be said about Converse's chosen method--survey research. The years of training in social psychology (insofar as it stressed the study of attitudes and insofar as it occurred within the confines of The University of Michigan) make this choice of technique fairly natural, in the sense of conforming to one's expectations. In a way, then, Converse's use of survey research to study belief systems represents an attempt to extend a favored tool or skill developed in one area to use in another, where one might discover both its usefulness and its limitations.⁵ Beyond this, however, I would guess that Converse

⁵ This is also the explanation given by Lane for his use of psychoanalytic methods and categories. [Lane 1981] In a cranky mood, one might refer to this phenomenon as the imperialism of method.

became enamored of survey research for the reasons usually cited by political scientists in discussions of research techniques, namely that

surveys provide data on a large number of people in their varied and normal settings. They provide quantifiable measures on a notable range of behaviors and beliefs, thus opening to the researcher the analytic powers of an increasingly sophisticated statistics. And they do so using scientific bases for sample selection that justify confidence about the broader universe to which findings can be generalized. [Boyd and Hyman 1975, 268]

In this spirit, Converse criticizes Karl Mannheim for turning his back on measurement when it comes to studying political ideologies. [Converse 1964, 206] Moreover, Converse has since confessed that one of his aims in the belief systems work has been "to raise some intelligent concern about the nature and roots of respondent answers to mass survey questions." [Converse 1981, emphasis in the original]⁶

Of what use, then, is the survey method in the study of political belief systems? On the one hand, the usefulness of the method is obvious. We want to know what people think about objects of their experience, so we ask them. On the other hand, however, the utility of the method can be somewhat problematic. For instance, the standard policy issue questions can treat attitudes in a fairly unidimensional

⁶ He apparently hoped (in the 1950s) to show the mistakenness of those antagonistic to survey research as well as of those who were too trusting of the results obtained from surveys. One wonders why the study of political belief systems was chosen as the vehicle for such intentions, when a more direct route could have been taken.

fashion, even though attitude theorists continue to insist that attitudes are highly complex constructs. [Boyd and Hyman 1975, 278-81]

Moreover, Converse himself admits that survey research is highly useful in answering only some of our questions about attitudes and belief systems. The method, he says, "is admirably suited to assess character of the interaction between citizen and government, that is, the functioning of public opinion in the kind of communication system that democratic institutions become in practice, if not necessarily in theory." [Converse 1975, 87] Survey research relies upon a directed-probe approach that best mirrors the context in which policy decisions have to be made both by the elite (in administrations and legislatures) and by the masses (in elections and referenda). As such, it can yield information about the extent to which (1) elites and masses mean the same thing by the same symbol or concept, (2) they treat the same issues as part of the same policy cluster, and (3) they share basic information (both current and historical) about political objects and events. In short, then, the survey approach is perhaps best suited to a study of the degree of political representation.

But if we think about the kinds of things we want to know about belief systems, the forced-choice, directed-probe approach of the survey is inappropriate. For one thing, it

lends itself to an interpretation of attitude structuring that speaks only of statistical correlation. It cannot (in its present format) get at the justifications one might have for one's beliefs or attitudes. Nor can it explore attitude structures based on functional relationships other than the means-end and class hierarchy types, that is, it cannot treat attitudes structured along need-based lines. Converse regards such matters, though, as falling into the realm of individual political psychology and hence outside his concern. As we shall see later in this chapter, this defense will not suffice for a number of reasons. For now, the conclusion is only that the study of belief systems for Converse assumes as a point of departure the social psychology of attitudes.

THE NATURE OF ATTITUDES

Given Converse's definition of public opinion in terms of attitudes, and given the SRC's project of examining attitudes and ideologies in presidential elections, some discussion of the nature of attitudes is in order. Indeed, one of the major controversies in attitude theory concerns the matter of the conceptual definition of an attitude. This controversy arises for the most part because (as McGuire observes) attitudes are most commonly treated as "a mediating concept, an abstraction partially defined in terms of various antecedent conditions and consequent behaviors."

[McGuire 1969, 141] Possession of an attitude thus can be only inferred, not directly ascertained. As a mediator or an intervening variable, an attitude becomes identified with some kind of learned predisposition to respond to an object in a certain way. Theodore Newcomb (in his textbook, Social Psychology) defines an attitude as an individual's "pre-
disposition to perform, perceive, think, and feel in relation to [a motive pattern or goal]. The concept of attitude is a shorthand way of saying that people learn as a result of experience to orient themselves towards objects and symbols." [Newcomb 1950, 118-19, emphasis in the original. Cf. Smith 1973, 57-58 and Katz and Stotland 1959, 428]

To a great extent, Converse has accepted this view of attitudes. Consider The American Voter, where Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller and Donald Stokes admittedly "assume that most events or conditions that bear directly upon behavior are perceived in some form or other by the individual prior to the determined behavior, and that much of behavior consists of reactions to these perceptions." [Campbell et al. 1960, 27] Converse himself acknowledges that to view human beings as bundles of attitudes "is certainly a heuristic viewpoint and undoubtedly a faithful one as well." [Converse 1970, 177] But, beyond the view of attitudes as intervening variables, the question as to what attitudes are like remains.

From Newcomb's definition, it should be clear that attitudes are not unidimensional. The most common view is that attitudes are comprised of a cognitive, an affective, and a conative component. The cognitive component represents the perception of an object in its simplest terms. In other words, the cognitive component is that part which enables one to recognize an object. It can comprise as well more elaborate beliefs about the object, particularly about its essential characteristics and its relationships with other objects. Attitudes also have an affective component that simply represents a pro or con feeling toward the object. (For some attitude theorists this evaluative aspect represents the core or central component, insofar as it assigns good or bad qualities to the object.) Finally, some theorists assert that there is an additional, conative component that refers to the action-orientation or behavioral tendencies an individual has toward an object.

How do Converse's views relate to this scheme? That he generally accepts it seems clear, yet some doubt remains about which component of an attitude is more theoretically significant. On the one hand, he seems to believe that the affective component has priority. This can be seen in his definition of an attitude as "some kind of affect toward an object of cognition" [Converse 1975, 78] and in the following comment of Campbell et al.:

evaluation is the stuff of political life, and the cognitive image formed by the individual of the

political world tends to be positively and negatively toned in its several parts. This mixture of cognition and evaluation, of belief and attitude, of percept and affect is so complete that we will speak of the individual's cognitive and affective map of politics. [Campbell et al. 1960, 42, emphasis in the original]

Thus, one's cognitions, beliefs and perceptions are only preludes to the attitude itself, not parts of it.

On the other hand, though, there is some evidence that priority actually lies with the cognitive component. One can note first of all Campbell et al.'s tendency to conceive of politics in terms of conscious perceptions and reactions to them. Much of the focus in their work concerns major elements of politics (parties, candidates and issues) that are known to individuals by means of symbolic representations. Secondly, one can note that a revised version of Newcomb's social psychology text (coauthored with Ralph Turner and Philip Converse) defines attitudes as stored cognitions having positive or negative associations. [Newcomb et al. 1965, 40] Attitudes thus represent motivation predispositions, that is, they are cognitions (albeit with a valence) oriented toward mobilizing and directing energy "in a selective fashion toward states of affairs ... called goals." [Newcomb et al. 1965, 22] Attitudes, when so defined, are highly cognitive in nature.⁷

⁷ This has been noted by Daniel Katz and Ezra Stotland, who place such attitudes in an "object-instrumental" category. Attitudes in this category comprise evaluations of objects as means to the attainment of one's goals. A prime example would be one's favoring a political party that promis-

That Converse places great store in a view of attitudes as learned predispositions toward objects can be seen from his stress on the information base as a means of understanding opinion formation in the mass public. [Converse 1975, 79-83] Also pertinent is his remark that "there is a very real sense in which attitudes take practice ..." [Converse 1970, 177, emphasis in the original]⁸ But now that we have looked at the nature of attitudes it is time to explore the ways in which attitudes become organized or structured into belief systems.

ATTITUDE STRUCTURES

As noted above, the SRC research in which Converse participated concerned not only investigations of important political attitudes, but also explorations of political ideologies. However, given the varied uses of the concept of ideology [Mannheim 1936, 55-108; Geertz 1964, 47-76; Lane 1973, 83-84], many political scientists have expressed a repeated concern for developing some neutral shorthand term for generalized orientations to politics. Campbell et al. voiced this concern and employed the term "attitude structures," which Converse himself dropped in favor of "belief systems." The obvious referent of all such terms is an ov-

es prosperity. [Katz and Stotland 1959, 439]

⁸ This priority of cognition leads Converse to a concern with information and communication, a concern to be discussed in the next chapter.

erarching frame of reference within which people organize information about politics and social life, and by means of which people assess and evaluate the objects of their experience. The task in this section, then, is to examine Converse's conceptualization of a belief system. In particular, the focus will be on the basic organizing principles that underlie a belief system and on the psychological prerequisites of such a system.

Central to Converse's views is the conception of a belief system as "a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence." [Converse 1964, 207; cf. Campbell et al. 1960, 189] This definition signals what I take to be Converse's major contribution (his main conceptual innovation) to the study of political belief systems, viz., the concept of constraint. "Constraint" as a concept begins as an extension of the functional relationships among attitudes that are isolated by Campbell et al. They find several such relationships to be important in understanding political attitude structures, to wit: (1) means-end relationships, that is, when one belief or opinion refers to an object that is a means to another object referred to by another belief or opinion; (2) when the beliefs or opinions fulfill a similar need; and (3) when the beliefs or opinions are organized into a class hierarchy. The identification of any of these types of relationship (like the presence of an

attitude itself) is dependent upon the analyst's powers of inference. In practical terms, however, this inference is conceived of as the ability to predict that an individual holds one belief or opinion from evidence that he or she holds another. [Campbell et al. 1960, 191] This predictive capability is carried over by Converse into his definition of static constraint. [Converse 1964, 207]

The concept of functional interdependence for Converse goes beyond this sense of predictive capacity to include a notion of dynamic constraint. Dynamic constraint "refers to the probability that a change in the perceived status ... of one idea-element would psychologically require, from the point of view of the actor, some compensating changes in the status of idea-elements elsewhere in the configuration." [Converse 1964, 208, emphasis in the original] The view stated here is obviously heavily influenced by cognitive consistency theories of attitude change, but a discussion of these theories would take us afield. The point is that Converse makes a significant addition to the conception of a general orientation to politics used by Campbell et al.

To repeat, the concern at this stage is with the concept of the functional relationships (or, in Converse's shorthand, constraints) that underlie a coherent attitude structure or belief system. In The American Voter the type of functional relationship that looms largest is that of a

class hierarchy: "Attitude structures are often thought of as hierarchies in which more specific attitudes interact with attitudes toward the more general class of objects in which the specific object is seen to belong." [Campbell et al. 1960, 190] Such a view apparently was rather common in the social psychology of the 1950s. Newcomb for instance speaks of general attitudes providing a frame of reference for attitudes toward specific objects. Thus, attitudes toward the same general class of objects would tend to be similar, though they might be directed toward rather different specific objects. [Newcomb 1950, 223] Katz and Stotland also discuss the organization of attitudes into structures called value systems that comprise attitudes "integrated about some abstractions concerning general classes of objects." [Katz and Stotland 1959, 432] Attitude organization thus represents an hierarchical arrangement of attitudes, based on the principles of generalization and abstraction. This arrangement is effected primarily through the logic of class relations, although Campbell et al. as well as Katz and Stotland all admit that logical errors may be made and yet permit the organization of attitudes into a coherent structure.

A curious feature emerges in Campbell et al.'s treatment of attitude structure, however. The concept was designed to replace "ideology" given the latter's unsavory features. Katz and Stotland also have provided an attempt to contrast an attitude structure with an ideology. They note, for ex-

ample, the difference between a value system that represents the individual's own organization of his or her own attitudes and an ideology that comprises a more or less impersonal set of beliefs intended to "justify the position of a group or institution" in society. [Katz and Stotland 1959, 432] Such a view comes close to the Marxist or Mannheimian usage of "ideology" and locates it very definitely in the context of contemporary political controversies and social conflicts.

Yet in The American Voter the concept of ideology as an orientation to politics or as a pattern of political beliefs loses this political and social context. It instead becomes merely a particular type of attitude structure with certain characteristic features, none of which refer explicitly to politics. Foremost among these features are elaborateness, a tightly knit integration of its parts, and reference to a wide range of objects. [Campbell et al. 1960, 193] Ideologies lose their significance as the political weapons of social groups and become instead a set of abstractions that enable individuals to render life meaningful. [Campbell et al. 1960, 204; cf. Geertz 1964, 57] The ostensible distinction between an ideology and an attitude structure all but disappears, then, as Campbell et al. proclaim that they

are interested in the presence or absence of certain abstractions that have to do with ideology; but we are also interested in the degree to which the individual's political world is differentiated and, most important, in the nature of the degree of "connectedness" between the elements that are

successfully discriminated. In short, we are interested in the structure of thought that the individual applies to politics ... [Campbell et al. 1960, 222]

In The American Voter the shift away from the study of ideology per se and toward an examination of attitude structures is prompted by findings of the mass public's apparent insensitivity to policy controversies during elections. Perhaps, it is reasoned, some underlying value system or attitude structure could be found to reconcile inattention to public policy issues with the fact of stable party identification. Added to the puzzle are the repeated findings of a low level of political information among the mass public. Converse himself seeks to address such problems in his 1964 article. As he later described the problem-situation, given the "frequent gaps in information [among the mass public] even with respect to rather prominent axes of public policy debate, it has been natural to ask what might be said of broader attitudinal structures and ideological thinking in the general public." [Converse 1975, 84] That is, if people are unable to process the relatively specific information they receive daily about concrete political objects, are they nevertheless capable of manipulating abstractions of the sort that organize those bits into more or less coherent belief systems?

Such a question becomes important once we adopt a concept of a belief system that stresses the class hierarchy mode of

relationship among idea-elements (beliefs and attitudes). Converse's well-known position on the matter is that the capacity to develop and manipulate abstractions is not widely shared among members of the mass public. Various sophisticated elites (such as political activists and political analysts) do have such a capacity "to approach political decisions at a rarefied level" and "to maintain an ordered view of remote events." [Campbell et al. 1960, 250, 253] Thus, for an individual to be considered ideological in his or her thinking about politics, he or she must have the ability to carry on political discourse in the articulate and knowledgeable fashion characteristic of the elites. A lack of sufficient background knowledge of politics, and more importantly, a lack of the cognitive and analytical skills to make use of such knowledge, constitutes and hence explains the failure of people to evaluate political objects (parties, candidates, issues) in ideological terms. As one moves downward on an information scale, says Converse, the

net result ... is that the constraint declines across the universe of idea-elements, and that the range of relevant belief systems becomes narrower and narrower....

At the same time ... the character of the objects that are central in a belief system undergoes a systematic change. These objects shift from the remote, generic, and abstract to the increasingly simple, concrete, or "close to home." [Converse 1964, 213]

The mass public is thus non-ideological not only in relative terms (when compared to political elites) but also in more absolute terms (when considered sui generis). For ex-

ample, members of the mass public rarely show significant levels of cohesion or internal integration among their views on public policy controversies. [Converse 1975, 84] Furthermore, the mass public appears to lack the capacity to manipulate the abstractions that enable an individual to organize information about and to evaluate political objects. The conclusion is that members of the mass public do not have the cognitive skills required to think about politics at a rudimentary, let alone an ideological or sophisticated, level. Campbell et al. thus

suggest that once below the higher deciles of the population [the politically sophisticated], there are major barriers to understanding that disrupt the processing of even that information about public policy to which the person attends. To some degree these barriers are the product of an inadequate backlog of information. In some measure too they reflect the incapacity to handle abstractions that permit the individual to maintain an ordered view of remote events. [Campbell et al. 1960, 253]

To some extent, then, the authors of The American Voter find the cognitive limitations of the mass public to be relatively permanent and inherent in the individual. Yet some minor (both quantitatively and qualitatively) changes in the distribution of ideological thinking in the mass public may accompany periods of increased education or social and political conflict. [Campbell et al. 1960, 256]⁹

⁹ In clarifying his views on recent studies of the American electorate undertaken by Norman Nie and associates, Converse has stated that the "discussions of cognitive limitations ... occurred in two rather different contexts, one that implied relative mutability and one that did not." The former context concerned the educational barrier to a sophisticated view of politics, a barrier that would fade

CRITIQUE

A few studies of the 1970s have challenged this view of belief systems, not only with regard to what the organizing principles are that underlie a coherent belief system but also with regard to the cognitive capacities of members of the mass public. Steven Brown (among others) has criticized Converse for assuming that the logic by which the sophisticated observer organizes the political world is the way in which attitude structuring should be accomplished. A mere lack of agreement with the sophisticate's view of what goes with what (or of what framework best comprehends political life) does not signify, Brown suggests, that someone lacks a coherent scheme to make sense of politics. [Brown 1970, 67] As an alternative, he offers the idea that where sophisticated observers hold articulate "forensic" ideologies, the masses tend to hold "latent" ideologies¹⁰ --world views that serve the same psychological purposes for the masses as the forensic ideologies serve for the elite. In order to adequately understand the mass public's belief systems, then,

with the upgrading of education among the electorate. The latter context "suggested that in addition to lack of interest and contextual knowledge there might be much more recalcitrant limits on cognitive capacities to organize political perceptions with the use of capping abstractions ...". This barrier would fade slowly (if at all) under stable political conditions and more rapidly under conditions of upheaval; however, there would not be a sweeping change such that people who thought about politics in an unsophisticated fashion would suddenly be found to think in highly ideological terms. [Converse 1975, 99-100]

¹⁰ These terms are taken by Brown from Lane [1962].

it is necessary to explore political reasoning (to draw out the latent ideologies) by examining people's views on the nature and limits of such values as freedom, equality and power; on current American society and politics; on what a utopian society would be like; and, in general, on what one's fellows are like as people and as political actors. [Brown 1970, 63n13] By exploring such views one finds a fair degree of coherence among people's more abstract political perceptions, a degree sufficient to conceive most people as having political belief systems in some sense.¹¹

Eugene Litwak, Nancy Hooyman and Donald Warren offer another study that suggests that the standards employed by Converse in evaluating the reasoning of the mass public are misleading. They find that "middle-Americans" are rather capable of developing a "causal belief system"—one that locates an individual in a social structure and offers a diagnosis of, and a remedy for, one's politically relevant problems. [Litwak et al. 1973, 318] The causal belief systems of middle-Americans differ from those attributed to the so-

¹¹ Converse has admitted that this is indeed the case, but he believes that the incompatibility between this view and his own is overstated. [Converse 1975, 86] Harry Wilker and Lester Milbrath make a similar point, noting the reasonableness of individuals having stable beliefs about abstract values coexistent with exhibiting "chaotic patterns of response to issues of policy ..." [Wilker and Milbrath 1972, 44n9] This is not doubted, but the lack of exploration of Converse's sources of constraint typology leads political scientists to attribute a similar chaos to the mass public's views on the nature of general values as well.

phisticated observers of politics in that the elements of the former are noncorrelated, yet this fact should not be taken to mean (as Converse interprets the noncorrelated belief systems of the mass public) that such belief systems are incoherent or irrational. Rather, Litwak et al. believe they have found that ordinary people can develop and exhibit a fairly "self-conscious causal system for explaining events and a set of 'reasonable' principles for making decisions or getting information when [they have] no knowledge." [Litwak et al. 1973, 330]

What the Conversean conception of a belief system relies upon, then, is the presumption that the key to attitude structuring is a certain degree of cognitive capacity. One thing that separates Converse from his critics is the matter of just what would be the most appropriate indicators of this capacity. Converse-type studies have tended on the whole to rely upon two major indicators for cognitive ability, namely, the level of formal education and a respondent's performance on political information tests. In some cases the two are treated as a unit, for as James Stimson notes, "Cognitive ability rests in perceiving 'facts' and integrating them into a larger framework." [Stimson 1976, 144-45] Formal education provides individuals with the all-important ability to manipulate abstractions or at least some familiarity with the terms of elite discourse. Restricted education, however, creates serious and perhaps insurmountable

obstacles to ideological thinking. In addition, having a fund of basic political information is essential for the mass public to share a perspective even remotely resembling that of the elite, so that policy communication in a democracy can proceed efficiently. [Converse 1975, 81, 99]

Two basic responses have been made to this view by Converse's critics. One is to say that the ability to manipulate abstractions (or the level of formal education) is less important for generating a coherent belief system than the factor of salience, of one's interest in a matter or of the prominence of the matter in one's experience. Paul Dawson, for example, suggests that political objects must have personal relevance for people in order for well-articulated belief systems to emerge, in order for attitudes to exhibit any degree of functional interdependence. [Dawson 1979, 107]

Beyond this emphasis on salience, other scholars assert that political information tests are inappropriate indicators of cognitive ability. According to Litwak et al., the requirements of living in a modern and complex society do not make it cost-effective to attempt to obtain and hold on to large amounts of diverse, detailed political information. The rational person instead "gains the knowledge necessary to handle his own job and delegates responsibility for other problems to persons who, because they are acknowledged experts or have demonstrated their commitment in the past, he feels represent his interest (e.g., doctors in medicine, lawyers

in law, legislators in politics, etc.)." [Litwak et al. 1973, 330]¹²

Underlying these differences about the indicators of cognitive ability is a more fundamental, theoretical difference about what is important for people to know and understand about politics. Converse's view is based on a "trickle-down" theory of social communication and socially originated attitude constraint. Such a perspective relies upon a number of problematic assumptions that reduce to the idea that the mass public gets all its information (pre-packaged) from the sophisticated elites, and then either reproduces faithfully or else badly muddles it. When this view is conjoined with the view that the priorities and perspectives of the elite must be shared by the mass public in order for democracy to work, then it must be noted that people have very different "structures of relevance," in Alfred Schutz's phrase.

¹² Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann make a similar point when they note that the largest part of our social stock of knowledge consists of "recipe knowledge" to help us master routine problems. We have little interest in going beyond such recipes until our problems can no longer be handled by them; but even then, the recipes provide a procedure for seeking out further information or expertise. Moreover, our "social stock of knowledge differentiates reality by degrees of familiarity. It provides complex and detailed information concerning those sectors of everyday life with which [one] must deal. It provides much more general and imprecise information on remoter sectors." [Berger and Luckmann 1966, 43] The point is that a focus on the concrete and the close-to-home is not the irrational thing it appears to be in Converse's scheme of things; rather, it is part and parcel of our existence and experience.

It should be apparent that a conception of political belief systems that focuses on the individual's cognitive abilities or on the relationship among idea-elements is, as Lane suggests, "at least partly an inquiry into political reasoning and therefore requires an analysis of the ways in which people think about politics." [Lane 1973, 98, emphasis in the original] Converse's primary response to all of this has been mainly to redefine the point of his inquiry into belief systems. In his Handbook of Political Science article he avows no concern with individual political psychology, with "studies of the way in which individuals develop, process, and generalize whatever political perceptions they may have." [Converse 1975, 87] If one were to study such things, then the broad-net, depth interview approach of Lane would enable the researcher to find greater political content and organization among the perceptions and attitudes of the mass public. Converse asserts, however, that his study of belief systems has so little to do with political psychology that the directed-probe approach of the SRC election studies is preferable. Rather than questions of the psychology of individuals, he prefers to study the role of public opinion "in the broader functioning of those mass-elite democratic communication mechanisms most obviously, if not exclusively, embodied in popular elections or referenda ..."
[Converse 1975, 89]¹³

¹³ This claim has some merit to it [see Converse 1964, 206-07] but I wish to reserve discussion of it for the

Yet for him to claim that he is solely engaged in political communication research is for Converse to turn his back on the research context of The American Voter. Recall that Campbell et al. profess an interest not only in the immediate precursors of the voting decision but also in "the structure of thought that the individual applies to politics." Also recall that they regard the relationship between beliefs that serve a similar psychological need as one of the important functional interdependencies that occur among the idea-elements within a belief system. Clearly, then, Converse's colleagues show a concern with questions of individual psychology and political reasoning, a concern that he has since disavowed. If (as Converse says) the SRC approach is inappropriate for such concerns, then perhaps he has chosen the wrong path for a study of belief systems. J. Harry Wray has come to this conclusion recently, noting that Converse "attempts to show that the masses do not have a 'contextual grasp of 'standard' political belief systems.' He speculates, but he does not inquire, as to what kinds of belief systems, if any, the masses have." [Wray 1979, 1176; quoted material from Converse 1964, 213] Surprisingly, Converse does not seize the opportunity to address the question of whether his research effort has been miscast from the start. He writes instead that "there is nothing whatever in [Wray's] note that I feel is wrong-headed." [Converse 1979,

next chapter, when I will explore a "communicational" research context.

1182]

It appears that Converse shares what Bennett has called "a natural reluctance to give basic assumptions a critical examination; [for] to do so effectively reopens the exploration of territory that many practitioners regard as already conquered." [Bennett 1977, 471] Converse has tended to neglect findings that potentially challenge his view of the cognitive abilities of the mass public, though it is not so much outright neglect as a reluctance to address the basic theoretical issues. Following from this neglect, has been an inability to see and comment upon the ways in which his effort has diverged from the research context set in The American Voter. Thus, he has not addressed the question of whether or not his research effort has been miscast or at least mislabeled since the 1964 article.

Bennett's remark implies that these actions can be explained or even excused as "natural." Yet they cannot be so excused, for the issues raised by them go to the heart of Converse's inquiries. Inattention to the origins of the inquiry (to its research context) leads Converse to redefine its point in the face of opposition and criticism. This kind of maneuver is terribly ad hoc, and such "strategic retreats" [Lakatos 1976, 26ff] do not serve either to increase our knowledge of the phenomena or to put the inquiry on a more secure footing. They instead attempt to restrict the

domain of validity of the research without giving adequate reasons. Reasons as to why Converse's effort and as to why belief systems research should turn from a focus on understanding patterns of political belief to a focus on policy representation are very much needed. Thus, far from being merely a "natural" tendency, the neglect of critical assumptions and presumptions (of the research context) lead precisely to the kind of growth of knowledge problems that Bennett and others lament.¹⁴

CONSTRAINT

As noted above, Converse's attitudinal research context defines a belief system in terms of the constraint or functional interdependence among the various idea-elements of the system. While nearly all students of political belief systems insist upon a criterion of coherence or consistency, for Converse it becomes the key characteristic of a belief system. Indeed, in his collaboration with Newcomb and Turner, Converse concludes that "object-belonging-

¹⁴ I am inclined to accept Feyerabend's view that the history of science contains many episodes of the use of ad hoc strategies that reduce content and of the use of deception or propaganda as one research tradition seeks to survive or supersede a rival. [Feyerabend 1975, passim] But to argue that this condition is to be passively accepted or that it will necessarily lead to progress is mistaken. Feyerabend, I think, would agree with Alasdair MacIntyre that: "It is yet another mark of a degenerate tradition that it has contrived a set of epistemological defenses which enable it to avoid being put in question or at least avoid recognising that it is being put in question by rival traditions." [MacIntyre 1977, 461]

ness"--considering certain objects as going together--comprises the main principle of all cognitive organization. Constraint, at base, refers to the principle of what goes with what, and can be treated either in a static fashion (correlation of attitudes) or in a dynamic fashion (cognitive balancing mechanisms). In introducing the concept of constraint to the study of political belief systems, Converse lays out a typology of the major sources of constraint--viz., the logical, psychological, and social sources. Because constraint has been the subject of much debate in the belief systems field, and because neglect of the research context has stunted development of this important conceptual innovation, it is now time to discuss Converse's typology in some detail.

Logical constraint represents for Converse the prototypical mode of the organization of attitudes. What is involved is the ability to hold related attitudes toward related objects, with the attitudes comprising terms in a valid deductive argument. For instance, as Converse notes, one "cannot believe that government expenditures should be increased, that government revenues should be decreased, and that a more favorable balance of the budget should be achieved all at the same time." [Converse 1964, 209] This kind of constraint is conceived to be a more or less objective feature of the world, and to the degree that one deviates from its pattern, one is that much less realistic. Converse is quite

aware that these objective constraints may not be subjectively experienced by a social or political actor. The idea-elements so constrained obviously have to be perceived as elements in the same belief system, and few social scientists have seen reason to doubt the significant extent to which people compartmentalize their experiences and beliefs.

Despite the fact that logical thinking may not be prevalent, it can be activated when people begin to think about the related objects, i.e., when people become sensitized to possible logical inconsistencies in their beliefs. Thus, "simple 'thinking about' a domain of idea-elements serves both to weld a broader range of such elements into a functioning belief system and to eliminate strictly logical inconsistencies defined from an objective point of view." [Converse 1964, 209; cf. Nelson 1977, 434-35]¹⁵ Since some people think about politics more than others, indeed since some do so for a living, a definition of constraint in terms

¹⁵ Converse's statement is based on his reading of experiments reported by McGuire concerning individuals' awareness of syllogistic relationships among their beliefs. However, when Converse cites this study, he leaves out an additional aspect of the situation. McGuire concludes that "we have to recognize that cognitive consistency is not just a matter of logical thinking--of consistency between belief and belief on related issues--but also a matter of wishful thinking, that is, consistency between belief and desire on the same issue." [McGuire 1960, 95] Thus, the issue of personal values as a feature of cognitive consistency or constraint (a feature later examined by Dawson [1979, 107]) is omitted from the study of belief systems, even though a prime source for Converse's approach included it.

of deductive logic inexorably leads to the conclusion that some people obviously (naturally?) exhibit constraint among their attitudes and that others just as obviously do not. [Converse 1964, 210; cf. Rokeach 1960, 34]

Since logical constraint has to be made subjectively effective before it can bind idea-elements, however, psychological constraint is seen by Converse as the more prevalent form. This latter form refers not only to constraint enjoined by motives for cognitive consistency but also to that promoted by the "quasi-logic" of a cogent argument. Yet even the influence of the cogent argument is subordinated to subjectivity: "What is important is that elites familiar with the total shapes of ... belief systems have experienced them as logically constrained clusters of ideas, within which one part necessarily follows from another." [Converse 1964, 210-11, emphasis in the original] At this point, it becomes difficult to see why Converse has distinguished two sources of constraint when what we seem to have are two perspectives (the analyst's and the subject's) on the same type of constraint, on constraint in terms of deductive relationships.

Converse proceeds to identify a third, more significant source of constraint, namely, the social source. One aspect of this source is a historical one that comes closest to the classic meaning of ideology. Here he has in mind a view

that roots certain ideological positions in the interests and information held by people in certain niches in the social structure. [Converse 1964, 211] Yet Converse regards such co-occurrences of idea-elements as more likely than not spurious correlations insofar as idea-elements are constrained not only because of the configuration of interest and social position but also because of "abstract and quasi-logical reasons." In other words, though this social constraint comes closest to the classic meaning of ideology, it cannot be removed totally from the realm of the logical and psychological sources of constraint.

The other aspect of the social source of constraint concerns the processes of the social diffusion of information. Belief systems are regarded by Converse as the creations of elites, who then transmit constrained bundles of idea-elements to the rest of society. As the bundles trickle down into the consciousness of the members of the mass public, the linkages binding together idea-elements become blurred or forgotten and cannot be restored by a public that lacks certain cognitive skills. Hence, the understandings taken for granted by elite political discourse cannot be found to be held by the mass public. The ultimate result is that expressions of public opinion via surveys or elections will be widely misinterpreted by both policymakers and political analysts, and that the mass public will not likely understand the policy issues put before them.

Despite the fairly elaborate typology of the sources of constraint provided by Converse, political scientists employing the concept have since used it in a rather narrow fashion. It no longer functions as a shorthand word for attitude organization per se but as a term for a particular kind of structure; attitude constraint has become synonymous with attitude consistency. Indeed, as Norman Nie and Kristi Andersen note, "both terms simply imply predictability of liberal/conservative attitudes across issue areas." [Nie with Andersen 1976, 97n5] This identification of constraint with consistency marks the intrusion of a decided preference for the static case and for the logical source of constraint.

Yet so long as consistency is equated with constraint, the question "Consistent with respect to what?" is always in order. For the most part consistency has been defined as agreeing with propositions in such a way as to form a valid deductive argument. Such an argument constitutes what Austin Sarat has called "principled reasoning." Those who reason in this way tend to "fit specific problems into general categories and deduce preferences from the principles governing each category." [Sarat 1975, 248; cf. Campbell et al. 1960, 253 and Converse 1964, 216] Converse and company assume that this ability to treat both the specific case and the general principle as belonging to the same belief system comprises a more or less universal socio-political "logic."

The content of this presumed "logic" comprises a number of the favored values of liberal democracy. Thus, in the most often used example, from a position favoring free speech as a value for society one should support free speech for Communists. However, this same socio-political "logic" is by no means universally shared even among American political elites. That there is no single, uniform, and coherent logic of democracy, says Bennett [1975, 7ff], can be seen from the numerous U.S. Supreme Court decisions that restrict free speech. Moreover, in this and in other examples, there are many logical moves that could be made to save one from ostensible deductive contradictions. [Nelson 1977, 427-36] The identification of constraint with logical consistency imposes a particular viewpoint upon people; it expects the mass public to organize information along the same lines as the elite or else be dismissed as having incoherent beliefs. [Brown 1970, 67] According to Lane, to maintain this focus on statistical patterns of association of idea-elements (on the logical source of constraint) is to obscure the fact that the phenomena of interest to us also include the subject's experience (and not just the analyst's imputation) of constraint. [Lane 1973, 99]

If the concept of logical constraint does indeed run aground (as John Nelson suggests), perhaps psychological constraint can be a more fruitful aid to inquiry into belief systems. Our hopes will be dashed, however, as we consider

the senses in which Converse uses the concept of psychological constraint. The first sense is that of treating constraint dynamically, so that a change in one idea-element would require "from the point of view of the actor, some compensating change(s) in the status of idea-elements elsewhere in the configuration." [Converse 1964, 208, emphasis added] Curiously, this definition is difficult to reconcile with Converse's later assertions that he is engaged in research on political communication processes. For under this definition, we must be concerned with the process of attitude change (within a theory of cognitive balancing) and such a concern requires an examination of the ways in which individuals process political information and reason about political life. To be fair, it must be said that Converse does not investigate dynamic constraint, perhaps realizing that an attitude change experiment might be more appropriate than a sample survey for such a task. Yet his admission that strong psychological connections among idea-elements may exist without becoming apparent to logical analyses suggests that ignoring dynamic constraint limits the validity of Converse's mass/elite comparisons. [Dawson 1979, 103, 109]

The second sense of the concept of psychological constraint stresses the experiences of people as the source of constraint. Converse gives as an example the Shaker community whose members appear to be as retiring as the Amish and

yet value technological progress. The fact that such a combination of positions could arise is evidence of the absence of logical constraints among the mass public, and hence, evidence of the presence of psychological ones. Another example notes that psychologically experienced constraint can be argued for in quasi-logical fashion by an appeal to

some superordinate value or posture toward man and society ... Thus a few crowning postures--like premises about the survival of the fittest in the spirit of social Darwinism--serve as a sort of glue to bind together many more specific attitudes and beliefs, and these postures are of prime centrality in the belief system as a whole. [Converse 1964, 211]

Two points must be made regarding this view of psychological constraint. First, it relies upon conceiving constraint from the actor's point of view. Yet the operationalization of constraint as statistical correlation leaves out important and necessary elements in the process of constraint. What is missing is an ascertainment of an individual's criteria of personal relevance and his or her sense of the meanings and consequences of the associated beliefs. [Balch 1979, 21-23 and Marcus et al. 1974, 407] In short, the concept of psychological constraint requires that we take into account not only statistical patterns of association among idea-elements, but also the ordinary language meaning of constraint (the experience of a narrowed range of choices, the sense that one belief should go with another) and the cognitive processes of individuals. [Lane 1973; Dawson 1979; Andersen and Thorson 1978]

The other point regarding psychological constraint is that the concept loses its distinctiveness under a definition as the subjective experience of logical constraint. The Shaker illustration strikes one less as an example of psychological constraint than as one of social constraint in which "certain postures tend to co-occur and ... this co-occurrence has obvious roots in the configuration of interests and information that characterize particular niches in the social structure." [Converse 1964, 211] To understand the Shaker belief system would not be solely to examine the patterns of their individual views on policy issues and political parties and candidates, but instead would be to explore the appropriate "configuration of interests and information" and to seek out the relevant "crowning postures" that might unify Shaker beliefs.

Apart from its merger into psychological constraint, this aspect of social constraint (that which parallels the classic meaning of ideology) gets dropped by Converse as he proceeds with his study of the mass public. I suspect this is because he dislikes the approach of Mannheim, whom Converse accuses of turning away from the question and the techniques of measurement. [Converse 1964, 206] Yet given Converse's own finding that the bulk of the mass public falls into the "group benefits" level of conceptualization, this aspect of social constraint should merit greater attention. The other aspect of social constraint--the social diffusion of infor-

mation in general and of belief systems in particular--is retained and becomes the essence of the "communicational" research context.

In his examination of the growth of knowledge problems in the belief systems field, Bennett has written that the field's major conceptual problem "tends to be the relatively low degree of articulation between concepts and the theories to which they presumably belong."¹⁶ [Bennett 1977, 482] Despite the typology of the sources of constraint which Converse has provided, this situation remains the case as political scientists have not pursued investigations designed to explore the range and utility of the typology.¹⁶ No one seems concerned to distinguish what type of constraint is exhibited among the attitudes and beliefs of particular individuals or groups. We have, moreover, little information regarding (1) what range of crowning postures either the elite or people in general may potentially have, (2) what postures tend to co-occur with the interests of what social niches, and (3) what research designs would best divulge (1)

¹⁶ Converse agrees that this has been the case, but he attributes it to the ease with which logical and psychological constraint can be operationalized as statistical correlation by the survey researcher. Since the other aspects of constraint are more difficult to employ in such a fashion, they have not been pursued. Moreover, Converse apparently does not regard the concept of constraint as a major theoretical or conceptual innovation worthy of further development, for he notes that the typology he has offered was "merely stitched together" from his readings in psychology. [Converse 1981] It is no wonder, then, that the belief systems field exhibits little articulation between concepts and theories.

and (2) to scholars. While political scientists have not been reluctant to employ the concept of constraint, they have narrowed its signification to the point where the concept loses its richness.¹⁷

Part of this problem perhaps has its roots in what Lakatos has called "inductivist style," a style of doing and reporting research that "reflects the pretence that the scientist starts his investigation with an empty mind whereas in fact he starts with a mind full of ideas." [Lakatos 1976, 143n2] The usual practice, for instance, is (when reporting research) to describe the layout (in political science, the customary and cursory review of the literature), the experiment itself (data, techniques and analysis), the results and a concluding generalization. The problem with this style, says Lakatos, is that "it hides the struggle, hides the adventure." [Lakatos 1976, 142] It neglects the role of background knowledge (as well as exemplars) in the definition and treatment of problems for investigation. With such a style, the increasing conceptual clarity so important for the progress of science [Laudan 1977, 49-50, 66] becomes much less likely to occur.

¹⁷ It seems that a process similar to that affecting mass/elite policy communication (as Converse sees it) affects the diffusion of innovations in academic disciplines. [Crane 1972, 66-84]

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have elucidated what I believe to be the primary research context for the work of Philip Converse insofar as that work concerns the study of political belief systems. This context stems from considerations of the nature of attitudes and attitude structures. Two heuristic problems, however, can be found when we examine Converse's work in light of this attitudinal context.

The first such problem is a lack of follow-through with regard to the concept of constraint (his major conceptual innovation), resulting in stunted conceptual development. From the discussion just concluded, it should be clear that the definition of research problems and concepts in the belief systems field does indeed suffer from the lack of theoretical articulation noted by Bennett. It should be equally clear that the conceptual typology of the sources of constraint developed by Converse lacks relatively precise boundaries among its subdivisions and that little has been done to further clarify that typology. However, there is an encouraging development in that the measurement of constraint is beginning to be recognized as theory-laden both by the followers and the critics of Converse's work.

As the reader will recall, Converse relies upon statistical correlation as the prime indicator of constraint. He definitely believes that for scientific purposes constraint

is not to be assessed by means of techniques available to philosophers or psychoanalysts. Instead, in the static case, constraint should be treated "as a matter of degree, and this degree can be measured quite readily, at least as an average among individuals."¹⁸ [Converse 1964, 207] Constraint emerges as a key concept in the study of political belief systems in part because when defined as statistical correlation, it becomes easily manipulable in terms familiar to political scientists.¹⁸ As Nie and Andersen express it, the advantage to the concept of constraint and its current operationalization is that it is

an economical and reliable way of studying mass ideology, whereas techniques such as those used by Lane require such intensive analysis of individuals that generalizations about national populations are difficult if not impossible. Moreover, even if techniques like Lane's can uncover some deeper structuring of an individual's political beliefs, in most of a citizen's interactions with the political world, he is presented with and asked to assume rather narrowly conceived alternative positions on political issues. [Nie with Andersen 1976, 95n1]

The latter comment anticipates Converse's own remarks concerning his preferred focus on questions of elite/mass communication in a democratic polity. [Converse 1975, 87-88] However, the former comment about techniques and the problem of generalization again raises concerns about just what phenomena the techniques are capable of exploring and about just what phenomena we wish to explore.

¹⁸ I am here reminded of Marx's phrase to the effect that "mankind only sets itself such tasks as it can solve."

As noted above, the statistical correlation of attitudes does not seem to be a very good measure of the structure of one's belief system. Correlation is misleading in this regard "because the relevant ideological principle(s)--the criteria by which the individual makes his choices--is [sic] not known a priori and, equally important, may vary from individual to individual." [Marcus et al. 1974, 407, emphasis in the original] Measures of constraint, then, must take into account the psychology of individuals--their personal values, instrumental beliefs and ways of processing information--a factor that Converse's typology both presumes and requires, and that his work later disavows.

This brings us to the other heuristic problem found in Converse's work when considered from the point of view of an attitudinal research context. In addition to stunted conceptual development, we find in his work a facile abandonment of early commitments found in the research context. That is to say, Converse tends to redefine his inquiry in the face of criticism and opposition. There is little that is wrong, in itself, with Converse staking out a certain parcel of political phenomena for investigation. What creates the difficulty is that he has established a context for his work that requires more of him and of those who wish to follow his example. If we are to learn anything about the nature of belief systems per se, then we must receive information about the structure of people's political think-

ing. Reliance on the concepts of logical and static constraint only touches the surface manifestations of this phenomenon. Moreover, insofar as Converse recently proclaims an interest in political communication alone, he has diverged from the context established in The American Voter. There, Campbell et al. note not only that one kind of functional interdependence among idea-elements is when they serve similar psychological needs but also that their work is partially rooted in an interest "in the structure of thought that the individual applies to politics; and this interest forces [the researcher] to deal in typologies and qualitative differences." [Campbell et al. 1960, 222, emphasis added]

To be sure, we might admit that Converse's focus on the differences between elite belief systems and mass ones is a worthwhile subject for investigation. We might as well accept that the questions this subject matter raises require "an unusual concern with measurement strategies" [Converse 1964, 206] of the sort apparently not required in The American Voter. Yet Converse should recognize that the context of that work (the focus on attitudinal or thought structures) yields the terms in which the mass/elite differences are discussed. Not recognizing this, and not acknowledging the extent to which he is indebted to (as well as the extent to which he is deviating from) this research context, leads Converse and others to confusions about the purposes of

their inquiries and about the conclusions we can draw from their results.

Thus, the growth of knowledge problems that beset the political belief systems field stem neither from the undermining of a paradigm nor from pathologies of intradisciplinary communication. They stem instead from the neglect of heuristic considerations, from the neglect of the history and the research context of one's inquiries.¹⁹

¹⁹ Lakatos suggests that while the addition of heuristic (considerations of the research context) to research papers and books would inevitably make them much longer, it might well make them fewer since "statement of the problem-situation would too obviously display the pointlessness of quite a few of them." [Lakatos 1976, 144n1]

Chapter III

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

The preceding chapter treated Converse's work as part of an "attitudinal" research context, one concerned with attitudes and their structuring into belief systems. In this chapter, the focus is on a "communicational" context that concerns the transmission of political information in general and political belief systems in particular within society. The heuristic problems that emerge within the pursuit of the communicational context include not only an inattention to the original aim of the inquiry that plagued the attitudinal context, but also an inadequate exploration of a key element of the background knowledge which Converse and others have brought to the study of political belief systems.

Much has been made in the above chapter of the contrast between an inquiry into individual political psychology and one into processes of political communication in a democratic polity. This is a contrast that has been urged upon us by Converse himself, and to some extent, he can be taken at his word when he says that his inquiry is of the latter type. In "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," for example, he focuses attention upon differences in the ideational worlds of the political elite and of the mass

public. Converse's thesis is "that there are important and predictable differences in ideational worlds as we progress downward [from elite to mass public] through [various] belief strata and that these differences, while obvious at one level, are easily overlooked and not infrequently miscalculated." [Converse 1964, 206; cf. Converse 1975, 79-83] Without a common framework of discourse in society, the elites lose the policy guidance and the mass public lose the policy influence that are requisite for a democracy. Within this broad concern for the structure and process of a democratic polity, Converse undertakes his study of belief systems. He is especially attentive to the relationship between information and the formation of belief systems, as well as to the processes of communication (of the social diffusion of knowledge) between elites and the mass public.

Therefore, in the following sections, we will explore Converse's view of the informational base that underlies the belief systems and political attitudes of the mass public, as well as of the political elites in our society. This discussion will lead (as it does in Converse's work) to consideration of the question of attitude stability as a distinguishing mark of coherent and cognitively complex belief systems. Finally, attention will direct itself to communication of information in general and constrained belief systems in particular, that is, to the mechanism of the social diffusion of knowledge which is (for Converse) a prime source of constraint among attitudes.

INFORMATION AND BELIEF STRATA

As discussed in the last chapter, Converse's view of belief systems places almost exclusive emphasis on the cognitive abilities of individuals as the source of political belief systems. The concept of information thus acquires considerable importance in this scheme of things, for one must be able to first differentiate the world into various components (mirror its complexity to some degree) before employing certain abstractions to order and simplify that complexity. As Converse notes, "it seems patent that opinion giving [or opinion and attitude organization] presupposes opinion formation, and opinion formation presupposes information that there is something to form a political opinion about." [Converse 1962, 594] Since the world of politics provides a welter of objects to perceive, a plethora of attitude-objects that threaten to overload our capacity to process information, some means of ordering those objects and of managing the information is required.

For Converse, belief systems provide such a means. Belief systems in general and specific attitudes in particular serve an economizing function for the individual. As M. Brewster Smith notes, all attitudes more or less prepare the individual "for his encounters with reality, enabling him to avoid the confusion and inefficiency of appraising each new situation afresh." [Smith 1973, 78] Attitudes thus resemble in function a scientific theory. They simplify the task of

coming to grips with phenomenal reality, of processing the welter of information that is presented to us. Attitudes are generalizations and simplifications that help make our encounters with the world considerably more manageable. They assist us in developing patterns of appropriate behavior toward certain objects by allowing us to store information about those objects and about their relation to our individual goals and values.

People, in short, need cognitive yardsticks or belief systems to order their world so as to save them time and energy when new situations arise.²⁰ For example, to attach the label "conservative" to a piece of legislation

can convey a tremendous amount of more specific information about the bill—who probably proposed it and toward what ends, who is likely to resist it, its chances of passage, its long-term social consequences, and most important, how the actor himself should expect to evaluate it if he were to expend further energy to look into its details. [Converse 1964, 241; cf. Converse 1975, 84]

²⁰ The importance of this economizing function is not a subject of dispute within belief systems research. What is in dispute is the influence this drive for economy has on the character of an individual's belief system. The Conversean view equates an economical belief system with one characterized by a single ordering dimension such as that of liberalism/conservatism. However, the economy function might be better served by a multidimensional belief system, for only in this way can the richness of the world be represented without substantial distortion. Evidence exists that this is in fact characteristic of individuals' actual belief systems. [Marcus et al. 1974 and Luttbeg 1974] Moreover, economy itself may represent something of dubious value, since it can be obtained not only by an overarching unidimensional belief system but also by unthinking conformity, stereotyping and a closed belief system in general. [Lane 1973, 101]

Belief systems provide sets of abstractions that encompass a mass of detailed information not only about specific objects but also about the various aspects of our experience in social life. They organize and store information in easily manipulable packages (symbolic representations). Having an adequate "backlog of information" means having a sufficient context for understanding various political situations. Such a context is central to the concept of a coherent belief system, as has been acknowledged not only by Converse but by Lane [1962, 350-53] as well. Belief systems also motivate and guide the search for new and additional information. Having the cognitive skills to create a relatively organized and coherent belief system means that one is capable of processing further perceptions and evaluative reactions to them. As Converse notes, "the general governing principle is of the 'them what has, gets' type: the more political information one already has, the lower the cost of acquiring and, perhaps more important, retaining new information." [Converse 1975, 97, emphasis in the original] Belief systems thus comprise taxonomic systems which subsume content of wide scope and diversity, and whose existence enables the political scientist to make sense of the public's political attitudes and motivations. [Campbell et al. 1960, 193]

Disturbed by the apparent insensitivity of the mass public to policy controversies, Campbell et al. seek to ascer-

tain the extent to which people economize by employing some yardstick or frame of reference in evaluating major political objects (parties, issues and candidates). For Campbell et al., the left/right or liberal/conservative yardstick is the paradigm case primarily because it is a general and powerful summary tool used both by political activists and by political observers. Hence, the study of belief systems has come to focus on the use of this particular frame of reference by the mass public. [Campbell et al. 1960, 194ff] By virtue of such a focus, the inquiry proceeds to examine survey respondents' discussions and evaluations of political parties and presidential candidates. The researcher looks for traces of the use of the liberal/conservative yardstick and then categorizes the respondents into levels of conceptualization "on the basis of a priori judgments about the breadth of contextual grasp of the political system that each [seems] to represent." [Converse 1964, 215, emphasis in the original]

The different levels of conceptualization, their labels and characterizations, are by now very familiar to political scientists.²¹ The conclusions reached about mass belief systems are equally familiar: Individuals in the mass public tend to lack a sufficient contextual grasp of politics for them to actively use ideological frames of reference in

²¹ For full discussions of the levels of conceptualization, see works by Campbell et al. [1960, 222-50] and by Converse [1964, 215-18 and 1975, 85-86].

their evaluations of political objects. The mass public's understanding of politics appears to be burdened by narrow time perspectives, concrete modes of thought and simplified views of causation in social and political life. [Campbell et al. 1960, 237] Not only does the mass public not exhibit the constrained belief systems characteristic of the elites, but the mass public rarely uses or even understands the philosophically based terms ("liberal" and "conservative") found in elite political discourse. [Converse 1975, 85]

Much of the distinction between the elite and the mass public that Converse makes rests upon this differentiation of people into belief strata and upon the public's inability to understand the key terms of sophisticated political discourse. Nevertheless, he admits that some members of the mass public are capable of an "ideology by proxy," that is, they are able to evaluate parties and candidates in terms of the treatment certain social groups would receive if a given party or candidate were to take office. Thus, Converse takes issue with political scientists such as Bernard Hennessy, who assert that the masses cannot legitimately be said to have political attitudes or belief systems at all. [Hennessy 1972, 35] Instead, Converse finds that a "realistic picture of political belief systems in the mass public, then, is not one that omits issues and policy demands completely nor one that presumes widespread ideological coherence; it is rather one that captures with some fidelity the

fragmentation, narrowness, and diversity of these demands."
[Converse 1964, 247]

The cause of this fragmentation and narrowness (in general terms, the decline in constraint as one moves from the elite to the mass public) is a lack of stored contextual information about politics. On abstract ideological issues (viz., those concerning the role of government in society) even those people who view politics in terms of group benefits (who have an ideology by proxy) lack the information needed to "perceive some meaningful link between membership in a particular group and preference for a particular party or policy alternative." [Converse 1964, 236] Though the salience of group antagonisms and social conflicts (like those of the 1960s) may help to increase the consistency of the mass public's attitudes [Nie et al. 1976, 117-19; Converse 1975, 106], they are not enough to bring about sweeping changes in the distribution of people across the levels of conceptualization.²² In other words, in a turbulent political era, information that links political objects with

²² Converse attributes this situation to the observation that the gains in consistency and in the use of capping abstractions occur only among that segment of the population (those in the middle and upper reaches of the levels of conceptualization) in a position to benefit from the changing nature of political life and discourse, as well as from increasing levels of education. [Converse 1975, 97, 100-03] Thus, the salient and turbulent politics of the 1960s did not bring anyone from an unideological to an ideological evaluation of political objects, and substantial cognitive and informational limitations have continued to burden more than a quarter of the electorate.

reference groups (which then indicate what goes with what--
-i.e., tell what ideas are constrained) can penetrate the
consciousness of members of the mass public without that
kind of information yielding "heightened levels of use or
recognition of ideology." [Converse 1975, 107]

This discussion of Converse's views of the relationship
between information and the division of the public into be-
lief strata raises a few problems. One such problem con-
cerns Converse's assertion that the absence of contextual
information is at the root of the overall lack of con-
strained political ideas among the mass public. Yet it
could be suggested that contextual information may have been
present and still have produced little or no overall con-
straint. For, as Norman Luttbeg notes, the supposedly neu-
tral SRC issue questions contain reference group cues that
serve (given the variety of backgrounds and hence of indivi-
duals' own reference groups) to draw people in different di-
rections on each question. Hence, the items tend to be
treated more or less independently and not as part of an ab-
stract ordering (ideological) dimension. [Luttbeg 1974, 343]

Despite the recent tempest about question wording and
assessments of mass belief systems [Bishop et al. 1978 and
1979; Sullivan et al. 1978 and 1979; Nie and Rabjohn
1979a], however, neither Converse nor anyone else has seen
fit to address this issue. The matter is complicated by

Converse's observation that group references in the survey instrument or heightened group antagonisms in society increase the level of constraint among the mass public's attitudes. The difficulty posed for belief system studies is that reference group cues cannot both depress and increase the overall level of attitude consistency. What is needed, then, is greater attention to the psychology of individuals so that we can discern just what kind of information base (in both quantitative and substantive terms) people in fact bring to bear upon their responses to survey questions.²³

Another problem with the relationship between information and belief strata concerns the finding of both change and inertia in mass belief systems from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. Norman Nie and his colleagues, for example, have discovered that the mass public has increased its overall level of attitude consistency while yet not changing much with regard to its distribution across the levels of conceptualization. Converse substantially agrees with this finding and accounts for the apparent paradox by distinguishing between two levels of public opinion--viz.,

²³ Richard Boyd and Herbert Hyman note that "most of our measures of information tap such issues as whether or not a person knows his elected leaders or knows basic facts about the constitutional structure of the government. Measures of knowledge about political controversies or practical politics are quite rare. ... [I]n the main we have only the most tentative information about people's information." [Boyd and Hyman 1975, 279-80] For a potentially useful way out of this difficulty, by means of the concept of "scripts," see essays by Andersen and Thorson [1978, 16ff] and by Abelson [1976].

attitude structure (consistency or constraint) and the use of capping abstractions (ideology). [Converse 1975, 103] The former is responsive to the motivational characteristics of individuals; whereas, the latter tends to be correlated with the rather inert variable of formal education. Given this, it is not surprising, says Converse, that an increase in attitude consistency can result from a turbulent politics without affecting the long-term cognitive abilities of individuals. [Converse 1975, 107]

This explanation, however, runs contrary to one of Converse's early theoretical statements about information. He writes that "there is a strong correlation between the mass of stored political information and the motivation to monitor communication systems for additional current information." [Converse 1962, 586] As noted previously, information must be stored by means of symbolic representations--hence, the capacity to store information is concomitant with (if not identical to) the ability to manipulate abstractions. If cognitive limitations abound in much of the mass public, how is the increased motivation to attend to political communications to be explained? For if the principle truly is of the "them what has, gets" type, then it is indeed puzzling that individuals lacking contextual information (duly stored by means of capping abstractions) could be so motivated. Here again, further inquiry into people's information-seeking and -processing behavior (an inquiry which Converse spurns) is required to resolve these matters.

What we have been discussing so far is the kind of relationship Converse presumes to hold between information and the consigning of members of the mass public to various belief strata. The conceptual puzzles that arise from this posited relationship, however, will not be amenable to resolution so long as the inquiry is guided by a research context that eschews investigations into individual political psychology.

INFORMATION AND ATTITUDE STABILITY

In Converse's scheme of things, information serves as the connective tissue linking the rather disparate ideas and attitudes people have about society and politics. He thus expresses great dissatisfaction about the lack of academic explorations of the information base underlying the expressed opinions of the mass public. That overall political information levels are low represents an old and familiar refrain to political scientists, but "when it comes to the practical interpretation of a vote, a referendum or a set of opinion poll results the assumption that there exists a fund of basic information shared in common between the opinion-giver and the observer seems almost irresistible." [Converse 1975, 83] Opinion formation among the mass public thus cannot be presumed to occur to the same degree and in the same fashion as it does among the elite.

A further consequence of the lack of political information among the mass public is that even individuals' expressed opinions and attitudes will tend to be unstable over time, since those views lack grounding in a body of stored contextual information. Converse reports, for example, that in the SRC panel studies from 1956 to 1960, "only about thirteen people out of twenty [could] manage to locate themselves even on the same side of [a particular issue] controversy in successive interrogations, when ten out of twenty could have done so by chance alone." [Converse 1964, 239, emphasis in the original] Moreover, it appears that "the more basic and ideological the issue dimension was [e.g., the role of the federal government versus business in electric power and housing], and the more remote its referents were from day-to-day change in national events, the higher the turnover of opinion." [Converse 1970, 170-71]

In contrast to the mass public, political elites such as congressional candidates are presumed to exhibit much greater attitude stability. Converse provided no direct evidence for this presumption in the 1964 essay but suggested that "the degree of fit between answers to our issue items and congressional roll calls is strong enough ... that time correlations for individual congressmen in roll-call choice on comparable bills would provide a fair estimate of the stability of an elite population in beliefs of this sort." [Converse 1964, 239] Such a view can be substantiated in

part by reference to recent work by Herbert Asher and Herbert Weisberg, who have found voting in the Congress to be predominantly characterized by continuity and stability. [Asher and Weisberg 1978, 391]

Yet roll-call voting does not provide a fair estimate of stability in the sense of being comparable to the estimate of stability for the mass public. As Harry Wilker and Lester Milbrath have noted, the political elite and the mass public have different fields of political thought and action. Members of Congress obviously have made politics the substance of their lives; whereas, for members of the mass public politics is often incidental to more pressing personal concerns. Where elites tend to view politics instrumentally (with specific tangible goals in mind), the mass public tends to have more expressive kinds of goals as it engages in political activity. [Wilker and Milbrath 1972, 52-54] Moreover, the voting history of a member of Congress is much more instrumental for achieving desired aims (e.g., policy influence or leadership posts) than are the mass public's biennial expressions of opinion on national surveys. In short, the measure of elite attitude stability that Converse suggests taps concerns that are much more salient to elites than to the mass public. Hence, the comparisons he makes between the two groups are undermined by the very method used to establish them in the first place.

Beyond comparing the mass public with the political elite, Converse has other purposes in mind when he examines the matter of attitude stability. Yet these other purposes similarly fall prey to the limitations of Converse's approach to the study of belief systems. One such purpose is to show that there is one group of respondents to survey questions which exhibits a fair degree of attitude stability, while another group can only be said to have no real attitudes on a given policy issue at all, i.e., can be said to have "nonattitudes." [Converse 1970, 175] The existence of this latter group, he believes, represents "an inevitable consequence of information impoverishment among the less well-educated strata of heterogeneous populations." [Converse 1970, 178]

This view has been criticized by a number of scholars as an underestimate of attitude stability in the mass public. Where Converse attributes much of the variability in survey responses to the respondent's nonattitudes (and not to actual attitude change), these researchers suggest that the variability is due to the very nature of attitudes themselves. John Pierce and Douglas Rose, for instance, point out that conventional analyses treat individual opinions as discrete points. They believe that it makes more sense to consider attitudes as comprising a range of acceptable responses to a given survey item. Thus, what may seem to be attitude instability over time actually represents normal fluctuation

with the range of acceptable expressions of the same attitude. [Pierce and Rose 1974, 630] Converse's response to this suggestion is that, while it has some attractiveness, it is rather flawed in that (1) the predictive power (and hence, its usefulness) of the attitude concept evaporates under such a definition, and (2) not much is gained by the new conception in understanding, say, votes on a referendum issue. [Converse 1974, 654] In short, Pierce and Rose fail to make the case for an alternative conception of attitudes and of the meaning of survey responses.

Where Pierce and Rose do not succeed, however, Christopher Achen does. According to Achen, not only must attitudes be regarded as a distribution of points around a central position, but both the survey questions and the response categories must be so regarded. Hence, "survey questions [should] be treated as vague: respondents will not always respond in the same way to the same question even if their attitudes remain unchanged." [Achen 1975, 1220] Converse errs in treating response variability as evidence of attitude instability alone, rather than as an inevitable consequence of measurement error. Moreover, Achen finds no evidence that attitude stability is a consequence of political sophistication or greater political knowledge, or that response variability is thereby due to information impoverishment or mass ignorance. Instead, he notes that "the well-informed and interested have nearly as much difficulty

with the questions as does the ordinary man." [Achen 1975, 1229] And when corrections are made for this kind of measurement error (vagueness of questions and response categories) Achen finds that the estimates of attitude stability for the mass public thereby increase.

In addition to the purposes mentioned so far (distinguishing elites and masses, questioning the degree to which the mass public holds real attitudes), Converse seeks to use the findings of attitude instability to undercut what he calls the "idiosyncratic possibility." This is the possibility that, while there is no evidence of widely shared belief systems, there may be members of the mass public who structure their attitudes and beliefs according to unique principles. Converse believes that the evidence of the instability of issue positions over the course of three elections "offer[s] eloquent proof that signs of low constraint among belief elements in the mass public are not products of well knit but highly idiosyncratic belief systems, for these beliefs are extremely labile for individuals over time." [Converse 1964, 241; cf. Converse 1975, 88] Lane and others have criticized Converse for not taking into account the perhaps unique ways in which people create meaningful structures of thought about politics. Yet Converse responds by saying that the discussion of this matter cannot be furthered so long as the proponents of the idiosyncratic possibility neglect the considerable evidence of attitude instability.

The proponents of the idiosyncratic possibility have not completely neglected Converse's findings nor his objections, however. Lance Bennett has criticized Converse for assuming that political attitudes will be more stable across issues the more respondents exhibit cognitive complexity, that a linear relationship exists between cognitive complexity and attitude stability. [Bennett 1975, 31] Such an assumption falters when one takes into account evidence that cognitively simple persons tend to produce categorical and unyielding judgments about events. The upshot is that the relationship between cognitive complexity (as a continuum) and attitude stability is best conceived as a curvilinear one:

On the average, then, cognitively complex persons should manifest a slightly higher level of attitude stability than will cognitively simple types. However, both types should be more stable than persons of intermediate stages of complexity (i.e., persons who differentiate the stimuli around them yet lack sufficient means of abstraction to re-integrate the stimuli in some meaningful fashion). [Bennett 1975, 35]

Hence, contrary to Converse's interpretations, even the least politically sophisticated individuals have the ability to array political issues on an organizing dimension in a fairly stable fashion [Bennett 1975, 42], and that stable and meaningful expression of opinion can be based nevertheless "on the introduction of arbitrary, ambiguous and, perhaps, meaningless symbols into the substance of concrete issues." [Bennett 1975, 97] Attitude stability, then, is not the hallmark of the elite as Converse would have it.

More recently, Paul Dawson has explored the idiosyncratic possibility and its link to the evidence of attitude instability in a work which develops a model of political cognition. In this model, individuals assess political objects according to their particular sets of personal values, and the evaluative conclusions they reach about the instrumentality of those objects for those values tend to condition one's attitudes toward the objects. Given this, so long as Converse examines only the interrelationships among a set of attitudes themselves while ignoring the relevance of personal values for attitude formation, it is no accident (says Dawson) that he cannot find well-structured belief systems among the mass public. [Dawson 1979, 106] According to Dawson, then, "it is likely that the influence of both [particular] psychic contexts and [pluralistic social and] political environments tend to produce political belief systems that are relatively idiosyncratic at the mass level." [Dawson 1979, 101-02] And though there is evidence of attitude instability across a mass sample, this inability to provide "Pavlovian responses to political stimuli [and for Dawson, attitude stability could represent a rigid and passive orientation to politics] does not indicate the absence of an ability to make some kind of sense out of rapidly changing events." [Dawson 1979, 118-19n11]

Where Converse has given great emphasis to the stability issue as a natural outgrowth of research into constraint

(and its roots in cognitive ability and contextual information), political scientists who have pursued the study of constraint have tended to drop the accompanying inquiry into attitude stability. Perhaps the reason for this is that long-term, national sample panel studies are no longer in vogue. A more likely reason, though, is that the definition of the issue of attitude stability has changed.²⁴ For Converse, the question of stability concerned whether or not the mass public could be said to have real, stable attitudes organized either into widely shared or even idiosyncratic belief systems. The question was one of degree and the evidence was quantifiable; a correct answer was almost as assured as one in mathematics.²⁵ Other researchers, however, have concluded that the proper question to ask about stability is not whether and to what degree people have it, but what purposes it serves for them or what use it is put to in the structuring of beliefs and attitudes. Bennett, for instance, laments that relatively "little thought has been given to the question of whether stable political

²⁴ This situation of competing definitions of the same concept has worried Bennett to some degree, and has led him to isolate it as a prime source of intradisciplinary communication pathologies. [Bennett 1977, 481] For a brief discussion of this issue, see the Appendix.

²⁵ Bennett's work has recently suggested that the answer was never really assured, for survey questions repeated across time (while yet maintaining a similar form and content) are subject to highly divergent contextual interpretations. [Bennett 1977, 478-79; cf. Andersen and Thorson 1981, 5] This suggestion lends some support to the conception of attitudes and surveys held by Achen [1975].

attitudes are 'good' or 'bad,' or whether they aid in the citizen's meaningful adaptation to the political environment." [Bennett 1975, 162] With such a focus in mind the question of attitude stability must be concerned with functional relationships among attitudes, personal values and beliefs about the instrumentality of political objects for those values. In short, attitude stability must be considered in light of psychological investigations that highlight individual's relevance structures and their private rationales for organizing their beliefs and attitudes. Unfortunately, as we saw in the last chapter, the Conversean mode of studying belief systems has both implicitly (by means of its choice of research techniques) and explicitly (when Converse redefines the point of his original inquiry) rejected such a strategy.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSTRAINT

So far in this chapter, our focus has been on the role the concept of information plays in Converse's approach to the study of political belief systems. Information is significant, as has been noted, primarily because it serves (when duly stored by means of ideological abstractions) to bind together the disparate beliefs and attitudes people hold about politics. The findings that people generally lack a basic fund of political information suggest to Converse not only the limited ability of individuals to form coherent

political belief systems, but also the pitfalls involved in mass/elite policy communication. Since the redefinition of his inquiry as one of political communication, Converse's focus has been on the function of belief systems (and of public opinion in general) with mass/elite interaction on major issues of public policy. [Converse 1975, 80-81, 87-89] One of his major aims, he says, is to both understand and justify an ethic of democratic control, that is, to reconcile a discrepancy between the bleak portrait he sketches of individual opinion-holding (the frequent gaps in contextual information)²⁶ and the conviction that elections make sense and matter in policy-making. [Converse 1975, 75, 157-58]

Crucial to the communication process involved in democratic control of policy elites by the mass public is the extent to which various belief systems attract adherents. For in a democratic polity, claims to having large numbers of

²⁶ Converse sees these gaps as resulting in rather flawed communication between elites and masses, as resulting in frequent misinterpretations of various expressions of public opinion as well as of public policy itself. [Converse 1975, 80-81] Curiously enough, the implications of such misinterpretations are never discussed fully. Does elite misinterpretation of electoral results mean, for instance, that public policy is forever out of step with popular wishes? Can public opinion on issues (by nature ill- or mis-informed) be effectively ignored by policy-makers? Such questions as these point to the problematic character of the opinion/policy relationship--a feature due not only to a presumed lack of information on the part of the mass public but also to the roots of the relationship in a process of negotiated meanings. [Nimmo 1978, 415-19] Again, it would seem that Converse's preferred method of survey research is inadequate to address the important questions raised by the notion of belief systems.

people on one's side become very important in policy debates, and the masses who are "numbered" within the spheres of influence of certain belief systems become the partisans of ideologies that legitimize their policy demands. [Converse 1964, 206-07] Yet the social diffusion of belief systems relies upon their creation by a creative minority of the population, the few who have the cognitive capacity to develop logically ordered belief systems of significant range. The remainder of society acquires belief systems not by thinking things through on their own but by grasping packages or bundles of constrained idea-elements. Interestingly, the packages themselves (information about what goes with what) tend to be fairly readily diffused, while the political reasoning that underlies the packages (information about why two idea-elements go together) confronts a number of obstacles to diffusion. Chief among such obstacles is the lack of contextual information and overall cognitive ability on the part of the mass public. Information consumers who have greater than average cognitive ability may occasionally introduce innovations on the fringes of a belief system, but most people come to see the packages of idea-elements as "'natural' wholes, for [the packages] are presented in such terms ('If you believe this, then you will also believe that, for it follows in such-and-such ways.')." [Converse 1964, 211] On the whole, however, the mass public lacks both the ability and the information to manage coher-

ent and complete belief systems. They may be able to remember the bundles of idea-elements (i.e., that one such element goes with another), but the reasons why two elements go together become obscured and hence forgotten.

It should be clear that the process of the social diffusion of knowledge (the communication of political information and belief systems) acquires some preeminence in Converse's work. He conceives of this process primarily in terms of a kind of two-step flow of communication, wherein opinion leaders either send information personally originated or send information received from the mass media to other people in their social milieu. Opinion leaders by and large are well-educated people who pay attention to current political information and have stored a good deal of it about past events. They also comprise the few people with well-organized and constrained belief systems, i.e., the few who are capable of creating ideologies more or less on their own. Such a portrait was first developed by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, and has since become rather commonplace. In their study of opinion leadership, Katz and Lazarsfeld discover that opinion leaders in matters of public affairs tend to be people of higher social status, i.e., that opinion leadership tends to be characterized by a vertical (across status group boundaries) pattern of influence. [Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955, 324, 331] This tentative finding of a vertical pattern may be undermined, they suggest, by the

possibility of a horizontal (among persons of like status) pattern of influence in a politically more important (perhaps) part of the chain. [Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955, 222] Indeed, an extension of the principle that "individuals are influenced by quite different kinds of people on different sorts of things" [Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955, 97] suggests that the pattern of influence with regard to (say) the evaluation of candidates might well be different from the pattern with regard to the diffusion of the crowning postures or capping abstractions that Converse finds characteristic of ideologies (and of coherent, constrained belief systems). Converse's own portrait of opinion leadership as marked solely by vertical patterns of influence (from elites down to the masses), then, is likely to be problematic until the matter is further explored with the several aspects of belief systems.

The intimations of the social diffusion process that Converse provides are subject to doubt in other ways as well. He assumes, for instance, that all failures of communication are to be attributed to failings on the part of the receivers (the mass public), though it is equally likely that the senders of bundles of idea-elements (the political elites) may be at fault. For example, elite communications during presidential election campaigns (the political context in which Converse examines belief systems) may be, and perhaps often are, purposefully ambiguous. [Page and Brody 1972]

For that matter, not all elite communication is oriented toward transmitting information about what goes with what and why, for elites (or anyone else) obviously have a variety of purposes in mind when they send messages. [Fenno 1978; cf. Nimmo 1978, 83-91] In short, as Thomas Jackson and George Marcus conclude, "the competence of the electorate may be dependent upon the ability of political leaders to perform their function of formulating and articulating the political issues of the day, as well as of wielding decision-making authority." [Jackson and Marcus 1975, 107; cf. Bennett 1975, 97-98]

The upshot of all this is that Converse's picture of the social diffusion of belief systems rests upon a fairly naive view of the communication process. It assumes a process similar to the direct effects model prevalent in early studies of the mass media's impact on public attitudes. Recent inquiries in mass communications from a "uses and gratifications" approach suggest that the process is rather more complicated than the direct effects view presumes, and that the audience (or the mass public) must be considered to be active participants (rather than passive recipients) in the communication network. [Blumler and Katz 1974] Bennett, too, has noted that Converse's theory of social communication rests upon a number of problematic assumptions:

First, we must assume [under the Conversean view of things] that there are no competing ... communication channels in society. Secondly we must assume that people down the social ladder do not

have their own interests and outlooks, which they use to interpret and reconstruct the flow from media, opinion leaders, and politicians. Finally, we must accept the premise that some universal socio-political "logic" exists in society, such that: (1) the resulting connections among belief elements are meaningful for elites, and (2) alternative connections (or patterns) are not meaningful for elites or for the mass public. [Bennett 1975, 7]

If Converse's view of the social diffusion process is indeed naive, then further examinations (that make assumptions different from those of Converse) of the process must be made in order for the belief systems field to advance.

Despite the importance attributed to the flow of communication and influence as a factor in the formation of belief systems, the communication process has been treated in a rather cavalier fashion. Converse, for example, tends to focus on the volume of information available to the mass public rather than the content or quality of that information. Moreover, he pays virtually no attention to the important factor of "the voter's motivation to attend to political communications, once some flow [of information] exists." [Converse 1962, 586] The curious thing about belief systems studies is that for all the stress on communication as the crucial variable and as an important aspect of the social sources of constraint, it is precisely that process which receives the least attention--either via original research or via citation of research from other disciplines. To the extent that this is the case, Converse's approach to

the study of belief systems as a factor in the policy communication between masses and elites does not succeed on its own terms.

COMMUNICATION AND CHANGING LEVELS OF CONSTRAINT

Cavalier treatment of the communication process is evident not only in Converse's own work [1962, 586n13 and Campbell et al. 1960, 44, 60n] but also in work by scholars seeking to extend the Conversean research project. For example, the work of Nie and his associates [Nie et al. 1976; Nie with Andersen 1976; Nie and Rabjohn 1979a] represents an attempt to revise the portrait of the electorate painted by Converse, an attempt to rebut his conclusions about the mass public's capacity to make sense of politics. They find an overall increase in attitude consistency to have occurred during the post-1964 period, as compared to the 1956-60 period studied by Converse. Nie and his associates attribute this to the changing nature of political events and discourse during the latter half of the 1960s. Thus, contrary to Converse, they conclude that "the inherent characteristics of the mass public [i.e., cognitive ability] are less important as determinants of mass ideology than are variations in the nature and salience of political stimuli." [Nie with Andersen 1976, 97]

Subjected to criticisms that attribute these differences between the two time periods to changes in survey instru-

ments [Bishop et al. 1978 and 1979; Sullivan et al. 1978 and 1979], Nie and James Rabjohn have since asserted that the thrust of the original argument does not concern the innate characteristics of individuals (cognitive ability), nor does it concern the internal criteria by which people uniquely organize their political beliefs (cognitive balancing, rationalization, etc.). Rather, the argument involves "factors external to the individual that provide organizing rules and guide the organization of attitudes into particular patterns." [Nie and Rabjohn 1979a, 142, emphasis in the original] This move is strikingly similar to Converse's own revision of the aims of his inquiry into belief systems--a move away from a focus on individual psychology and toward a focus on the social communication process.

For Nie and Rabjohn, these external factors--namely,

the number and intensity of events, the degree to which candidates and political leaders invent and reinforce packaging of these events, and the ways in which the media present and evaluate events and factors [sic] to the public--are, [they] believe, the primary factors that determine the depth and scope of attitude constraint in any given historical period. [Nie and Rabjohn 1979a, 142]

George Bishop, Alfred Tuchfarber, Robert Oldendick and Stephen Bennett criticize Nie and Rabjohn for attaching such great importance to these factors without presenting "evidence showing how specific pairs of issues have been 'bundled' or 'packaged' by the media or other 'external' sources at a specified period in time, and how this is re-

lated to changes in correlation for the same pairs of issues in the SRC/CPS series." [Bishop et al. 1979, 191] While Bishop et al. ask an important question ("What are the concrete links between idea-elements?") and seem to have the proper aim (explanation), they fail to realize that their criticism of Nie and his associates has equal validity for Converse's own work. They restrict the focus of their criticism to findings of increased consistency when it applies just as well to findings of the absence of constraint among the mass public's attitudes. In substituting concern with political communication for concern with individual psychology when it comes to the study of political belief systems, Converse, Nie and the others fail to illumine either aspect of the matter insofar as they have neglected to pursue the questions required by the appropriate research context.

How to explain this cavalier treatment of the social diffusion of knowledge or the communication process in the belief systems literature? One might suggest that theories about the process are simply part of political scientists' unexamined background knowledge, that there is an academic division of labor that narrows the focus of our inquiries by taking certain things for granted. However, by leaving background knowledge unexamined, critical assumptions underlying one's concepts and techniques are left unspecified--the result being that communication about the merits of alternative conceptualizations is inhibited, if not precluded.

[Bennett 1977, 485-86] Since political science heavily borrows concepts, techniques and theories from other disciplines, researchers need to be more explicit about the sources of the background knowledge they bring to bear upon a given problem. After all, as Imre Lakatos notes, a "problem never comes out of the blue." [Lakatos 1976, 70] An academic division of labor (however valuable) should not become an all-purpose excuse for not following through, especially when there are grounds for thinking that one's background knowledge may be problematic. Researchers and critics could be made aware of potential difficulties, I believe, to the extent that heuristic considerations play a part in defining their inquiries.

CONCLUSION

What seems to have occurred within the Conversean mode of belief systems research, then, is that heuristic considerations (i.e., sufficient attention to the research context) have not been prominent among those motivating the work of Converse and other scholars in the field. Thus, the focus of belief systems research has never turned to an examination of Converse's typology of the sources of constraint. Nor has it examined his communication and information based explanation for the absence of constrained belief systems among the mass public. Such matters--bearing most significantly on the prospects for scientific cumulation and for

the development of theory--have simply been pushed aside for the most part. As Bennett notes, today's debate in the belief systems field (i.e., within that part of the field working within the Conversean mode) tends to concern "troublesome questions about the fine line between the real world and our artificial reconstruction of it through measuring devices." [Bennett 1977, 448] In short, political scientists have been so concerned with distinguishing artifactual from actual change in attitude consistency (indeed, so concerned about consistency apart from its presumed sources) that "statistical digressions displace substantive insight" [Nie and Rabjohn 1979a, 173], that the emphasis on technique leads to neglect of the point of belief systems study in the first place.

In chapters two and three, I have shown that the lack of progress in belief systems research in political science is due primarily to a neglect of the research contexts within which Converse began his investigations. Two central heuristic problems have been discussed, namely, a facile abandonment of early commitments without discussion and an inadequate exploration of background knowledge. These problems merge into a general lack of follow-through on the part of political scientists with regard to the important conceptual and theoretical aspects of belief systems inquiry. The result is that platitudes about scientific cumulation of knowledge (as well as about the interaction be-

tween theory and research) all come to nothing, unless we keep our attention on the contexts within which research is developed and undertaken. As will be seen in the next chapter, the same conclusion can be reached after examining the rival research context represented by the work of Robert Lane.

Chapter IV

PSYCHOFUNCTIONALISM: MOTIVATION AND STRUCTURE

Having developed during the above chapters an inquiry focused on the research context within which Philip Converse's work occurred, it is now time to elucidate and explore the ramifications of the research context of his major competitor in contemporary political belief systems studies, namely, Robert Lane. Fortunately, despite the lack of explicit statements of research context in most work, the context of Lane's work can be readily identified. As it has developed over the years, the body of his work contains a number of different emphases that have tended to parallel concerns found elsewhere in both political science and psychology.²⁷

In the 1950s, as Roger Cobb [1973, 122] has noted, one major topic of concern was the broad area of studies in "personality and politics." There was at that time a surge in standard academic interest in psychoanalytic theory, a surge that fostered studies of the dynamics and motivational bases of political attitudes. [Smith 1973, 61-62] Lane's own work in the study of belief systems first appeared in 1959 under the influence of such psychodynamic concerns as the

²⁷ Indeed, Lane has recently noted that he has "drifted with [trends in] psychology, observing the Freudian theory [being] dismantled year by year." [Lane 1981]

effects of father/son relationships on one's political orientations. [Lane 1972, 63-76] The 1950s saw in political science an increasing concern with political behavior, with studies of public opinion and various forms of political participation. Other efforts undertaken by Lane at this time thus sought to illustrate the relevance of personality studies to studies of political behavior. Hence, he tried to detail authoritarian voting patterns in the 1952 election [Lane 1972, 38-56] and he sought to synthesize the findings on political participation with those on political motivation and personality. [Lane 1959]

The middle years of Lane's work (roughly from 1959 to 1969) represent an era in which the emphasis is placed on what might be called a psychofunctionalism. This perspective tends to focus upon "how beliefs play an adaptive role in mediating between the inner drives of the person and external reality." [Cobb 1973, 123] At the beginning of the period Lane was concerned with elucidating the ideology of the "American common man," that is, with showing the patterns of belief among a group of workingmen. [Lane 1962] While he also sought to explore the cultural sources of political beliefs, much of Political Ideology turns on the relations between belief and personal experience (both family and psychic or inner life). By the end of the 1960s, Lane produced a book on the political thinking of adolescents (one that appears at the height of worldwide youth involve-

ment in politics), a book that seeks to understand the links of political thought to the psychic needs of individuals. [Lane 1969] Throughout this period, prominent psychologists exercised substantial influence upon Lane's work.²⁸

Lane's most recent period covers work written during the 1970s. Most of this work, as we shall see later in this chapter, has a summarizing character. I believe it is motivated by the success of Converse's work in inspiring many related studies by political scientists, and as a result, seeks to systematize Lane's own approach and offer an alternative to that of Converse. The focus thus becomes placed on a concept of a core belief system, conceived as the basic premises of political thought for both the inarticulate and the politically sophisticated. [Lane 1973, 109-10 and 1972, 174]

In the sections that follow, we will be concerned first of all to locate and define in more detail a "psychofunctional" research context for Lane's work. A second matter to be taken up is that of the degree to which Lane has pursued this context, particularly in the form of studies of psychological needs and motivations and their relationships to political thought. Finally, an examination of what I take to be Lane's conceptual innovation (the concept of a

²⁸ In particular, the psychologists and their respective ideas that most influenced Lane are Erich Fromm (social character), Erik Erikson (identity), and Abraham Maslow (hierarchy of needs).

core belief system) will be made.

THE PSYCHOFUNCTIONAL CONTEXT

It is perhaps fitting that the major research contexts for both Converse and Lane studies of political belief systems are rooted in the discipline of psychology. Yet where Converse relies on quantitative social psychology, Lane turns to personality theory and to functionalism. This latter approach seems to emerge into political science with Harold Lasswell's Psychopathology and Politics, which first appeared in 1930. [Lasswell 1951, 282] Lasswell sought to familiarize political scientists with the uses of personality and life-history research and to provide evidence that much of politics involves the displacement of private motives onto public objects, a displacement rationalized in terms of public interests. [Lasswell 1951, 75] With this pioneering effort, the stage was set for the investigation of individuals as a means of answering questions about politics. Moreover, the focus shifted away from the objective, sociological forces and toward the "unseen forces" of psychological motivations in hopes of making the latter more explicit and subject to control. [Lasswell 1951, 191, 234-38, 250]

Lasswell's work had a pattern of concerns to which Lane's own work has conformed. To work out of the psychodynamic or the psychofunctional context requires two things. First,

one must address the issue of what psychological investigations can offer the study of politics. And second, one must explore the genetic and/or the functional relationships between personality, motivations and psychic needs, on the one hand, and belief systems, behavior and institutions, on the other. This section will deal with Lane's remarks on the first issue and, in a preliminary way, with those on the second.

In the attempt to describe what psychology has to offer political science, Lane takes pains to note that the choice is not one of either/or. The respective approaches to explaining political beliefs, for example--either telling of the self or telling of the world--"are complementary features of a total explanation for the simple reason that belief is inevitably an interaction between self and world ..." [Lane 1969, 2] Truly, each discipline may claim a special skill or a particular expertise with some facet of political belief systems, yet it is only a combined approach that could yield a complete understanding of the whole phenomenon. [Lane 1963, 598, 625]

By itself, this tells us little and gives few guidelines as to how best to proceed with a study of political beliefs. Lane does offer, however, some points of relevance which he believes standard political science neglects. In his scrutiny of the 1950s research on participation and voting, Lane

claims that it must be supplemented by investigations into human nature. Why? Well, his answer is: "Explanations of political decisions which rely wholly upon analyses of the social environment, while they may have high predictive value, neglect a vital link: they never explain why an individual responds to the environment the way he does." [Lane 1959, 98, emphasis in the original]²⁹ Standard political science routinely shows more concern with the what of a phenomenon than with the why of it. It asks about the merits (as a proposal for political institutions and behavior) of an ideology rather than why an individual has a particular ideology, for example. A psychological approach to the study of politics, says Lasswell, "must disclose a variety of novel circumstances [childhood, adolescent or adult experiences, or the psychic motivations that result] which dispose individuals to adopt, reject, or modify the patterns of act and phrase which are offered in the environment." [Lasswell 1951, 77; cf. Lane 1963, 601]

Lane not only believes such an approach can prove its worth but he also believes that standard political science explanations (those referring to the social environment) are actually premised upon the findings of psychological inves-

²⁹ There is a hint here of the dispute between the Hempelian view that identifies explanation and prediction and the opposing view that accepts explanations which do not predict as nevertheless valid and scientific. For an introduction to the dispute see Hempel [1965], Toulmin [1961], and von Wright [1971].

tigations. [Lane 1963, 625] He notes, for instance, that any prediction of the effects of political changes on actual political behavior requires (in the last analysis) knowledge of psychological processes. Routine sociological investigations all too often contain latent psychological hypotheses about human nature, about the reactions of individuals to their environment. Most importantly, though, psychology can provide greater insight into whatever phenomena are of concern. It can highlight and explain the deviant cases that put more standard ones into proper perspective. And it can, as Lasswell observes, "bring into the center of rational attention the movements which are critically significant in determining our judgment of subjective events, and [can] discover the essential antecedents of those patterns of subjectivity and of movement." [Lasswell 1951, 250]

I believe Lane's arguments for the importance of the concerns of psychology to political science have merit, but it is not clear that they have great import. As both Lane and Converse have admitted, both disciplines have claims on the study of political belief systems; both have different emphases and each pursues a fairly distinct set of questions. The differences between Converse and Lane do not occur because one adopts a wholly political scientific approach, while the other opts for a wholly psychological inquiry. Instead, the differences arise because of the different psychological questions each asks about belief systems and pol-

itics.³⁰ Lane expresses such differences when he characterizes his approach as one which "stresses the striving, need-fulfilling character of social thought, as contrasted to an approach that might, for example, reveal the logical aspects of thought, or the associational aspects ..." [Lane 1969, 2]

Such an approach places Lane's work within a psychofunctional context associated not only with the work of Lasswell but also that of Donald Katz, M. Brewster Smith, and others. For Smith, the key question is always "Of what use to a man are his opinions?" [Smith et al. 1956, 1] The focus of a psychofunctional approach is on the role opinions, attitudes or belief systems play within the personality dynamics of an individual. [Smith 1973, 74] One might seek thereby to describe the personality structures and dynamics of a number of individuals and to show how these condition the choice of certain elements of belief about the political world. Smith

³⁰ As will be seen in the next section, neither Converse nor Lane can be put wholly on one disciplinary side or the other. Rather, their basic concerns lead them to ask either political scientific or psychological questions when the need arises without becoming solely linked to either. The kinds of psychological questions each asks, however, do show some differences: (1) Converse looks at attitudes and belief systems primarily in terms of their economy functions, while Lane looks at them in terms of the functions of expression and ego defense. (2) Both Converse and Lane seek out patterns of association, but Converse restricts his search to the logical or syllogistic pattern and neglects to fully explore the reasons for the association. Lane, however, is as interested in that underlying rationale as he is in the pattern of association itself.

and his associates, as well as Lane and many others, have indeed followed this path of illustrating the distinctive qualities that differentiate the political thinking of various individuals.³¹ Yet the functionalism of Lane's research context is not limited to showing belief systems in their uniqueness nor is it restricted to elucidating the functions of belief for an individual's personality. Functional thinking, it can be said, "aims to understand the characteristics or structure of something by examining its significance for a larger or more comprehensive system of which it is a part." [Noble 1979, 2] As such, the research context we are exploring goes beyond the system of personality to discover the functions political belief systems serve for the broader political system. Lane does this in at least two ways. One way is to note that belief systems have functions for groups and nations, as well as individuals. [Lane 1962, 424-25 and 1972, 171] Indeed, it could be argued that belief systems have little role in political life save when they are adopted by social groups, that is, when they are shared and not idiosyncratic. The other way in which Lane shows the functions of political belief systems for the polity is by showing how one's beliefs and personality either support the status quo or not, either underlie the workings of de-

³¹ This aspect of Lane's work comprises what Paul Diesing has called the "holist standpoint," a standpoint that focuses not only on the interrelations of parts but also on the unique characteristics of the parts. [Diesing 1971, 138-39]

mocracy or not. [Lane 1962, 400-77 and 1969, 312-39 and *passim*]

As noted above, the psychofunctional context has roots not only in the work of Smith but also in the work of Katz, who among other attitude theorists has sought to define a short list of functions opinions and attitudes serve for an individual. This list most commonly isolates the utilitarian (adaptive), the economy (knowledge), the expressive (self-realizing), and the ego-defensive functions of attitudes. [McGuire 1969, 158ff] In the last chapter, Converse was found to have tended to emphasize the utilitarian and economy functions. The former regards attitudes as serving people by disposing them toward objects that are instrumental in achieving their goals. [McGuire 1969, 158; Katz and Stotland 1959, 435ff] The latter is more important in Converse's scheme of things, and it views attitudes as enabling individuals to simplify and more easily manage their encounters with the world. [McGuire 1969, 158-59; Smith 1973, 78] With these functions in mind, Converse evaluates belief systems in terms of such concepts as constraint and economy.

Lane recognizes that these functions are valuable, in fact they comprise part of the basis of the concept of a core belief system. Despite this, he tends to emphasize the functions of expression and ego-defense over the other two. Attitudes that serve these functions are held or maintained

as a means of gaining various emotional gratifications. An expressive function means that the given attitude represents a cathartic acting-out of internal psychic tensions, but it can also mean that the attitude serves as a means of self-assertion. By taking a more or less public stand, by holding an attitude, one establishes or confirms one's identity as an individual or as a member of a group. [McGuire 1969, 159; Lane 1962, 382, 397-99] Lane, in particular, looks at a number of expressive functions of both political participation and political belief systems--viz., they help to remove self-doubt, to resolve the search for autonomy, and to improve one's self-concept. [Lane 1969, 17-18 and passim and 1959, 102]

Ego-defense, like expression, represents a working out of intrapsychic tensions, though the mechanisms are different. Ego-defense more often connotes an attempt to contain or deny inner conflicts rather than an attempt to give vent to them. [McGuire 1969, 160; Smith 1973, 78] Most likely, ego-defensive attitudes occur in dealing with consciously unacceptable motives such as aggression, wherein various defenses (projection, denial, rationalization, and the like) are employed to reduce the tensions of psychic life. Yet the tension reduction is accomplished by removing the tension itself from perception rather than by actually resolving the conflict. [Sarnoff 1960] A considerable portion of Lane's discussion of belief systems does concern the emergence of

ego-defensive needs and their fulfillment. Yet he is less concerned about tracing the specific psychodynamic mechanisms of defense than about examining such situations as a damaged father/son relationship or a person's lack of control over his or her impulse life (sex, aggression, consumption). [Lane 1972, 63-76; 1962, 41-56; 1969, 145-89, 261-311; and 1981]

Given Lane's general concern about the functions belief systems serve within the individual personality and within the social character of the group or nation, how is one to gather material for analysis? The method usually chosen is some means of the intensive study of life-histories, a method popularized in the late 1920s and early 1930s with the rise of both psychoanalysis and anthropology. Lasswell especially sought to familiarize political scientists with life-history techniques, the personality dynamics they could reveal, and the understanding they could provide about society and politics. [Lasswell 1951, 8-10] For the most part he was concerned with elements of psychopathology that appeared in therapeutic interviews and with the traumatic episodes which sparked those pathologies. But one can employ the life-history technique with "normal" individuals (as well as those undergoing therapy in or out of institutions) by focusing not so much on traumas and pathology as on any developmentally significant facts. [Lasswell 1951, 10]

John Dollard (from whom Lane learned the strategy and tactics of psychotherapy) also sought to popularize the use of the life-history method among social scientists. He was concerned to provide a listing of criteria that would mark an adequate life-history analysis. A life-history, in Dollard's view, marks "a deliberate attempt to define the growth of a person in a cultural milieu and to make theoretical sense of it." [Dollard 1935, 3] As such, an adequate life-history must transcend disciplinary boundaries--when done by a psychologist, it must give attention to the influence of culture; when pursued by a sociologist, the technique must treat an individual's biography as well as his or her psychic and biological impulses. The complete life-history, then, must portray the individual as a person with biological impulses and psychodynamic needs moving through a cultural milieu and mirroring its aspects. Only in this way can such investigations be scientifically useful.

A casual acquaintance with Lane's work is enough to show that he relies upon life-histories as a means of understanding and theorizing about political belief systems. Those histories he gathers come from two main sources, oral interviews and autobiographical essays. In Political Ideology, the oral interviews were conducted in a "clinical, relaxed, conversational situation" [Lane 1962, 9-10] and covered topics ranging from public policy issues of the day to memories of childhood and early family life.³² The depth interviews

have a number of advantages over routine survey questionnaires. For one thing, the social relationship that develops between the interviewer and the respondent permit extended probing of the latter's remarks in order to reveal important features of the personality. Also, the discursiveness of the interviews, the free rein given to the respondents' thought processes, enables one to gather insights into connotative meanings, patterns of association and styles of argument. Most importantly, such interviews allow one to place the thoughts of respondents in their proper context--a context not only of other thoughts but also of biographical information. In this way, the researcher can trace latent ideological themes, see the whole structure of an individual's political thought and relate life experiences to the possession of a congenial belief system. There is, says Lane, "no other satisfactory way to map a political ideology." [Lane 1962, 10]

Despite this remark, Lane has since found another means of studying political belief systems, namely, the autobiographical essay--a technique used in his Political Thinking and Consciousness. This method has some rather obvious drawbacks, and two of them are especially significant.

³² The questions Lane used were derived from various sources such as the work of Smith and the Survey Research Center. [Lane 1962, 8n4] Moreover, the questions cover areas similar to the clinical portions of the interviews conducted for the study by Theodor Adorno and his associates [1969, 304-25; cf. Lane 1962, 481-93]

First, the essays do not permit probing of the individual's remarks nor do they allow the researcher to observe the subtle cues of personality found in the face-to-face relationship. The essays also are of uneven quality in that some people are a good deal more introspective than others and are able to provide more information of a "depth" character. Overall, then, the essays do not provide as much psychoanalytically relevant information as do the interviews. Second, the essay's usefulness is limited to the investigation of articulate subjects, such as the college students studied by Lane. The technique, however, can be valuable not only as a means of self-clarification or political education [Lane 1972, 123], but also as a means of analyzing an individual's "political values, opinions, and beliefs, and the functions they serve in one's personality and life situation." [Lane 1969, 16]

TWO MODELS

The above section sought to clarify the psychofunctional context within which Lane's work in the belief systems field has been undertaken. In this section, however, the focus shifts to a consideration of the ways in which Lane has worked through or out of that context. Such a focus soon will involve (as will later be apparent) an examination of Lane's use of individuals' needs and motivations as a means of understanding political belief systems.

In claiming a role for the psychological study of ideology, Lane offers a list of questions the psychologists and political scientists tend to ask about political belief systems:

The political scientist wants to know the merits of the arrangements of institutions proposed by each ideology. ... The psychologist is interested in why the individual has adopted this particular ideology ... In asking what an ideology is, the political scientist wants to know what system of ideas logically coheres, given certain premises; the psychologist wants to know what items of belief are associated in what ways and for what reasons. ... The political scientist usually is more interested in the results of a given pattern of acceptance, the psychologist in the light a given distribution can shed on the etiology of the belief.³³ [Lane 1963, 598]

Lane's work has fallen for the most part on the side of the psychologist, as he himself recognizes. [Lane 1981] In this section, then, we will discuss the preeminent psychological question of why someone holds a particular belief system.

Accounting for the why of an individual's political beliefs is not an uncomplicated task, for one must be clear as to the precise question one is asking. One question concerns the production of a full-blown, forensic ideology, while another involves the process of choosing among available ideologies in circulation at any given time or place.

³³ This set of questions provides a better appreciation of the differences between Lane and Converse than does the latter's account. [Converse 1975, 87-89] The differences are highlighted in the second pair of questions that Lane provides. However, this list of research foci also suggests that Lane and Converse are closer together than is commonly realized by political scientists or even by the parties themselves. [Converse 1975; Lane 1981]

The former task is one for the more articulate individuals in society, for people for whom political life is a matter of great importance and a subject of constant reflection. Yet such an ideology is not developed by an isolated individual; rather, it is a distillate not only of one's own thoughts and personality but also of the interests of one's group and culture. [Mannheim 1936, 29, 58-59; Fromm 1969, 308] Lane's treatment of this facet of the why of an ideology occurs in a paradigm he offers in Political Ideology. He writes that, for any society: an existential base creating certain common experiences interpreted through certain cultural premises by men with certain personal qualities in the light of certain social conflicts produces certain political ideologies.³⁴ [Lane 1962, 415-16, emphasis in the original]³⁴ The focus of this paradigm, though, as Lane repeatedly asserts, is not on the production of an ideology de novo. The focus instead concerns the mechanisms of ideological change--the shared elements of character and the shared socio-cultural experiences that condition the development and adoption of a different ideology by a given social group.

³⁴ This model of the production of, or change in, ideologies is rather similar to the views of Erich Fromm: "[I]deologies and culture in general are rooted in the social character; ... the social character itself is molded by the mode of existence of a given society; and their turn the dominant character traits become productive forces shaping the social process." [Fromm 1969, 324]

Thus, one answer to the question of why someone holds a particular belief system must follow along these lines: X is a member of group Y in society Z, and belief system B fits that group or society for reasons C, D, E. In short, in order for a group or society (and the individuals who comprise it) to adopt a belief system as their own, that belief system must be congruent with the life experiences of the people involved. Before the belief system is adopted, it must pass certain tests:

The ideological features must fit with the personal qualities of the men to whom they are addressed or they lack appeal. They must be seen as congruent with the cultural premises of the society, or they will be seen as immoral or unrealistic or dissonant with what is known. And they must somehow make the interpretation of real-life experience both more gratifying and more realistic. [Lane 1962, 419]

Lane uses this notion of congruence in conjunction with the ideological change paradigm to suggest reasons why the ideology of the "American common man" is not likely to be replaced by Marxism. [Lane 1962, 420-32]

To some degree, however, this paradigm lends itself more to a discussion of the ways in which beliefs are associated than one of the actual adoption of a particular ideology. What is missing is an account of the interaction between the socio-cultural factors and the personal qualities of the individual. Such an account would provide insight into the second facet of the why of an ideology, namely, the choice of a congenial belief system from among the available alter-

natives. For this, Lane offers a second paradigm in his Political Thinking and Consciousness.

In offering this paradigm, Lane reaffirms his focus on the need-fulfilling aspects of social thought. Concentrating on the "personal qualities" element of the first model, he now presents a model of a political "idea machine." This model is described as follows: Certain messages or cues from the environment (either remembered or currently perceived) engage or arouse certain motives or needs in the individual. This sets in motion a search and selection procedure for ideas that would resolve internal psychic conflicts, defend the ego and attain need-satisfaction. Once the selection process (conditioned by personality features, one's reference groups, one's epistemology and learning strategies, and one's definition of the situation) is complete, the end product is a social and political belief system with a particular content and style of thought. The result is a belief system with a considerable degree of psychic fit. [Lane 1969, 48-49] Lane, then, primarily explores the kinds of political beliefs individuals possess, given the predominance in their personalities of certain needs, motives or internal conflicts.

NEEDS AND MOTIVATIONS

The exploration of the role of psychic needs and motivations in the formation or choice of a congenial belief system obviously depends upon a conception of what needs and motivations people in fact have. Under the influence of the popularity of Maslow's psychology during the 1960s, Lane examined a number of need typologies in his Political Thinking and Consciousness. None of them, as might be expected, were satisfactory so he developed his own list of ten needs significantly related to the development of political belief systems. [Lane 1969, 31-47; cf. 1959, 102] There is no reason to examine the full list provided by Lane, but several needs loom largest in both of his major studies of belief systems. Hence, the elucidation of the psychofunctional context can be accomplished by concentrating on the following motives and needs: (1) material well-being, (2) affection and other social needs, (3) understanding and other cognitive needs, (4) control over the impulse life or the relief of intrapsychic tension, and (5) identity formation. Discussion of these will provide a capsule summary of the results of Lane's studies, and it will enable us to take a closer look at the functional relationships that Lane presumes condition political belief systems.

Material Well-Being

A need for material well-being or economic gain, it seems, should have a place in any need-based theory of the formation of political belief systems. One reason for this is that the concept of ideology was developed in part as a label for various rationalizations of economic self-interest. A second reason is that American culture (though perhaps it is not alone in this) tends to evaluate one's worth as a human being in terms of economic performance. Economic gain thus represents a powerful motive for political participation and for certain kinds of political thought insofar as it is instrumental not only for commodities but also for psychic gratifications. [Lane 1959, 102]

How does such a need play a role in the formation and content of one's political belief system? The influence of this need on belief systems has two facets that are more or less obvious. One facet concerns the effects of economic opportunity on political thought, while the other concerns the effects of economic disadvantage. As Lane notes:

A man's economic life modifies his ideology, and of the ingredients of that life the opportunity to earn what he considers to be a decent living [abundance] is probably the most important. Beyond that, the opportunity to increase his earnings (and status) from time to time [improvement] counts substantially in framing a social outlook. [Lane 1962, 215-16]

The existence of economic opportunity, both in the sense of current economic satisfactions and in the sense of opportu-

nity for the future, gives the political belief systems of the workingment of "Eastport" a strong status-quo bent. Because such opportunities exist (or rather because they are believed to exist), those men have a sense of personal responsibility for their own social positions--everyone gets what is deserved. If I have succeeded, it is because I have worked hard; if I am failing, the fault lies not with the system but with myself for lacking education or for not exerting myself. [Lane 1962, 62-72] Even the concept of a utopia is not marked by substantial change from the status quo, for while the very poor and the very rich are absent from utopia opportunities for continued improvement in one's economic condition and status remain. Too strict an egalitarianism cannot be advocated by these men, for equality connotes sameness, a static society, and the undermining of all one's hard work prior to the onset of the egalitarian utopia. [Lane 1962, 203, 72-79]

Economic disadvantage, as might be expected, does not produce an easy identification with the status quo. Rather, considerable anxiety about material well-being occurs, particularly as a result of the experience of poverty in one's youth. Such experiences generate feelings that are projected onto society at large when such people witness "lavish" governmental expenditures and large public debts. [Lane 1962, 254] Such anxiety is only one result of the experience of poverty in one's early life. Another result is a loss of

self-esteem, a loss that may lead individuals to wealth- and status-seeking as a means of gaining acceptance in the eyes of others. "In the most summary terms," Lane concludes, "one could say that striving for wealth and status, for whatever reason, encourages the elaboration of an 'ideology' or elaborated rationale, and that this is always conservative." [Lane 1969, 258]

Affection and Social Needs

The second major need that occupies a major place in Lane's work is that of affection, which is part of a category of broadly defined "social needs" that includes affiliation, approval and a preference for easy (non-conflictual) social relations. Among the "Adams College" students whose autobiographies Lane has studied, the most often expressed need was the need to be liked. To a certain extent, one might expect this of adolescents trying to find their way in the world, for the uncertainties of that stage of life put a greater emphasis on bases of social support and approval than may be the case in adulthood. Yet the need to be liked (as well as the needs akin to it) cannot be dismissed as just the concomitants of adolescence, for it is clear that they operate among adults, too. Lane is of the belief that the need to be liked emerges early in life, endures, and as a result, creates enduring political thoughts.

Such a need has several functions within one's psychological economy. One such function is instrumental--being liked is a definite aid in obtaining not only material rewards but also other intangible social rewards. Another function is a selfvalidating one--being liked reaffirms one's sense that "I am OK." An emphasis on being liked could also serve to reduce one's anxieties about the hostilities felt toward others. [Lane 1969, 107-08] Or, finally, the need to be liked could be generalized to the extent that political objects (the government and other political actors) would be perceived through "need-colored glasses." [Lane 1969, 141]

What are the expressions of these social needs in political belief systems? One such expression has been found among both the workers of Eastport and the students of Adams, namely, a "low-tension" morality and politics. There is an assumption among the workers, for example, that people's interests aren't in fundamental conflict, that people would come to ready agreement and do good if only they were educated enough to see where the harmonious equilibrium lies. Hence, there is no such thing as an evil person say the men of Eastport. Instead of blame, there is only a recounting of situational causes and temptations or an admission of human fallibility; instead of evil, one speaks only of error. [Lane 1962, 324-30]

Politically, this low-tension morality has a number of manifestations. There is, for instance, a reluctance to speak ill of political leaders and to engage in serious political controversy. One is always seeking the middle ground in arguments, the way people seek higher ground to escape floods--in this case, a flood of tension and ill-feeling. More importantly, the need to be liked leads to projective thinking with regard to the proper role of government in society. Government should be representative and hence responsive; it should try to ingratiate the various groups in society; it should be nice to people and seek friendly relations with other countries. In short, government ought to be non-coercive, non-restrictive, and above all, love-giving. [Lane 1969, 101ff] Both the college students and the workers are characterized by this type of projective thinking, for which Lane finds good reasons. Through it, "one validates one's own personality traits and life style by having the government adopt them. ... And on the other hand, it makes for a congenial image of government, a predictable one, one readily accepted, honored, and obeyed." [Lane 1969, 142]

Understanding

Understanding represents the third of the five needs and motivations most important in Lane's studies of belief systems. While some social psychologists might postulate an

undifferentiated curiosity motive, Lane is of the opinion that political learning tends to be motivated learning, that is learning directed to a specific end. Political learning (according to Lane) "is heavily dependent on the way men perceive political ideas to be useful to them in their ongoing life struggles, something less true of science, history, and literature. [Lane 1969, 317]³⁵ In particular, the struggles he has in mind are those of identity formation, of developing satisfactory interpersonal relations, and of assisting career and task achievement. [Lane 1969, 91-92]

At the same time these life struggles motivate the individual to engage in political learning, they are responsible for a number of limits to one's knowledge, reasoning and understanding. Compared to the ideal democratic citizen (one with complete information and enough critical faculties to make reasoned political choices), the ordinary person does not fare well. Political scientists have repeatedly lamented the poverty of information and thought of ordinary citizens. Instead of philosophically rich belief systems, one finds among such people only a melange of undigested political labels, emotions and personal anecdotes.

³⁵ This is a rather curious statement for someone schooled in the Freudian tradition. That all learning is motivated, does not seem to be doubted. What appears to be at issue is the relationship of the various kinds of learning to "ongoing life struggles." Lane perhaps is implying that science, history and literature relate to those life struggles only for the few, whereas politics will do so for everyone.

In his depth interviews with the Eastport workers, Lane finds a number of characteristics of political thought that tend to support the standard picture of the ordinary citizen. These include, first of all, a blunted differentiation of political objects, a lack of recognition of the difference between speculation and knowledge, and a lack of organization and strategy in one's political discourse. [Lane 1962, 359ff] Secondly, among the men abstract thinking gives way to a preference for the personal and the concrete, so much so that first principles are simply assumed to be unproblematic and widely shared. Lane notes, for example, that "the man of Eastport tends to explain matters in terms of latent principles and manifest facts, and when he argues the argument more often turns on the characteristics of the situation, not on the rules that govern the universe." [Lane 1962, 349; cf. Smith et al. 1956, 256]³⁶

A third characteristic that Lane discovers is one that Converse cites in an approving manner, one that deals with the ways in which people understand political events. According to Lane,

one of the features of ... "understanding" is to grasp the context of an event, that is, temporally to know what went before and what is likely to follow, spatially to know the terrain, in human terms to see the play of the many motives involved. To understand an event in this way is to

³⁶ This presumption that fundamentals of political thought are unproblematic parallels the concept of "givenness" isolated in American political thinking by Daniel Boorstin [1953].

contextualize it; not to do this is to morselize it, to see it isolated from the surrounding features that give it additional "meanings." [Lane 1962, 350, emphasis in the original]

For Converse, however, this morselization of political events is by far the norm for the mass public; Lane merely notes that some of us morselize and others do not. Yet it is clear that broad contextual knowledge of the sort that informs one about political and economic alternatives, about history and religion, and about the costs and benefits of specific situations and activities tends to be absent for most people most of the time. Ultimately, when we ask what do people know, Lane observes, "we are asking what do they not know, and we are asking why." [Lane 1962, 377]

An answer to this why question forces one to return to the idea that political learning is motivated learning. Only the doorstep issues matter to the ordinary citizen; the abstract ones are best left to philosophers and politicians, to people whose lives revolve around the posing and answering of such riddles. Despite what seems to be the prevalence of ignorance and deficient reasoning processes among members of the mass public, however, Lane believes that the "American common man" is nevertheless in touch with political and social reality. The workers of Eastport do have an acquaintance with what democracy means, with the requirements of work in an industrial society, and with the prevailing codes of thought and behavior in society. [Lane

1962, 380] In short, they can make sense of their experiences.

Impulse Life and Psychic Tension

The fourth major motive conditioning the development of individuals' political belief systems is the relief of intrapsychic tension. A focus on this motive has been part and parcel of the psychofunctional context from the start--witness Lasswell's classic formula about political man [Lasswell 1951, 75], Smith et al.'s identification of the externalization function of attitudes [Smith et al. 1956, 40ff], and the elucidation of the authoritarian personality by Adorno et al. on the basis of data from clinical interviews. [Adorno et al. 1969, 391-486] Lane does not depart from this tradition and defines the relevant psychic conflicts as occurring "between impulse and control mechanisms, or between conflicting impulses, or between the unconscious super-ego and the rational mind." [Lane 1959, 115]

Of these areas of intrapsychic conflict, Lane chooses to focus his attention on the individual's control over the impulse life and especially on control over the impulses of sex and aggression. Sexual impulse are an obviously important aspect of personality dynamics, and they must be treated by anyone working within a context that owes a debt to Freudian psychoanalytic thought. Aggression must be treated not only because of its similar part in the Freudian scheme

of things but also because politics is a preeminent arena of conflict.

Sexual life, however, does not figure very much in Lane's explorations of political belief systems. For the most part, sexual tension is at a rather modest level among the Eastport workers, who are more concerned about the modes and spontaneity of sexual expression than about the existence and nature of the impulses themselves. Yet there were two members of that group who shared a rejection of the sexual impulses similar to that attributed by Adorno et al. to the belief systems of prejudiced individuals. Significantly, these two men were also among those fearing an extension of freedom in society. [Lane 1962, 46-48; cf. Adorno et al. 1969, 393-97]

Aggressive impulses are given more attention by Lane, though. In his scheme of things, aggressive political thought and behavior are "predominantly marked by a desire to injure or humiliate or denigrate some objects important in the ongoing affairs of political life ..." [Lane 1969, 151] The source of such aggression is neither instinct nor imitation but rather frustration, including the anticipated frustration of one's desires. Frustrated dependency needs, emotional deprivation in early life, and a lack of ego strength can all result in an aggressive personality. Lane's summary view is that a "sense of chronic status dep-

rivation (at whatever social level) seems to make for political thought filled with aggressive sentiment." [Lane 1969, 156, emphasis deleted]

Lane is less concerned with explaining the genesis of aggression than with the consequences for political belief systems of a feeling that one's aggressive impulses cannot be controlled. Among the Adams students, a number of aggressive personalities did complain of emotional deprivation and punitive parental discipline. But the father hatred that fostered the aggressive impulses gave vent only to a selective hostility, when generalized to the political realm. The targets of such hostility, then, "are likely to be partisan opponents, lower status groups, abstractions and symbols ... but not heads of state." [Lane 1969, 163] Another consequence emerges among a few Eastport workers who were worried about their propensity toward uncontrollable anger and hostility. These men tend to fear any extension of freedom--fear it, because they dread the consequences of the actions of unrestrained angry men like themselves. [Lane 1962, 48-51]

Yet another consequence of the failure to control aggressive impulses is the projection onto society of a similar lack of control. As Lane notes, "there is a fundamental relationship between one's internal experience of fighting against barely contained and inadmissible impulses, and

one's external perception and reconstruction of society as threatened by some inadmissible and barely contained social force." [Lane 1962, 127] Examples of such projection are well known from the stereotypes of Jews found among people by Adorno et al.; Lane provides a few of his own as well in his descriptions of cabalist political thought (views that attribute nearly complete control over society to some quasiconspiratorial group). What is important to note is that projection serves two kinds of function for an individual's psychic economy in this instance. First, projecting the uncontrollable impulses onto others in society renders those impulses ego-alien, thereby facilitating not only one's self-validation but also one's urges for the destruction of the now alien impulses. Second, viewing society as beset by unchecked forces can lead one to choose a strengthening of external controls to take up the slack left by weak internal ones. This represents a kind of "escape from freedom" or a submission to a dominant force that will not only ensure that society as a whole is fully regulated but also protect one from oneself.

Identity Formation

A final need to be considered is the need for a coherent identity. For Lane, the concept of identity comprises three aspects: (1) a developed self-awareness--cognition, acceptance and understanding of one's mental processes; (2) an

accurate self-description--the ability to trace one's important characteristics; and, (3) a significant degree of self-esteem--valuing oneself and one's ideas. [Lane 1962, 381-82] Lane subsequently distinguishes two aspects of the resultant identity. There is a personal aspect that refers to the sense of self as ego, as well as a social aspect that refers to the sense of self that is derived from one's group memberships.

Among the workers of Eastport, the personal identities tend to be rather strong, though curiously objectified. [Lane 1962, 382] Most of the men accept themselves, see themselves as worthy of respect and capable of filling a political role. Yet when they relate their life-histories, the men treat themselves as an uninvolved observer might--telling their stories in terms of external events rather than of feelings and emotional development. This is not because the men are "anti-intrceptive" in the sense Adorno et al. apply the term to the inability of "authoritarians" to think deeply about human phenomena, to probe the subjective and tender-minded aspects of experience. [Adorno et al. 1969, 234ff and passim] Rather, this objectification is due to want of reflection, which is apparently not fostered by their environment or by their experience.

The interesting aspects of the matter of identity, however, do not concern people whose identities are relatively

secure and well-established. Lane thus spends a good deal of time in exploring the consequences for political thinking that occur as a result of a deficient sense of identity. His interest is not with the serious cases of identity diffusion described by Erikson [1980, 131-58], but with cases where an individual's relationships with the father or with the family in general have been damaged. Among the workers, Lane has concentrated his attention on the cases of damaged father/son relationships. The picture of the political thought that emerges in such a context is rather bleak. The damage done to one's self-esteem (due to various kinds of deprivation) creates a very low degree of political interest and hence a low level of political information. The psychic conflicts generated by such experiences apparently leave the men with few emotional defenses and thus with little or no concern for politics. Such men also are characterized by a tendency toward authoritarianism and by an extreme pessimism about the future. They have had no experience of interpersonal relationships based on trust or on a non-exploitative, non-manipulative foundation; as a result, they have not been able to conceive of a political life conducted on such bases. Moreover, the men of Eastport with damaged father/son relationships see almost no movement of American society and politics toward their respective utopias, and hence, they have very little hope for the future. [Lane 1962, 276-81]

When examining the autobiographical essays of the students, Lane finds that the consequences of estranged family relationships are not quite so dismal as the consequences of damaged ones between father and son. Rather than turning away from politics or submitting to an authoritarian version of it, these estranged adolescents

seek in their political thinking and behavior some means of coping with the deficiencies that caused the break with their families: the loss of self-esteem, the lack of power, the coldness of family relations. ... This is a process of restitution or compensation, and, ... these men use politics to help them in their striving to become "whole."
[Lane 1969, emphasis in the original, 288]

Politics can restore one's self-esteem by providing one access to various status groups. Yet the restitution for other deprivations does not come easy. For example, the political thinking of subjects deprived of familial love either sees no nurturing role as proper for government or views liberal government as the regulator overseeing the activities of an "enemy." A view of government as offering both succor and opportunities for self-development and camaraderie (though perhaps expected) is not to be found, primarily because the search for restitution is hampered by the lack of a loving and caring role model. Similar problems beset the use of political thinking and behavior as a means of restoring other aspects of identity, especially a sense of inner guidance and certainty. Though the restitution may be difficult to achieve, most of the men from estranged families seek and value in their political beliefs what they

were deprived of in the home, be it self-esteem, power, or independence. [Lane 1969, 290-307]

In Lane's view someone's identity, "that which he feels he is and somehow must be, is a mixture of things sui generis (properties he feels to be special to himself) and things shared with some group--a family, a religious body, a community, a nation." [Lane 1969, 132, emphasis in the original] These shared qualities comprise what Lane calls a person's social identity. While the men of Eastport show strong personal identities, their social identities are rather weak and diffused. How could this be? Lane attributes it to various factors associated with the muting of social conflict in American society. For example, social mobility tends to inhibit the use of one's social class as a reference group; ethnic assimilation does likewise for one's ethnic background; and religious toleration mutes the differences among the various church creeds, thereby weakening the church as a potential solidary group. [Lane 1962, 389-90]

What consequences for political belief and action are there from such identity diffusion? One is that (given the uncertainty of reference group definitions) the workers tend to become cautious and tentative in expressing political opinions; they try to seek some measure of consensus and conformity in their politics. This consequence is similar to that found in the political thinking of the college stu-

dents with ambivalent social identities. Their political thinking tends to be cast in the form of a dialogue, wherein they are always conscious of (and sensitive to) "the other side's possible rejoinder, and [is] marked by a history of rather facile change in an effort to attain acceptance and selfvalidation. [Lane 1969, 132-36] In short, the absence of a clear social identity yields only an individual basis for the adoption of a belief system; one's political beliefs lack the social base that is deemed requisite by some political analysts. Moreover, to the extent that individual goals and purposes are substituted for social ones, the motivations to participate in politics are weakened—for politics is only obscurely related to highly personal aims. [Lane 1962, 397-99]

While among the workers Lane searches for social identity in terms of class and ethnic or religious background, he discovers another source of social identity among the college students, viz., the family. For the students, identification with the family helps clarify both "a person's social identity (social placement and sense of group membership) and his political and ideological identity (how he thinks of himself in these contexts)." [Lane 1969, 266] Whereas estranged family ties lead to one set of consequences for the belief systems of adolescents, continued identification with the family has a quite different set of consequences. One such result is reinforcement of support for

the status quo, particularly if one is satisfied with the family's social status and given the selective picture of the world common among one's chosen peers. A second consequence is a measure of generalization and projection onto society of one's familiar experiences. One may view society and government as having the same patterns of reward and punishment, the same structure of authority, as does the family. An example of this is the following argument that Lane reconstructs from material in one of the autobiographies:

Society rewards and punishes like the family; the behavior and attitudes which are rewarding in the family are ... transferred to social behavior and attitudes. Control of aggressive and rebellious feelings and more or less compliant behavior toward paternal (good) authority is rewarding; it produces reinstatement of love and acceptability. Generalized social rules and norms are desirable, legitimate, not too constrictive; hence I accept them ... Big business is bad authority, and hence criticism and challenge of it are not dangerous; socialist dogmatic authority is too constrictive, hence not acceptable ... The Democratic party allows latitude for deviance, hence is acceptable and rewarding. Therefore: I follow social rules and norms; I am against the power of big business; I am not a socialist; I am a Democrat--and for the welfare state. [Lane 1969, 275-87]

Similar patterns of belief illuminate the effects of family identification on an individual's political belief system.

Aims of the Inquiry

To what end does this exploration of the needs and motivations of individuals aspire? On the one hand, Lane wants to illuminate the psychological requisites for a democratic

polity. In this task, he is led to show us the many features of political belief systems that tend to support the status quo. [Lane 1962, 439-54 and passim]³⁷ Some of the important examples of this have been discussed above. Lane also seeks to alert us to the psychological "pathologies of democratic man." [Lane 1962, 400-09] What these pathologies all have in common is their roots in psychological deprivation. Lane chooses to comprehend this by means of the concept of the "impoverished self," a concept which encapsulates the various impediments to support for democracy.

An impoverished self is marked by three things. First, a low degree of self-acceptance (especially manifest in a rejection of one's impulse life) undermines the low moral tension so necessary to the consensualist processes of democracy. Low self-acceptance also tends to impair the development of a realistic epistemology and metaphysics. Second, there is the characteristic of low self-esteem, which creates individuals with a variety of traits such as cynicism, misanthropy, self-alienation and anomie. In general, low self-esteem "produces in the citizen a sense that

³⁷ Later, he writes that "scholars are aware that there is no simple distribution of traits, syndromes, or personality types which is good or necessary ... for the operation of an efficient and humane political system, and that hence we must direct our research toward discovering relatively subtle patterns of personality characteristics, with varying distributions, meshed into roles and institutions in complementary ways, each 'way' modified by the ecology and history of a particular political system." [Lane 1972, 17]

he is unworthy to hold opinions, to make demands upon the society, to be treated as an important individual." [Lane 1962, 411] The third and final mark of the impoverished self is the absence of ego strength, a lack of control over either one's internal impulses or the demands of the environment. A weak ego makes it impossible for the individual to pursue a long-term course of action (the sort requisite in politics) and generates feelings of anxiety, irrational habits of thought and an overall lack of autonomy. Hence, a lack of ego strength does not enable individuals to treat each other as free-standing units, as beings capable of a reasoned and self-governing politics. [Lane 1962, 412]

In endeavoring to alert us to the pathologies of democratic man, Lane's work returns to the concerns of Lasswell, whose studies of psychopathology aimed at the creation of a preventive politics. "By the intensive analysis of representative people," Lasswell observes, "it is possible to obtain clues to the nature of these 'unseen forces' [needs and motivations], and to devise ways and means of dealing with them for the accomplishment of social purposes." [Lasswell 1951, 191] Preventive politics, then, seeks to eliminate maladaptation and to reduce the level of tension in society.

Yet Lane's work does little more than alert us to the existence of pathologies. He offers no suggestions as to what preventive measures to take, and indeed, the tone of the la-

ter chapters of Political Ideology suggests that none need be taken. But in Political Thinking and Consciousness, perhaps due to its focus upon the belief systems of youth, the preventive suggestion is to encourage the development of "political consciousness." Political consciousness comprises the following: knowledge and acceptance of one's needs and motives; an accurate identity and self-appraisal; the awareness and examination of the inarticulate premises of one's beliefs; wisdom about the nature and meaning of political concepts; and finally, an accurate definition of one's situation. [Lane 1969, 312-21]

How, then, is this elusive consciousness to be obtained? Lane's only answer is ideological self-analysis, either by the autobiographical essay or by means of the depth interview. Self-analysis helps one to obtain political consciousness in a number of ways. First, the simple process of setting forth one's belief system provides a great deal of clarification about a difficult area of thought. Second, it can focus on the functional question of the motivational bases of one's beliefs, as well as provide insight into oneself through examination of one's responses to the answers to that functional question. Finally, one can use this self-knowledge to begin a sensitive inquiry into the motivations behind the beliefs of others. [Lane 1972, 123] In sum, ideological self-analysis provides a liberating experience, for "it liberates choice, unties a thought from a specific

need, and examines its serviceability in a larger context." [Lane 1969, 332] Clearly, the task of building a preventive politics is a large one, one that proceeds in a halting, step-by-step fashion. Perhaps recognition of the immensity of the task is what limits Lane to merely alerting us to the latent democratic pathologies.

CRITIQUE

So far we have been dealing with Lane's treatment of the question: Why does this individual hold this particular belief system? A complete answer to this question obviously requires the presentation of a detailed case study of each individual, which Lane does not provide. However, he is able to tell us the psychological roots of (say) a fear of freedom or a low-tension morality. We are able to gain insights into particular personalities, as well, since some individuals are discussed in a variety of contexts. Of course, simply focusing our attention on personality and on the needs and motives of the individual is hardly novel. Yet it seems that Smith et al. are correct in noting that the significance of an opinion (or a belief system), and the conditions under which it may change, can be understood only in the context of its relation to personality. [Smith et al. 1956, 279] Lane has done well in providing a phenomenology of belief that gives substance to such a claim.

Yet Lane's work has come under some measure of criticism, though it has not received the sustained critical attention given to Converse's work.³⁸ Still, one must consider the serious charges brought against Lane's approach by Norman Nie and Kristi Andersen, who suggest that his techniques not only are uneconomical and unreliable but also "require such intensive analysis of individuals that generalizations about national populations are difficult if not impossible." [Nie with Andersen 1976, 95n] The three criticisms in this remark must be treated separately in order to fully understand their ramifications.

The charges concerning the lack of economy and reliability share a common difficulty, namely, that they are for the most part undemonstrated. Such charges are of great importance in assessing the merits of a technique of investigation, and they should be developed in more or less sustained argument, not relegated to a footnote. Beyond this, the question about what criteria are used to arrive at these judgments is begged. Lane's method is uneconomical--by what standard? for what purposes? Obviously, the costliness of a

³⁸ It is interesting to speculate as to why this is the case. One obvious reason perhaps is that Converse's work simply has been deemed the most scientifically valuable path, while Lane's represents little more than an intriguing sideshow. Yet this response merely begs the question, especially given the lack of attention given to heuristic concerns. Another probable reason is that political scientists have been so heavily trained in quantitative skills and techniques that they no longer have the background to view Lane's work as viable or even worthy of attention.

technique could be assessed by any number of criteria--the cost of training researchers, the time involved in pursuing a project from its inception to the publication of its results, etc.--but Nie and Andersen offer no specification of the charge. Moreover, it is clear that a technique economical for one purpose may not be so for another. Both Converse and Lane plead that they are doing different things. Converse's survey research method is well-suited for assessing the opinions of a large sample of people, and the technique is economical for ensuring that the distribution of opinion is representative of the electorate at large. However, for Lane and for psychologists in general, the question of representativeness does not concern the distribution of opinion but the possession of widely shared (if not universal) characteristics.

Similarly, the charge of unreliability lacks specification of the criteria on which it is based. When usually levelled at depth interview techniques (or even participant observation methods) such a charge suggests that the technique cannot produce similar results when used by different observers. This charge lacks force for a number of reasons. First, given proper training, reliability with depth interviews does not seem any more difficult to achieve than with open-ended survey questions of the sort used by Converse to determine the levels of conceptualization. Second, no one has yet cast any doubt upon the validity of Lane's interpre-

tations of the life-histories and belief systems of his subjects, although many such questions have been raised about the assignment of people to the levels of conceptualization. And finally, Lane's depth interviews yield results about the relation between psychic needs and political beliefs that are quite similar to those obtained by Smith et al. [1956] and by Adorno et al. [1969].

Turning now to the most serious charge, that of ungeneralizable results, it should be noted that this charge has been the bugaboo of various case study methods as well as controlled experiments. The charge does have some merit, since Lane's Political Ideology is peppered with generalizations made from his Eastport workers to Americans at large. Though he is reluctant to proclaim the existence of an American national character, he does conclude (for example) that: (1) the low-tension morality among the workers is the feature of our society responsible for our characteristically non-ideological politics, and (2) the belief system of the "American common man" is impervious to a challenge from Marxism because that ideology is not congruent with his experience. Clearly, a transition from the Eastport sample to the American nation is both glib and unwarranted. However, for the charge to be substantiated it must be made on a case-by-case basis and not in an a priori fashion. Many of Lane's generalizations are made in the context of pointing out similarities between his own work and the investigations of other scholars--hardly an improper activity.

More importantly, though, it should be observed that the generalizability of the results of depth interviews (or ideological autobiographies) depends upon the full and sustained pursuit of investigations using those techniques. A final decision should not be made on the basis of just one or two studies, for we should not be too anxious to close off a potentially fruitful avenue of research. [Feyerabend 1975] Moreover, general theorizing within a functional approach involves the comparison of widely differing types, of individuals from widely differing backgrounds. [Diesing 1971, 6] One scholar's investigations are clearly not enough to accomplish this task by themselves. Generalizations are possible (given appropriate training and sufficient resources and will), for as Lasswell notes:

If we begin with a political pattern and view it against the private histories of actual people, we find that this pattern takes on variable meaning from one individual to another, but that broad groupings of associated meanings are possible of ascertainment. [Lasswell 1951, 258]

Yet the generalizations we desire will not emerge unless our psychofunctional studies are rid of one flaw that characterizes Lane's studies, namely, a lack of parallelism. The questions and concerns pursued in the study of the Eastport workers sometimes disappear from the analysis of the beliefs of the Adams students. One example should make the point. Among the workers the study of social identity was treated primarily in class terms (a feature due to Lane's concern about the potential for these men to adopt a Marxist belief

system). Yet all references to social class disappear in connection with the analysis of the students; instead, social identity is treated in terms of the family.

Perhaps this shift of conceptual focus is due to shifting academic concerns, a shift from worries about the potential for Marxism to concern with the crises of adolescence. Yet such a shift (similar to the one made by Converse from studying patterns of thought to studying political representation) should not be made in an unconscious fashion. Rather, it should be made openly and with a statement of the reasons for the shift--whether those reasons are concerned with the availability of research funds, with the influence of new social phenomena, or with a newfound conviction that the old program for research is a dead end. For the discipline at large to allow such a shift to occur without notice and comment is (I think) to predestine the belief systems field to a continued lack of significant progress.

Several questions could be asked in the studies of individuals from different milieux that would help to keep the studies parallel, and hence, to pave the way for appropriate generalizations. One could ask (to stay with the above example): To what extent is the family, as a source of social identity, simply a substitute for social class? Do the adolescents suffer from the same diffusion of social identity as the Eastport workers? How can such results be recon-

ciled with Converse's finding that the bulk of the population views political parties and candidates in terms of potential group benefits? Do the belief systems of individuals with firm social identities (no matter the source) differ from those without such firm identities, even when both sets of people come from the same milieu? The list need not end here, of course, but it must be noted that I am not arguing for detailed, mindless replication of each major study that achieves academic notoriety. I am asking, rather, that due attention be paid to the history of the endeavor so that the questions asked in subsequent investigations may build on earlier ones.

Now that this set of criticisms levelled against Lane has been discussed, we must turn to yet another set. Nie and Andersen conclude that the depth interview technique that Lane uses concentrates too heavily on the "deeper structuring of an individual's political beliefs." [Nie with Andersen 1976, 95n] Converse likewise notes that Lane's approach is extremely useful for discovering and characterizing "the way in which individuals develop, process, and generalize whatever political perceptions they may have." [Converse 1975, 87] Yet (say both Nie and Converse) such an investigation tells us very little about the role of mass belief systems in the politics of policy-making by representative elites. Depth interviews (which Converse likens to "fishing with a net," as opposed to the survey technique's "fishing

with a rifle⁶⁹) are admirable tools for the study of individual political psychology but they do not further the study of public opinion's "role in the broader functioning of those mass-elite democratic communication mechanisms most obviously, if not exclusively, embodied in popular elections or referenda ..." [Converse 1975, 89] The charge, in essence, is that Lane's work tells us some intriguing things but not about what political scientists want to know.

This criticism has some point to it. Though Lane asks about political issues and figures, he does not describe how his subjects respond to those questions. Yet the criticism is mistaken in the implication that what Lane does has no relation to policy preferences (as they might be expressed in responses to public opinion surveys) or that all his technique offers is unique ideological profiles. For instance, Lane describes the link between the experience of poverty in childhood and what we now call fiscal conservatism, with the result being anxiety over governmental lavishness and indebtedness. Could such a psychofunctional pattern account for some of the current balance the budget fever, at least among its major proponents? He also points to links between the need to be liked and an emphasis on consensual politics (rooted in a low-tension morality). What kind of psychofunctional account could be given of the high tension surrounding the abortion issue? Finally, Lane notes the patterns of inference that lead from identifica-

tion with the family to a conservative or liberal ideology that mediates between "the individual identity ... and policy preference." [Lane 1973, 113] Clearly, there probably is no one-to-one correspondence between one's personality and one's opinions on public policy issues. [Smith et al. 1956, 278] Yet these kinds of questions raise the issue that whatever connections there may in fact be between the two should be explored. Thus, for Lane, it is more useful (in order to ascertain the conditions and possible direction of change) to understand the reasoning processes that underlie an attitude or opinion than it is to know what that attitude or opinion is.

In another sense, however, this criticism of Lane begs the question. To criticize his technique for not yielding information about the policy representation process is similar to criticizing Converse's method for not revealing the vagaries of political reasoning processes. Each scholar is entitled to say, "But that is not what I intended to do." Such criticisms reflect less on the chosen technique than on the research context in which the scholar who makes them is embedded. What is ultimately at issue, then, is the question of the proper focus for the study of political belief systems.³⁹

³⁹ This matter of the proper focus, of what should be the aims of the field's inquiries, cannot be treated at this point. To do so now would be premature. It will be addressed in the next chapter.

Having treated the only two criticisms of Lane's endeavors made by major figures from another research context, I should like to make one other point. Much was made (in the above section) of the view that individuals dominated by a given motive tend to see the world through "need-colored glasses." What this refers to is not only the various types of projective thinking illustrated above, but also the way in which early deprivation of a value leads an individual to give that value central place in his or her political thinking. These aspects of need-based thinking, however, have not been pursued through further explorations and conceptual development. Scholars who would work in the psychofunctional context should endeavor to follow through on such aspects of thought by asking questions such as: Do all needs and motives equally lend themselves to projective thinking when applied to the realm of politics? Is such projective thinking so prevalent that our political discourse is doomed to emotionally-rooted misperceptions? If so, what preventive measures can be (should be) taken to increase the likelihood of a rational society and politics?

THE CORE BELIEF SYSTEM

In the section on needs and motivations, I noted that Lane has developed a list of the questions that political scientists and psychologists, respectively, ask about political belief systems. Where the political scientist seeks to ass-

ess the merits of the belief system's proposals for political institutions and processes, for example, the psychologist instead probes the question of why a given individual holds that particular belief system. By focusing on needs and motivations, Lane tries to develop an answer to the latter question. But this is only a part of his project; the other part emerges in a second pair of disciplinary questions. He observes that in asking what a belief system is, "the political scientist wants to know what system of ideas logically coheres, given certain premises; the psychologist wants to know what items are associated in what ways and for what reasons." [Lane 1963, 598] The correlational approach and focus on the concept of constraint appears to put Converse on the political scientific side of the fence. But this is not entirely the case, given the expressions in The American Voter of a concern with patterns of belief and the structure of thought, matters of importance to the psychologist. Moreover, Converse's own typology of the sources of constraint suggests that psychological concerns do motivate his work, at least in part. This ambivalence about Converse's goals for belief systems inquiry (about the field's explanatory ideals) has led, given inattention to heuristic, to a situation in which only one aspect of his project has been taken up and advanced by other scholars.

Lane, too, has been somewhat ambivalent about his concerns and goals for the field. Sometimes he focuses on the

why of a belief system (explaining the mechanisms by which one chooses a congenial set of views), sometimes on the what (drawing a composite picture of the patterns of belief for particular individuals). Certainly, both kinds of investigations are needed and are interrelated. More important to an understanding of his ambivalence is recognition that Lane's work represents a developmental sequence of concerns and research foci. The 1950s and 1960s saw in that effort a preoccupation with personality dynamics (needs and motivations) as a tool for accounting for both political behavior and political belief systems. The 1970s, however, have brought a focus on the patterns of association among the various elements of a belief system. Indeed, this has been so much the case that he criticizes psychodynamic explanations of political ideas as erroneous and misleading. Such explanations, Lane observes, omit treatment of "the core belief system the individual has acquired as an instrument for interpreting the world and the political problems of a society. A man makes ideas out of other ideas, not simply out of need and defense mechanisms." [Lane 1972, 191] Despite this criticism of an approach he himself has used, his view of the concerns of the belief systems field is that an individual's needs and motivations represent the energy source for political thought, but that political thought itself is shaped by certain basic premises of belief. [Lane 1969, 87]

In this scheme of things, then, political beliefs are rooted in the context of a broader belief system, and share the style and structure of that broader system. [Lane 1962, 15] Thus Lane advances a central claim that "at any given time in any given place all but a handful of intellectuals, reformers and possibly statesmen ... develop their political beliefs by reference to an adaptation of certain core beliefs relevant to the political problem to which they must respond." [Lane 1972, 174, emphasis in the original] This claim marks the appearance of what I take to be Lane's major conceptual innovation, the concept of the core belief system. This concept, more than a focus on psychological needs and motivations, distinguishes Lane's work from that of others, and it parallels Converse's concept of constraint.

The Concept Defined

The discussion in Political Ideology was indeed organized in terms now recognizable as the concept of the core belief system, though this framework was not explicitly defined at the time. By now, however, Lane is concerned to give that concept a more explicit and concise formulation. He speaks of eight major areas of the core belief system:

1. Beliefs about the self; concepts of identity; selfevaluation.
2. Beliefs about the world of "others," classification of human sets, concepts of human nature; beliefs about interpersonal relationships.
3. Beliefs about authority [and] about appropriate behavior in the face of authority; legitimacy, kinds of authority.

4. Desires, wants, needs, motives, goals--and the elaboration of beliefs about them. ...
5. Beliefs about the moral good. ...
6. Explanatory systems; concepts of causation, habits of causal inference.
7. Concepts of time, place, and nature, ...; metaphysics.
8. Concepts of knowledge, truth, evidence, and how to discover the truth; epistemology.

In order to fully understand the core belief system concept, these code phrases of Lane's must be further explicated.

Just what comprises each of these eight elements? Beliefs about the self, particularly when they are accurate and when the appropriate traits are accepted by oneself, are very important in Lane's discussions of belief systems. Much of the focus in both of his major works is on such beliefs as components of ego-strength and identity. The former, as remarked above, is necessary for individuals to engage in long-term courses of action that characterize politics. Identity provides a sense of one's interests in society, a sense of what it is proper to expect and to demand from government. It shapes one's concept of the proper role of the individual in the polity, as well as the patterns of trust and distrust that determine one's posture toward the idea and practice of self-government.

Beliefs about the world of others represents in part a further elaboration of the concept of identity, particularly in its social aspect. What is of interest here are one's beliefs about the individual's relationships to a given hu-

man set--the family, the clique, the occupational group, the social class, the nation or whatever. The nature of one's identification with a particular set is conditioned by the degree of individualism or uniqueness one can maintain within the set and by the degree of mobility between sets. There are, additionally, beliefs about the relationships among the various sets in society that must be taken into account--beliefs about status and conflict, as well as beliefs about the nature of community.

Beliefs about authority comprise the most overtly political element of the core belief system. Such beliefs provide answers to questions like Who shall rule? and What constitutes a legitimate use of power or coercion? The core belief system, then, must inform us not only as to who has (and rightfully deserves) authority in a given social institution, but also as to the appropriate stance to take toward that authority--be it rebellious, critical, cooperative or submissive.

Though one can distinguish a need as some property of an individual, and a value as something sought by the individual in order to satisfy that need, for the purposes of elucidating the core belief system Lane treats the two concepts as nearly identical. In his view, the values "a person wants for himself, and for those he cares about, represent features of the core belief system that shape his thoughts

about society and politics." [Lane 1972, 180] Knowing the dominant value (in this sense of an object of desire or need, or the need itself viewed intentionally) held by an individual will provide an entry into his or her political beliefs, but one must be careful to note that broad social values as such are not likely to constrain policy choices. [Lane 1973, 101-02] What does serve to constrain such choices is not the deductive logic from (say) conservatism to a policy choice, but rather, is the logic of experience in satisfying one's needs. Political belief systems thus can mediate between needs and policy choices. [Lane 1973, 112-13]

Beliefs about the moral good represent another meaning of value, viz., not what people in fact desire but rather what they should desire. Yet the significance of an ethical system for political belief rests less with the content of one's moral axioms than with the style of one's moral reasoning. Lane distinguishes three main types of moral reasoning evident in the autobiographies of the Adams students, types characterized by their respective location of conscience: (1) primitive morality locates conscience in an external authority and a system of rules laid down by that authority; (2) intermediate morality locates conscience in the guidance of other people, and it is a morality of impression management geared to maintaining a public image of morality; and, (3) mature morality locates conscience in oneself and a

set of self-generated moral principles. [Lane 1969, 197] On the whole, the tendency for a primitive style of moral reasoning is to produce political conservatives, and for a mature style, liberals. [Lane 1969, 198; cf. 1973, 113]

Thus, the moral code that an individual develops from whatever style of reasoning helps to give content to one's political belief system, especially when one is called upon to interpret or evaluate a social or political order. There are many cues available to the individual as to how to justify or criticize a given order. Such cues come from discrepancies between the ideal and the actual or from ones between incompatible norms, both of which the order claims are operative. The cues also may emerge from the application of a central value or doctrine to existing social and political practices. Or, finally, the cues may appear in the various rationalizations of selfinterest individuals and groups frequently offer in the course of political disputes. At bottom, the individual selects a more or less congenial cue just as one selects a more or less congenial system of political beliefs. [Lane 1972, 182-83] Though one's moral code gives content to one's belief system, that moral code still may not greatly constrain one's policy preferences. This is partly because "moral prescriptions and premises must necessarily conflict; that is, one moral consideration is selected at the cost of another: efficiency (parsimony) at the cost of generosity, love at the cost of work, civic duty at the cost of familial duty, and so forth." [Lane 1973, 114]

Explanatory systems have an obvious importance in the formation of political belief systems insofar as individuals can be said to need to have some means of accounting for their own and society's situation, some theory (that is) of social causation. Many such theories are possible, of course, from natural law to magic, from the great deeds of heroes to divine providence. Though the specific explanatory pattern preferred by an individual does not constrain policy choices in either a consistently liberal or a consistently conservative direction (among others), such patterns do provide for one's political belief system "the foundations for the important interpretations of how we got here and what we can expect from the future." [Lane 1972, 185]

Time and place constitute the seventh major area of the core belief system. The importance of time perspective (says Lane) is given in the prevalent use of such terms as "reactionary" and "progressive" in characterizing political beliefs. More specifically, he notes that the temporal life of any culture has four aspects--rhythm (the organization of the life cycle), pace, historical focus (time perspective), and generational continuities or discontinuities (a concept of the family). In short, time gives insight into how urgent one's demands on the political system are. A given time perspective that is appropriate for one political belief system, for example, may not be appropriate for (or congruent with) another one. [Lane 1962, 284] Place primari-

ly refers to a definition of one's community and the boundaries of the relevant arena for political action.

The final aspect of the core belief system is that of epistemology, of one's concepts of knowledge and truth. In exploring this element of the core belief system, two considerations are primary. The first is the way an individual uses knowledge, that is, whether information is used defensively (to protect previously held notions), instrumentally (to explore the world or as a guide to reality), or emotionally (as a means of gratification). The second major consideration is individual's style of knowing, as conceived on a dimension whose scale is from concrete to abstract, from taxic or stimulusbound responses to a kind of parascientific mentality." [Lane 1972, 187]

With regard to the latter consideration there has been much debate within the belief systems field of inquiry, as should be obvious by now. Lane (like Converse) recognizes that deductive logic and forensic ideology do not greatly constrain an individual's policy choices. Yet Lane insists that the style of knowing characteristic of the mass public need not be toward the concrete end of the continuum. Instead, people are able to organize their political beliefs by either relating the event or problem to a concept (comparison of cases), by rehearsing alternatives, or by separating the self from the environment. These capacities,

Lane notes, are all "toward the abstract end of an abstract-concrete dimension. They are the products of maturation, education, intelligence; and they are informed by personal experience." [Lane 1973, 116]⁴⁰ In short, then, people can make sense of their political and other experiences. They can have a reasonably abstract style of knowing, even if their knowledge is limited to the concrete and the personal.

The Concept's Use-Value

If the concept of a core belief system is to represent something more than a summary of the results of Lane's psychofunctional investigations, one must ask of what use is the concept. Fortunately, Lane has begun to provide his own answers to this question. One such answer suggests that a focus on belief systems can be a fruitful approach to political explanations. He believes, for example, that the policy-making process "is properly understood by reference to a set of fundamental beliefs held by significant portions of the population." [Lane 1972, 164] In order to demonstrate

⁴⁰ Robert Abelson's explorations into cognitive psychology provide some support for Lane's focus on the "logic" of experience as a source of constraint, as a source of belief organization. Abelson treats the formation and organization of attitudes as the product of "script-processing." A script is a learned coherent sequence of events, a stored chain of vignettes (images and conceptual representations of events). An attitude toward a given object comprises the ensemble of scripts concerning that object, and behavior results when one first selects the appropriate script and then takes a participant (rather than an observer) role in that script. [Abelson 1976]

the utility of the belief systems perspective, Lane offers three alternative approaches to explanation and shows how they either presume a belief systems-based explanation or need to be supplemented by one.

The first type is an explanation by reference to the dominant political philosophies of the time, e.g., explaining the American Constitution by noting the influence of such philosophers as Locke, Harrington and Montesquieu on the framers of that document. This type merely presumes a belief systems explanation, since the great theories amount to rationalizations of the prevailing political culture or national belief system. Moreover, in order for political philosophies to influence public policy they must be "congruent with important elements of the cultural premises, the values, norms, mores--in short, the belief system of a society." [Lane 1972, 166]

Legal analysis (examination of the structure of government and of the legal powers and duties of office) is another alternative, though it cannot go very far as an explanation. Formal structures have only a residual effect on policy decisions, much less of an effect than the belief systems that shape the values, goals and behavior of the people in power. The third approach, the study of government by means of history, also must be supplemented by due attention to belief systems. Such systems should be em-

ployed as the mediating link between (say) the existence of slavery in 1860 and current patterns of voting in the present-day South. A particular sequence of events (history) can affect policy, then, either by changing the character of policy-making institutions (in this case, belief systems are somewhat less important) or by changing the beliefs of people about what constitute appropriate policies. [Lane 1972, 168]

Much of this is rather trivial, primarily because the so-called approaches to explanation are treated in an a priori fashion. Only the presumption of the Hempelian hypothetico-deductive pattern of explanation permits such a treatment of explanation. Lane (as already noted) seems reluctant to accept such a model, however.⁴¹ What is more, these "approaches" are treated in very different contexts; it is important that we explore them within the context of a single phenomenon that needs to be explained. Let's take an example from Lane's Political Ideology: Why aren't the workers of Eastport (representing prototypical proletarians in an advanced industrial country) socialists?

⁴¹ Despite that earlier statement to the effect that explanation need not also be predictive, Lane seems now to have a rather different view. Speaking of the differences between his own work and that of Converse, he has written that (while the two are doing different things) Converse "represents the zeitgeist of the time, the scientific hypothesis formation and testing mode. [Moreover, t]he zeitgeist is right; that is the way we should go." [Lane 1981] This is quite a change from the Lane who once regarded his own inquiries as providing the basis for those of Converse.

If one pursues the historical approach, the account might point to the absence of a feudal era in the United States, to the identification of socialism as a "foreign" doctrine (and to the concomitant Red Scares), and to the New Deal's cooptation of much of the socialist program. Of course, a longer chain of events and conditions could be mentioned. Yet Lane's assertion is that such a chain (no matter how long) must be mediated through belief systems before it can affect present behavior. Legal analysis would involve citing such statutes (and the motivations behind them) as the Smith Act, as well as pointing out the powers of congressional committees such as HUAC and the one headed by Senator McCarthy. This approach would require supplementation by considerations of the belief systems of the various political actors involved in these activities, such that we would learn about how they viewed the world and how the struggle against Communism fits in that picture. Finally, the approach of political philosophy would attribute the lack of socialism among the Eastport workers to the Lockeanism of the republic's framers and to the Social Darwinism that later took hold of the public mind. This approach will not do by itself, according to Lane, because we must offer an account of how these philosophies became part of our political culture, that is, an account of the ways in which they were and still are congruent with the belief systems of the mass public.

Lane's own explanation begins by noting that acceptance of a belief system depends upon its possession of the property of congruence. That is to say, it must be congruent with one's (and one's group's) life experience, with one's other ideas, with one's unconscious motives, and with one's group's social and political program. [Lane 1962, 426] Given this premise, his explanation for the absence of socialism among the Eastport workers is summarized by the assertion that socialism (or Marxism, in particular) is incongruent with the workers' own belief systems. This is so for a number of reasons: The men of Eastport lack the strong social identity (especially, the sense of class membership) that socialism presumes. They view social conflicts not as conflicts of fundamental interests but rather as misunderstandings, capable of being corrected via further education. The long-term perspective and future-orientation of socialism does not fit the workers' own focus on the present and on the "day after tomorrow." These "common men" also have no sense of immiseration or of exploitation that derives from their experience of the world, either on the job itself or in social life in general. And finally, there is an implicit resistance on the part of the men to any philosophical or ideological system, evident in the tendency of some of them to morselize events and to reason from minor premises, as well as in the desire not to appear to have one's ideas influenced in any way by an external source. [Lane 1962, 428-32]

Having described the role of belief systems in political explanation, Lane offers one more attempt at showing the value of the core belief system concept. This is done by referring to the interaction of such core beliefs with various political events and with the "agenda of history." The question he raises is this: "How ... do the several features of men's philosophies, weltanschauungen, and political cultures engage the great problems that descend upon them?" [Lane 1972, 191-92] The answers to this question are provided in the context of some of the important elements of the core belief system, namely, one's self-image, the relations between self and others, and one's value orientation. Yet his strategy is less to provide complete answers than it is to pose suggestive questions to indicate the directions in which research on beliefs might contribute to political understanding.

With regard to self-image, Lane poses questions about the cues one receives about the self from society at large. For instance, he notes the conflicting cues received by a nation-building elite, viz., cues from the West that stress their inferiority conflicting with cues from their own people that proclaim them superior to and more enlightened than the West. He wonders whether such an elite would continue to indentify with the West, repudiate its materialism while espousing a strong nationalism, or both. Lane concludes that such a conflict will likely be resolved by a policy

that protects self-esteem for this elite while simultaneously providing a basis for power politics. Additionally, a focus on self-image leads to concern with the distribution of "narcissistic supplies" (the ways and means of building self-esteem) within any given society. Does a generous distribution of such supplies, he asks, lead to a more fact-based and efficient policy-making process and to less attention to the issue of reputation in politics than would otherwise be the case? [Lane 1972, 192-93]

The relations between self and others include definitions of one's social identity, as well as the degree of interpersonal trust that exists in a particular society. Social identity divides society into groups and helps to set the lines of partisanship. Moreover, it will likely set the society's orientation to distributive justice. Thus, societies with social identities based on status are perhaps more interested in distributive justice than societies with social identities rooted in occupational categories (for the latter type of society will be more concerned with overall national economic performance). With regard to interpersonal trust, Lane notes that the workers in Eastport have a good deal of it and hence base their political thinking on premises favoring easy social relations. The result is a flexible, accommodative politics. The question of what happens in societies lacking such a degree of trust remains, however. [Lane 1972, 194-96]

Value orientations (a third element of the core belief system) tend to be discussed by Lane in terms of the East-port workers only. After noting the various premises of their political thinking, he remarks about the conservative cast of their thought and about their enduring trust in the status quo. The outlook of the men thus "implies an inattention to radical solutions, an incremental approach to change, a Burkian sense that practical men, not political philosophers, are the best guides for political reform." [Lane 1972, 198]

Beyond this, Lane turns his attention to what he calls the "agenda of history," the set of problems faced by the developing nations. As one passes along the many items on the agenda--the questions of national independence; of boundary and community definition; of who shall rule; of handling ethnic, religious and linguistic conflicts; and finally, of economic development and wealth distribution--the core belief system will undergo many challenges and subsequent alterations. At the end of the road, the developing countries will have a core belief system quite different from that of the Western developed countries. The former is characterized by a class-based definition of the political community, by a view of authority as something alien and confined solely to the elite, and by a decided preference for one or another variant of Marxist economics. By contrast, the developed West tends to have a core belief system

that identifies the political community as embracing all nationals, that views authority as diffused and accessible, and that prefers market mechanisms and a reliance on "economic technology" over any variant of socialism. [Lane 1972, 206-07]

In all of this, Lane does manage to pose some suggestive questions about political life in the developing nations. The issue of conflicting cues for self-evaluation by a nation-building elite is still very much with us, as the example of revolutionary Iran indicates. The conflict of a prevailing belief system with the difficulties of political and economic development is also an important area of inquiry, though one taken up in other work such as that of Peter Berger et al. [1974]

Yet for all of his suggestiveness, Lane is still very far from informing us as to the utility of the concept of a core belief system. Conceptual development has not been advanced by his work for a number of reasons. One is that his more recent work (that of the early 1970s) tends to fall back on repeated summaries of the study of the Eastport workers. A second reason perhaps is that this shift of attention from the beliefs of individuals to political and economic development is premature. Given that the significance of the core belief system has not yet been established in the context of American society, it does not seem likely that the

jump to the developing world (with all its complexity) will clarify matters.⁴² Moreover, it is very unclear just what status this core belief system has in Lane's scheme of things. Is it a listing of the various elements of belief one can investigate if one chooses (in short, elements to be treated in an atomistic fashion)? Or is the core belief system a universal "deep" structure of the sort some scholars claim exists in language? Such questions must be answered⁴³ if the concept of a core belief system is to motivate further research. At this point, however, the concept represents merely a convenient framework for summarizing results rather than an outstanding tool for investigating the political beliefs of individuals from a variety of milieux.

⁴² It seems to me that this shift occurred not for intellectual or logical reasons, but rather, it occurred as part of an attempt to exploit a fashion among political scientists in order to gain respectability and recognition for Lane's earlier work on belief systems. Yet this is only speculation on my part.

⁴³ In his correspondence with me, Lane has offered the following characterization of the concept of the core belief system. Behind all his work, he says, "is the idea that every person is a philosopher, although the philosophies are mostly inchoate, inarticulate, only partly conscious. . . . When you ask a person a question about poverty, or more narrowly about a welfare policy, you are entering this philosophic world. Surveys are useful surface indicators, but they cannot give you the gestalt. There is something deeply Piagetian about this: the structure of reasoning is a central determinant of specific topical answers--at least once one gets behind the cliches." [Lane 1981] While the structure of reasoning clearly is important, this still leaves us in the dark about how "Piagetian" the concept of the core belief system really is. Are some elements acquired before others in definite developmental stages, for example? Are our minds such

CONCLUSION

How, then, should we assess Lane's efforts in the study of political belief systems? Before giving an answer, let us first reconsider the nature of his project. John Nelson (in his review of the Conversean inquiries into belief systems) notes that there are several possible foci for the student of political belief systems. The Converse school presumes that ideological connections among idea-elements exist and that those connections are of a certain character. For such scholars, the study of belief systems involves ascertaining whether a given group of people are in fact ideological in their thinking about political objects. Nelson asserts, however, that the

challenge is not so much to know whether there is a correlation among a person's beliefs ... Instead, the first project of the student of ideologies should be to understand the connections among ideological components. ... Or, we might say that the key question is not that there are connections among ideological components, but what those connections are. Rather than attempting to predict issue beliefs from issue orientations and the like, our prime concern should be to elucidate the respondents' patterns of belief. ... The aim is to discover the content or character of the ideological connections, so that we can understand how the ideological components hang together as an ideology. [Nelson 1977, 577, emphasis in the original]

that we cannot but think about politics and other realms of experience in reference to the core belief system? And, if this is the case, is this singularity of thought due to biological inheritance (as Piaget would have it) or is it due to social conditioning?

Much of what Nelson describes as the alternative to a Conversean inquiry into belief systems can be found (of course) in Lane's own work.

One of Lane's aims definitely is to elucidate the cognitive organization (akin to a forensic ideology) that enables individuals of all degrees of cognitive ability to understand and react to politics. As we have seen, the core belief system serves this function for people. But elucidation of belief patterns is only a part of the project; other parts include concerns with psychofunctional questions as to the origins and maintenance of a particular pattern. With regard to both, a focus on the motivational bases of political thought is essential.

While Lane's work has these merits, I believe it suffers from much the same difficulties as that of Converse. There is first of all a lack of follow-through that accounts for a stunted conceptual development of Lane's major innovation, as well as for a lack of theorybuilding. This is allied with a lack of parallelism within Lane's own work, which results in a shift of research focus without adequate discussion and justification. The root of these difficulties is inattention to heuristic, that is, a neglect of the research and problem contexts of the major figures in the belief systems field. But now that the heuristic questions have been asked, and some of their answers outlined, can the field be put on the track to progress?

Chapter V

CONCLUDING POSTSCRIPTS

Contemporary philosophy of science has in recent years tended to emphasize a demand that we begin to understand scientific inquiry as it actually proceeds rather than as it might be reconstructed in formal terms. Stephen Toulmin has noted this trend and has compared it with an earlier one:

The [positivist] picture of science as a "logical structure" gives us ... only a "snapshot" of its content: the newer questions that younger philosophers of science are now pressing begin to arise when we ask for a "moving picture," showing how the intellectual content of the sciences develops historically. [Toulmin 1977, 604]

In pursuing such historical investigations of science, however, we often ask (and rightly so) for more than a moving picture. A moving picture is after all nothing more than a succession of snapshots shown rapidly. We ask instead for a story, a narrative with some point to it--a moral if you will. As Dudley Shapere notes, we in fact desire that our case studies in the history of scientific development have

a view to arriving, for each case, at a grasp of the scientific foundations of that case, [that is, a grasp of] what counts as an appropriate description of the items to be examined in that area [of inquiry], what counts as a legitimate and important problem about that area, what counts as a promising line of research, what counts as a possible and as a correct solution to the problems of the area, and related questions. [Shapere 1977b, 505]

Acting on this desire requires an appreciative understanding of the aims and strategies of inquiry. It demands sensitivity to the motivations behind a given inquiry and to the interplay of intentions and activities found in all human endeavor. It involves, in short, treating scientific inquiry as human activity. Toulmin's recent prescription for the history of science suggests that the best way to understand this activity is to conceive it in evolutionary terms. In his view, the task of science is to improve our knowledge "by identifying problem areas in which something can now be done to lessen the gap between the capacities of our current concepts and our reasonable intellectual ideals." [Toulmin 1972, 150] Given this, the history of science should be approached by examining any given intellectual milieu (discipline, field, particular inquiry) and then making comparisons among ideas on the extent to which they are adaptive, that is, the extent to which they fulfill an explanatory mission. Thus,

we may in each case consider--retrospectively--what was in fact achieved, by accepting the concepts under consideration, towards meeting the relevant demands of (say) physics or history ... Within the same [perspective], we may consider also--prospectively--what light such comparisons throw on possible ways in which the proper goals of (say) scientific understanding or historical analysis be better formulated for the future. [Toulmin 1972, 493]

Such have been the intentions of the present inquiry into the study of belief systems in political science. I began by noting the nearly universal perception that the field has

not been making progress and by presenting one account [Bennett 1977] of the reasons behind this sorry state of affairs. That account, however, is deficient in some respects, primarily because (I believe) it rests upon a mistaken view of the history of the field. I therefore have presented what I trust is a better history, one narrated in terms of what can be called the "research contexts" of the major figures (Philip Converse and Robert Lane) in the contemporary study of political belief systems. This approach explores each context, allows it to define its own aims, and judges how well the scholars who operate within it perform. The basic thesis is that they have not performed well, and they have done so because they have neglected the concerns, questions, concepts and theories that both motivated and served as background knowledge for the efforts of the major figures in the field. Inattention to heuristic, to considerations of the research context, is the prime cause of the recognized lack of progress in the study of political belief systems.

What I propose to do in this concluding chapter is to look to the immediate future, first of all. This means weighing the information about the three research contexts we have considered in light of relevant explanatory or intellectual ideals, in order to address the question of what are the most promising lines of research for a study of belief systems. In this fashion, I hope to be able to point

the way toward progress. And second, this chapter will devote some consideration to the nature and pitfalls of the history of political scientific inquiry. In particular, I will ponder the nature of commitment and the controversy about internal versus external history.

CONCLUDING SCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT

In seeking a direction for future research into political belief systems, we must first come to terms with what we desire to learn from that research, that is, we must assess the "explanatory ideals" [Toulmin 1972, 150-55, 173-75] that we hold for the field. For Toulmin, such ideals comprise a consensus on what phenomena to explain (indeed, upon what counts as a phenomenon), in what manner, and based on what kinds of evidence. The study of belief systems (whose contemporary history has been traced above) manifests a fairly wide-ranging set of explanatory ideals, a set that lends itself (in the absence of attention to heuristic) to considerable confusion about just what is to be studied.

Concerning the matter of what phenomena to investigate, one finds a number of divergent foci. On the one hand, both Lane and Converse seek to account for the nature of individuals' belief systems. Each offers some discussion of the components of a belief system and of the role a belief system plays within the individual psyche. But even with this superficial common focus, Converse and those working in his

most tend to conceive of the individual belief system as an agglomeration of positions taken on public policy issues. Lane (by contrast) regards the belief system as centering around a few basic political values and the emotional demands placed upon the individual. No consensus seems to exist as to what aspects of a belief system are supremely politically relevant and what aspects are interesting only from some extra-political standpoint. Similarly, the nature of the psychological mechanisms presumed to be at work in the formation, adoption and maintenance of a political belief system remains disputed.

As these students of politics wrestle with identifying a political belief system, they also seek to probe the relations between belief systems and political behavior. Converse (given his training and intellectual associations) especially seeks to link belief systems with voting in elections. This concern leads the study of belief systems away from patterns of thought per se and toward questions of voter rationality and of the degree mass opinions are represented by political elites. Lane, too, explores links between belief systems and behavior when he probes the question of political development and when he examines how belief systems affect adolescents' choices of a political party, peer group, and the like. In this regard, however, the study of belief systems falls victim to the same troubles that beset inquiry into the link between singular atti-

tudes and behavior. In the aggregate, no one-to-one correspondence between the two has yet been found. Part of this problem (perhaps) is due to the conceptualization of both attitudes and behavior as monolithic entities, when they actually comprise a range within people have a considerable degree of choice. [Pierce and Rose 1974; Achen 1975] So long as little thought is given to defining the kind of entity we wish to relate to behavior we shall continue to flounder.

Finally, belief systems inquiries sometimes view the phenomenon to be explained not as the nature and kinds of such systems but as the relationships they have with society at large. Converse, for example, continually expresses concern for the role of belief systems in the representative process. He also explores the consequences of the mass public's lack of coherent belief systems, consequences such as the rise of Nazism. Lane, too, shows concern for the support belief systems may or not provide for democratic politics. In short, both men seek to use the results of their inquiries into belief systems to answer such questions as: How does one develop and maintain a beneficial and stable political order? Under what conditions do political orders change, and can such change be forestalled if it is not in the proper direction?

Beyond the nature of what is to be explained or accounted for, our explanatory ideals for a field of study also consist of what mode of explanation to adopt and of the type of evidence to be used to support those explanations. That there is no consensus on the latter component within the study of belief systems should be evident. Converse's preference for survey research and statistical correlation, as well as Lane's for depth interviews, autobiographical sketches and interpretation, are fairly obvious. With regard to the former component, one finds a similar divergence. Converse tends to seek causal explanations to account for the absence of constrained beliefs among the mass public. He cites failures in such mechanisms as information acquisition and storage, and political communication and opinion leading. Lane, while occasionally interested in the origins of belief systems, tends to invoke functional accounts of the textures of individual belief systems.

Domains and Correctives

Clearly, the ambitions held for the political belief systems field cover a great deal of ground. It is equally clear that no consensus exists to unify work in the field under the umbrella of a single paradigm. Thus, our achievements tend to lag far behind the aims we set for the study of belief systems. Why is this the case? The answer I have pursued in this essay is that this poor situation is due pri-

marily to a neglect of the history of the research contexts that we bring to bear upon the study of belief systems. Thus, we fail to get clear on the questions we seek to address (as well as those that demand to be addressed) and on the kind of answers they require. The disagreements among the figures in the belief systems field have been recounted many times, but their prime result is a lack of clarification of the proper domain⁴⁴ of the belief systems field.

Several attempts at clarifying the proper domain have been made so far. One such is Roger Cobb's examination of the belief systems field, which has yielded a set of problem areas characteristic of the field. Based on the familiar distinction between independent and dependent variables, this listing comprises: "(1) a focus on what predicts to belief-system components; (2) the interrelationship among different elements of a belief system; and (3) belief elements as predictors to behavior at either the individual or

⁴⁴ This term is taken from Shapere, who defines a domain as "a body of related information about which there is a problem, well defined usually and raised on the basis of specific considerations ('good reasons')." [Shapere 1977a, 521-22] The domain includes not just facts about phenomena, but also the concepts, theories and techniques used to explore those phenomena and derive those facts. In their association and interaction, these elements of a domain may become problematic and result in one of three types of problem requiring resolution: (1) domain problems, which seek a clarification of the domain itself; (2) theoretical problems, which ask for a "deeper" account of the domain; and, (3) theoretical inadequacies, which consist of problems regarding the theories used to account for the phenomena of interest. [Shapere 1977a, 533]

the systemic level." [Cobb 1973, 135] The first problem area treats belief systems as dependent variables, as the results of some causal process or the concomitants of some more or less extraneous factors. In this vein, one can point to Converse's use of various demographic characteristics (mass versus elite status, level of education or political information, etc.) as predictors of one or another pattern of political belief. Similarly, one could focus on patterns of political activity or socialization as predictors of certain patterns of thought.

The second problem area concerns the interrelationships among belief system components. A prime example here are the Converse-type studies that show strong links among degrees of articulation, intensity, stability and consistency of attitudes within political belief systems. Basically, what Cobb has in mind here are the isolation of various belief system syndromes such as the elite and mass syndromes discovered by Converse or as the portrait of "undemocrats" painted by Lane. From this, Cobb moves to elucidating the final problem area in which belief systems function as independent variables or as items leading to predictions of behavior. For the most part, predictions of individual behavior have tended to focus exclusively on the matter of voting, thus ignoring other forms of political participation such as activity in social movements. Cobb finds that predictions of systemic behavior from the existence of certain

kinds of belief systems to be similarly limited. They tend to look only at such dependent variables as democratic institutions, political stability and political development, while neglecting the questions of the effect of belief systems on role structures, social movements and the patterns of social conflict. [Cobb 1973, 140-44]

What are we to make of Cobb's assessment of belief systems research? He is certainly aware that the field's explanatory ideals or its phenomenal domain are very wide-ranging and complex. Somehow, the concerns of the field must be narrowed down into something manageable and productive. To continue to use belief systems inquiries for a multiplicity of inadequately distinguished purposes is surely to continue in confusion and inhibit progress. Cobb suggests that the focus of belief systems studies should be narrowed, then, to two major problem areas: (1) the impact of belief systems on systemic features, i.e., on the polity or the society at large; (2) resolving the inconsistencies (in terms of concepts, methods and findings) of the field by means of an examination of the elitist (Converse)/populist (Lane) debate. [Cobb 1973, 144, 147]

Cobb's choices have support from two other political scientists who have examined the study of belief systems. David Hinar, in his survey of the field, shows considerable dissatisfaction with the too prevalent tendency among politi-

cal scientists to treat ideology as a subtle backdrop for political life. As a result, the concept of ideology remains undifferentiated and is too often "pressed into service as a delusory 'explanation' of a residuum that nothing else accounts for." [Minar 1961, 328] The corrective to this is twofold. First, one must demonstrate (and not merely presume) that ideology has political impact, that it makes a difference in political behavior. This presumably would add to our knowledge of both belief systems and behavior, as well as provide useful support for current disciplinary boundaries. Second, however much we desire to link thought with behavior, we must be more specific about what is to be linked with what. We need to be precise about whether ideology as thought is distinguished by its content, its structure, its function, or whatever. Conceptual precision thus is a vital part of inquiry, and Minar suggests that we better define not only ideology and the behavior to which we relate it but also the political system within which that relationship occurs. In short, an understanding of ideology as a political variable will come most quickly when we first achieve "self-consciousness about the ends and techniques of research and the advantages and shortcomings of alternative research tactics." [Minar 1961, 331]

Lance Bennett's analysis of the lack of progress in the study of political belief systems offers a set of correctives to the confusions surrounding the elitist/populist de-

bate. [Bennett 1977, 481-94] One set focuses on a need for conceptual precision, rooted in an examination of the assumptions underlying competing concepts. This kind of inquiry would assist also in bringing our conceptual definitions into greater fit with existing theories and observations. Another set suggests that our measurement and analytical strategies seek out alternative patterns within data, as well as foster a number of experimental inquiries designed to provide instruments yielding a more solid basis for estimation. A final set of correctives is intended to get the field to focus on the right questions. [Bennett 1977, 496] Thus, we need to frame inquiries into belief systems within "more general understandings of politics that lead us to believe that political situations, institutions and regimes are capable of transmitting a vast array of behaviorally critical stimuli to the average political actor." [Bennett 1977, 492] We also must cease our current habits of narrowly based research and move toward the creation and development of a systematic general theory of belief systems, which itself would require that our attention be directed toward such things as "clinical and ethnographic investigations of how belief systems operate in everyday political settings for ordinary persons." [Bennett 1977, 487]

Toward Consensus

The upshot of all this is that (in order for progress to eventually result) we need to get clear on just what kind of study of political belief systems we want and on just what questions to pursue in light of that goal. I am not in sympathy with the desire of Cobb and of Minar to proceed headlong into explorations of the systemic effects of political belief systems. Primarily this is because of the rather poor example set by research into relationships between attitudes and behavior. But this feeling is also due to sharing the observation of both that considerable conceptual housecleaning needs to be done prior to examining the relationships between beliefs and behavior. Too quick a jump into the realm of systemic effects (such as that made by Lane) will only leave us confused about both of these aspects of our experience.

That the field requires further conceptual housecleaning probably is not a surprising conclusion, for a standard criticism of the social sciences made by historians and philosophers of science is that they are more or less immature sciences. Such "would-be disciplines" [Toulmin 1972] are characterized by a "cancerous growth" [Lakatos 1971] which results from a lack of consensus on the concepts, theories, problems and achievements of the field. But the kind of housecleaning Cobb, Minar, and Bennett have had in mind first of all includes an attempt to come to grips with the

history of the contemporary study of political belief systems, that is, to find out what went wrong on the path to scientific progress and to discover the way back to the true path. To a great extent, Bennett's own work and this one bring us to a better understanding of the course of the inquiry from the late 1950s to the present. On such a foundation, can we construct a road to progress?

I believe the answer to that question is affirmative, provided that the lack of consensus besetting the field is eradicated. Yet how should this be done? One way that has been intimated is to search the past for a paradigm that once was well-established but that now has fallen by the wayside. This has been Bennett's tack, though when it comes to offering solutions to the communication problems he laments, he simply opts for a different paradigm. Such an approach, though, ultimately results in the imposition of a consensus by fiat. By contrast, Cobb's approach has something of merit. He has avoided a kind of "Easter-egg hunt" for paradigms and has instead tried to mirror and yet reduce the complexity of the belief systems field. This path is meritorious insofar as it seeks to build a consensus out of an interpretation of the current and ongoing concerns of the field.

A consensus on the explanatory ideals or on the domain of belief systems inquiry cannot and should not be imposed from

without, either by a philosopher's or historian's discovery of a paradigm or by a select panel of disciplinary gatekeepers. Rather, the consensus should be more or less immanent in the current activities of the field's scholars. As such, the historian and philosopher of science is not reduced to the role of a reporter and chronicler; instead, he or she has a role similar to that of the Freudian psychoanalyst. [Freud 1963, 273-82] The analyst does not impose an interpretation of a psychic disorder upon the patient, but rather suggests one when it is appropriate to do so. So long as the patient accepts the interpretation as an alien or merely intellectual construct, therapeutic progress will be blocked until the interpretation becomes an internally accepted and motivated guide for action.

By doing history of science in this manner, one seeks to discover the aims, goals, problems and strategies scholars actually employ in their work. Through such discoveries and through comparing achievements with ideals or potentials, one can gain a sense of what future researches are needed. The interpretation that results (a story of where the inquiry came from, where it has been, and where it is or should be going) is then made available for scholars to accept or reject as they may. Interpretations that are made, if accepted (that is, if they fit the community's understandings of the inquiry's aims), will then find their way into the field as guides for further research. If they are

rejected, it is back to the drawing board for one who wishes to change the field's direction. What consequences in fact ensue from the history and philosophy of science investigations are subject to the processes of negotiation. Ultimately, though, the consensus for the direction of the field will not be imposed upon scholars but will instead be "discovered" and "chosen" by them (with appropriate guidance, of course).

PATHS TOWARD A THEORY OF BELIEF SYSTEMS

With this perspective, and the above discussions of Converse's and Lane's research contexts, firmly in mind, let us return to the question of what directions should the study of political belief systems pursue. It seems to me that what is needed is the kind of general theory that Bennett speaks of, but a general theory of this sort requires that we first seek to understand belief systems per se before we inquire into their effects upon the behavior of individuals or of political systems. Both Converse and Lane, I think, have too often jumped to the latter inquiry without providing the necessary preliminaries. From the various concerns expressed in their respective research contexts (i.e., from the points of agreement and the essential issues of dispute between the two men), several features of belief systems are worthy of further investigation. These are: (1) political cognition, (2) political reasoning, and (3) the place of values or crowning postures in belief systems.

Political Cognition

Given the stress on information and cognitive abilities found in Converse's work, the area of political cognition is one that clearly deserves exploration. Cognition is most commonly treated in terms of "cognitive maps," i.e., what is believed and how an individual's beliefs interrelate. [Bolland 1980, 2-3] Focusing on the beliefs themselves has involved consideration of the process of attitude and belief system formation. For the Conversean scheme of things, this process boils down to the ideas that (1) we must have the capacity to divide our world into discrete objects and then to order it, and (2) our political views tend to come from other people. This is fairly trivial, and we get little further by either noting the economy function served by attitudes and belief systems or citing Lane's postulation of a set of cognitive needs as part of a core belief system. As it stands, then, we still need "to develop [an] explicit theory that will explain the formation of political belief systems." [Dawson 1979, 99]

Paul Dawson offers a step in that direction with his "model of political cognition." This model points to something beyond the mere ability to differentiate the world into discrete objects, for once the objects are isolated we must then develop beliefs about their instrumentality with regard to our needs and values. "The results of this assessment of personal (value) relevance, that is, the evaluative aspects

of instrumental beliefs, are capable of being elicited, in generalized form, as affective responses (attitudes) toward political objects." [Dawson 1979, 106] This step forward is incomplete, however. We must also ask, whence the values and whence the instrumental beliefs? Socialization most likely accounts for an individual's values, their "enduring belief[s] that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative" ones. [Rokeach 1972, 160] Yet beyond this, we must account for one's values and instrumental beliefs by looking at the encounters one has with political objects.

Robert Abelson has developed a theory of cognition and attitude formation rooted in such encounters, a theory of cognitive scripts. Scripts comprise "coherent sequence[s] of events expected by the individual, involving him either as a participant or as an observer." [Abelson 1976, 33, emphasis deleted] Scripts are learned throughout life and are composed of vignettes, which represent "the raw constituents [image and conceptual representation] of remembered episodes in the individual's experiences." [Abelson 1976, 34] The vignettes and the chains of vignettes called scripts are then processed at either the episodic (single experience), the categorical (many experiences with common features), or the hypothetical (typologies of common features used to group categorical scripts) levels. Developing an attitude toward an object, then, is to invoke the scripts that one

has concerning that object. [Abelson 1976, 41, emphasis deleted] In short, scripts allow us to comprehend what has occurred to us, as well as to create expectations and plans for the future.

The picture one gets from these kinds of studies is that our cognitions of political objects are conditioned by our experiences with them and by the purposes we would put them to or expect them to serve. Thus, we must study the kinds of experiences that shape the formation of political belief systems. To some extent, Lane has done this with his investigations of the workplace and of early childhood pursued in the Eastport study. We would do well to continue his explorations of the beliefs of fairly homogeneous groups of people in order to sort out the effects of certain kinds of experiences on belief systems. We would also do well to pursue the concept of scripts by focusing on the dimensions of abstractness (from episodic to hypothetical) and role (from observer to participant). Both dimensions seem to be helpful in understanding the reasons for the elite/mass differences that Converse finds, for example.

The other aspect of political cognition is that of cognitive organization, of the interrelations among beliefs. This tends to be treated in terms of the underlying principles of organization, in terms of the content of the belief system, or in terms of the degree of complexity manifested

by the belief system. With regard to the principles of organization, we have noted that Converse looks mainly at a class-hierarchy mode and that Lane focuses on the underlying needs and motives. Examination of cognitive organization in terms of the content of beliefs comprises Lane's efforts to determine who among his Adams students are liberals (and who conservatives), as well as his elucidation of the core belief system for various members of the Eastport sample. Converse has tended to explore this facet by means of the levels of conceptualization, deciding who among the national sample views parties and candidates in issue and ideological terms and who does not. Finally, exploring cognitive organization in terms of the degree of cognitive complexity tends to be a preeminent focus in Converse-type inquiries into belief systems. It involves the ability to differentiate objects as well as the ability to organize them under some overarching frame of reference.

In treating cognitive organization, the study of belief systems would be better off (particularly if it follows the guidelines just mentioned) if it began to investigate the underlying principles of the organization of attitudes and beliefs. The concept of the core belief system could be a useful springboard to such explorations, so long as we ask such questions as: Are some of the elements isolated by Lane given priority over others in political belief systems? What are the relations between the elements of the core be-

belief system and the needs and motivations found in our personality dynamics? This last question leads to the view that Converse-type inquiries have erred in restricting the possible relations among belief system components solely to the class hierarchy mode. Clearly, more attention must be paid to the means/end mode (as with Dawson's focus on instrumentality) and to the needs and motivations mode (as with Lane). We must then explore the circumstances (e.g., social groups, idiosyncratic features, experience, etc.) in which one or the other mode of organization might predominate, as well as the ways in which the three modes might reinforce or undermine each other.

Political Reasoning

In Converse's examination of belief systems, political reasoning plays a little recognized, but important part. The very notion of constraint (insofar as it presumes the class hierarchy mode of attitude organization) does indeed presume (as Lane has suggested) certain characteristics of people's reasoning processes. Moreover, all the concern he and others manifest about degrees of cognitive ability mean nothing if they do not refer to those same processes that enable us to make sense of a complex world. Thus, only Lane and those influenced by his arguments have seen the significance of inquiries into political reasoning for the study of belief systems. According to Lane:

Political reasoning is a term we may employ to refer to the ways in which people justify or argue about their political beliefs. It bears the same relationship to belief system that moral reasoning bears to morality and is discovered in the same way: by finding out the grounds on which people base their beliefs. [Lane 1973, 100, emphasis in the original]

Despite this recognition that "(1) an individual's style of reasoning (however defined) is an important factor in his or her belief system and that (2) styles of reasoning vary from person to person, style of political reasoning has very rarely been studied directly." [Binford 1981, 13] True enough, there has been no massive effort to study processes of reasoning in the context of political belief systems. Yet there have been some useful first steps in that direction which must be noted.

Three basic concerns about political reasoning have been evident so far in the belief systems field. The first is how reasoning processes should best be studied. The usual contrast here is between the depth interview approach taken by Lane and a variety of semi-projective methods, though usually involving modified survey formats. Michael Binford has offered a list of advantages for the latter [1981, 22-29], but the choice seems to rest more on expediency and training than any other criterion.

The second concern about reasoning processes involves developmental considerations. Lane, for example, has treated moral reasoning and its influence on political thinking from

a perspective influenced by the work of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. Similarly, Richard Merelman has traced the relationship between cognitive development (from the precausal/unalterable world of the child to the causal/malleable world of the adult) and moral development (from the child's inflexible morality to the adult's morality that recognizes variety and contingency). [Merelman 1972, 180-86] Such a concern leads directly to thoughts about preventive measures, so that pathologies are avoided and democratic systems remain viable.

The final concern about political reasoning comprises the issue of just what kind of thing should be studied. There is (fortunately) some agreement on a few categories of styles of reasoning, such as the abstract/concrete dimension. Austin Sarat's work has focused on this dimension in particular, as he has examined the differences between principled and concrete reasoners. [Sarat 1975, 247-48] Lane (with his contrast between contextualizers and morselizers) and Converse (the levels of conceptualization) have both employed this basic category of reasoning styles in their inquiries and analyses. Other categories that have emerged include the following. Lane has listed: (1) personification/impersonalism, (2) assertion/citation, (3) personal responsibility for the condition of society versus personal nonresponsibility, and (4) decisive versus hedged opinions. [Lane 1969, 53-55] Robert Putnam's long list adds the extent

to which: (1) political issues are moralized, (2) one evaluates policies and other political actions in terms of its effect on social groups, and (3) one refers to a named ideology or a (past or future) utopia as standards of evaluation. [Putnam 1973, 34-45]

Where should we begin to focus our efforts as we inquire into the processes of political reasoning? Sarat's piece offers a number of useful suggestions. For one thing, we need to explore a variety of hypothetical yet real-life situations in which people's responses to those situations will reveal their styles of reasoning. This kind of inquiry will be helpful in defining a typology of styles (relevant to politics) that goes beyond abstractness/concreteness, and it could assist in seeking out a set of circumstances in which certain styles may predominate.⁴⁵ In addition, we need to investigate the psychological functions served by various reasoning styles. Lane suggests as much when he criticizes Piagetian or Kohlbergian scholars for not analyzing "how a moral theme supports and reinforces some pattern of ideas, reducing dissonance, or how it may fulfill some personality need, reassuring a man that he is, after all, not weak, not stupid, not sinful."⁴⁶ [Lane 1969, 218n8]

⁴⁵ Fortunately, some work has already been done along these lines. One must note Sarat's own work [1975], Binford's [1981] plea for semi-projective techniques, and work by Andersen and Stuart Thorson [1978] that relies upon Abelson's concept of scripts.

Values

A final aspect of belief systems to consider and investigate as we inch toward a general theory is that of values. Converse, for example, raises the matter of values when he speaks of the "crowning postures" that unify belief systems such as Social Darwinism and the views of communities such as the Shakers. Lane's emphasis on values has been noted many times by scholars wishing to undermine the Conversean mode of studying belief systems; indeed, Lane regards values (such as equality or freedom) as the major entry point into political thinking.

If we wish to use values as our means of entering political thought, we must be clear on what kind of values we shall employ. Rokeach has distinguished between instrumental values (concerning preferable modes of conduct) and terminal values (concerning preferable end-states of existence). [Rokeach 1972, 159-60] Dawson appropriates this terminology and suggests that since "efforts to attain instrumental values are primarily individualistic and private enterprises, whereas efforts to attain terminal values are collective and public process, political objects are more likely to engage terminal rather than instrumental values." [Dawson 1979, 105-06] Rokeach has something like this in mind when he typologizes the great political orientations on the dimensions of the values of freedom and equality. [Rokeach 1972, 171] Yet it would seem that instrumental val-

ues are not without political relevance, as Lane notes that the fear of equality among a few of the Eastport workers is motivated by worries about how folks would act toward others of formerly high status and that the fear of freedom is motivated by concerns about aggression and its control. Clearly, then, one question for future research is what kinds of values are employed in what kinds of political situations? One could similarly explore the possible relationships between instrumental and terminal values (on the one hand) and styles of political reasoning (on the other).

There is a problem that remains with focusing on values, namely, the problem of value incongruency. Converse takes pains to point out the good deal of evidence that members of the mass public tend to accept democratic values (such as free speech) in the abstract but not in specific concrete applications. One way to address this problem is by studying belief systems in terms of "the symbols which have potency for the individual or political settings." [Cobb 1973, 146-47, emphasis deleted]

Treating belief systems in their symbolic contexts would result perhaps in, first of all, the realization that both attitude stability and constraint may be manipulated by elites. As Bennett notes, attitude organization among members of the mass public can be affected (that is, show increased stability and constraint) by "the introduction of

arbitrary, ambiguous and, perhaps, meaningless symbols into the substance of concrete issues." [Bennett 1975, 97] A second result would be recognition that "a significant measure of seeming inconsistency may be 'built into' mass belief systems as a result of this country's [multiple definitions] of [such values as] economic individualism." [Feldman 1981, 15] Such multiple definitions produce a situation among the mass public in which there is "agreement on the valence or potency of a symbol but no consensus on what the symbol means. The symbol is visible so that people can respond to it, but not with any commonality of meaning." [Cobb 1973, 151] A focus then on either symbols or values forces us to consider the meanings people attach to their belief systems, the meanings inherent in those systems, and the meanings that are transmitted and negotiated in processes of political communication.

Conclusion

To summarize, it seems that three elements are central to the task of building a general theory of political belief systems. We must first of all begin to develop an account of the variations and commonalities across individuals' cognitive processes and organization. Secondly, we must acquire an account of differing styles of political reasoning, in either developmental or typological terms. Finally, a general theory of belief systems must treat such components as values and symbols.

Beyond this, however, I am urging that the study of political belief systems move in a very Lanean direction. Converse's mode of inquiry has failed to enlighten us a great deal about belief systems, because the first steps it took toward a psychology of belief were subsequently neglected and then denied outright. Until those steps are retraced and followed to their conclusion, the study of political belief systems will continue to flounder. For scholars will remain confused about what directions will most likely lead to scientific progress and understanding so long as the study of belief systems is merged into the study of political representation.

In discussing the relationship between the history/philosophy of science and its practice, Imre Lakatos has noted that his methodology of scientific research programs doesn't and shouldn't

prescribe to the individual scientist what to try to do in a situation characterised by two rival progressive research programmes: whether to try to elaborate one or the other or whether to withdraw from both and try to supersede them with a Great Dialectical Leap Forward. Whatever they have done, I [as a philosopher or historian of science] can judge: I can say whether they have made progress or not. But I cannot advise them ... about exactly what to worry and about in which direction they should seek progress. [Lakatos 1971b, 178, emphasis in the original]

In this section I have obviously gone contrary to the spirit of this remark. Perhaps the transition from history to advice is justified in my case since I have been describing

the history of rival yet more or less non-progressive traditions of research. But it seems to me that no such excuse is necessary for two reasons. First, part of the intellectual ideals for inquiries of this kind includes a demand for suggestions as to how to proceed further in the study examined. Second, I have not presumed that I am the sole and final arbiter of the future directions for the study of belief systems. Instead, I have offered only an interpretation of that field (rooted in an examination of its history), an interpretation that can be either accepted or rejected by students of belief systems.

CONCLUDING HISTORIOGRAPHIC POSTSCRIPT

As I began this inquiry into the history of belief systems research in political science, at least two presumptions were made. One such is that the fashion in contemporary philosophy of science for historical case-studies and historically-rooted philosophical discussions of science is a valid pursuit. Though I may not have devoted as much attention to philosophy as I have to history, I take it as given that the two kinds of intellectual endeavor are inextricably linked. As Shapere notes, this is because

both the historian and the philosopher ... are concerned with reporting and judging ... all of the following: weaknesses in the reasoning by which ... scientists conceived their subject matter, raised their problems, argued in favor of certain lines of research as "promising," constructed alternative possible answers to their problems, chose acceptable solutions from among those alternatives, etc. ...; vaguenesses or inac-

curacies in their statements of premises or conclusions or arguments; presuppositions of their approaches ...; consequences of their approaches which they may not have seen (and not, we are interested in why not). In all such judgments, formal rules of deductive or inductive logic are insufficient as criteria of what [scientists] "should" have said or done; such rules must be coupled with a knowledge of the scientific situation at the time and what "could" have happened, [given information about and expectations arising from the then current ideas and techniques]. [Shapere 1977b, 502-03]

On this score, I believe there is no need for further argument. Philosophers of science seem united on the need for historical studies of one type or another, in order to keep their musings in touch with scientific practice. The only question is what type of history is preferable. Here, too, I must back off from giving a direct answer. The disputes between the proponents of various kinds of history (e.g., Thomas Kuhn, Larry Laudan, Karl Popper, Lakatos, Toulmin, Shapere, etc.) can be readily accessed. [Suppe 1977] Moreover, getting involved in the disputes among these various historiographies of science can lead to a good deal of nit-picking insofar as they share several common concerns, concerns which I have captured in approaching the history of belief systems research via the concept of a research context.

The second presumption of this inquiry involves two basic issues in thinking about the historiography of scientific inquiries. These issues are, first of all, the nature of commitment to a supertheoretical entity such as a paradigm

or research program and, secondly, the nature and usefulness of a distinction between internal and external history of science. The first issue was raised at the very beginning insofar as we needed a point of entry into the complexity of belief systems research and insofar as we took contemporary history and philosophy of science as our starting point. The second issue acquires significance as soon as one begins to reflect on the nature of one's inquiry, on what to select for inclusion in the study and on what to exclude. These two issues, then, will be the focus of the discussion in this section.

Commitment

As noted in the first chapter, the major attempt at an understanding of the belief systems field employs a Kuhnian perspective on the history of science. Bennett, for example, asserts the existence of a dominant paradigm in belief systems studies (one identified with Converse) from the 1950s onward, a paradigm that has come to be undermined by anomalies and communication pathologies during the 1970s. This account of the belief systems field errs (I have said) because it neglects the fact that a rather different approach to the study of political belief systems had existed prior to (and alongside) the approach developed in the so-called "paradigmatic era" that Bennett isolates. The history I have provided gives some substance to a remark by Laudan that:

Virtually every major period in the history of science is characterized both by the co-existence of numerous competing paradigms, with none exerting hegemony over the field, and by the persistent and continuous manner in which the fundamental assumptions of every paradigm are debated within the scientific community.⁴⁶ [Laudan 1977, 74]

In analyzing the history of belief systems research, I have sought to avoid questions of hegemony by focusing on what I have called research contexts, the ensemble of influences affecting the direction and character of a scholar's work. Such a term owes a great deal to similar concepts espoused by Kuhn, Lakatos, Laudan, and others. Kuhn, for example, relies upon a notion of paradigms (conceived as including things from exemplary scientific achievements to chosen problems and problem-solving techniques to metaphysical world views) as a means of tracing the development of science across periods of stability and periods of crisis. Similarly, Lakatos has developed a concept of research programmes that are composed of a hard core (a set of ideas made irrefutable by fiat) and a protective belt of theories (designed to elaborate the ideas of the hard core by making empirical predictions). Laudan, too, captures the basic idea underlying these concepts when he opts for a notion of research traditions. Such traditions comprise "a set of

⁴⁶ Laudan's case is rather overstated, especially on the matter of hegemony. Preference has indeed been given to the Conversean mode of studying belief systems since the late 1950s, although the tide now seems to be changing. The point, however, is that the hegemony has never been complete; alternatives to a dominant mode of inquiry do exist, even if they have been consigned to an academic underground.

general assumptions about the entities and processes in a domain of study, and about the appropriate methods to be used for investigating the problems and constructing the theories in that domain." [Laudan 1977, 81, emphasis deleted]

Given that a central thesis of contemporary philosophy of science is that inquiry presupposes a set of ontological and methodological (i.e., technical) commitments, what can be said about commitment in the study of political belief systems. Some commitments are indeed present. The methodological or technical ones (I believe) are preeminent. Converse has been preoccupied with justifying the ways of survey research to political science perhaps more than he has been concerned with examining belief systems per se. Lane, too, has sought to investigate the usefulness of psychoanalytic and interpretative methods for political science. In addition, both have underlying ontological commitments in the form of presumptions about human nature. Converse, for example, tends to view human beings as more or less bundles of attitudes, which comprise learned predispositions to respond to objects successfully differentiated in one's conscious mind. In addition, those attitudes relate to one another in characteristic ways that are grasped by means of the concepts of dissonance and consistency (among others). Lane regards human beings as creatures motivated by certain drives and needs, and presupposes that our belief systems

develop not only out of psychological mechanisms of ego defense but also out of a welter of ideas on the basic aspects of experience.

But what do these commitments have to do with the inquiries that have resulted? The answer to this question is not altogether clear. I do not get the impression that either Converse or Lane has a well-developed hard core of beliefs which they will not give up or allow to be subject to criticism and modification. Lane, for example, has more or less drifted with the fashions of psychology--abandoning Freudianism as it has come under attack or as new concepts have emerged. Nor has commitment meant (as it does for Lakatos) "that not only the experiments [and research techniques] but also the theories should be, as it were, planned beforehand." [Lakatos 1971b, 176] Converse regards his entry into the study of belief systems as more or less a "chain of accidents," and the typology of the sources of constraint (a central part of any theory that might be developed) was simply "borrowed and merely stitched together" from a variety of sources. [Converse 1981] In short, there does not seem to be any great depth of commitment to a set of ideas that conditions the direction and course of the inquiries into political belief systems.

Commitment in a psychological sense clearly is not very much evident within the various contexts of belief systems

research. For Lakatos this is as it should be, for "if all hard cores may be false, whether one believes them or not is a psychological irrelevancy." [Lakatos 1971b, 175, emphasis in the original] One may thus contribute to a research context (or program or tradition or paradigm) without committing oneself to a given hard core of assumptions, to a Weltanschauung. That this is possible (says Alan Musgrave) only demonstrates "the historical and methodological irrelevance" of commitments in scientific inquiry. [Musgrave 1976, 483n10] Commitment, however, need not be conceived only in psychological terms. It may, for example, be regarded as comprising the logical presuppositions of a given inquiry or set of theories. In this sense, a concept such as a research context represents the hypotheses and assumptions identified (through hindsight) as running through a series of more or less successful explanations. [Musgrave 1976, 466]

In any event, no matter how commitment is properly viewed, it is a feature of inquiry that needs to be discovered in the course of historical research. An a priori definition of commitments used in studies of a field, a concern to establish entities such as paradigms without doing an appropriate history, will undoubtedly lead to distortion and inhibit understanding of the aims and achievements of the inquiry.

Internal and External Histories

Another major issue in contemporary philosophy of science concerns the kind of history that should be done. Traditionally, internal history involves more or less standard intellectual history, i.e., tracing the forebears, development and successors of important concepts, theories and methods. Under recent definitions, internal history has come to be conceived as something more than intellectual history. It has taken on the connotation of being history that deals with accounts of the growth of knowledge emphasizing rational factors. For Lakatos, for example, internal history "emphasizes [the] long-extended and empirical rivalry of major research programmes, progressive and degenerating problemshifts, and the slowly emerging victory of one programme over the other." [Lakatos 1971a, 105] External history, on the other hand, primarily refers to various influences upon scientific work that are extraneous from the point of view of logical and intellectual concerns. These influences include political ones (primarily ideology and government research funds), social ones (primarily class background), and especially, psychological ones (non-scientific philosophical commitments, habits of thought, personal idiosyncrasies, etc.).

The central question regarding these two kinds of approaches to the historiography of scientific inquiry is: Which kind of history should be primary, and which is most

useful in understanding science? For Lakatos, it is internal history which is of most importance. The aim of historiography is to show that the change from one research program can be conceived as one effected by rational factors, even if "actual history is frequently a caricature of its rational reconstructions." [Lakatos 1976, 84n2] He even suggests that this is so much the case that internal history (the rational reconstruction) should be given in the text, while the actual history (the extent to which a given episode deviates from a rational pattern) should be relegated to footnotes. [Lakatos 1971a, 91-92, 107] This view has come under attack by such people as Laudan and Kuhn, who criticizes this kind of history as not history at all but "philosophy fabricating examples." [Kuhn 1971, 143] Where Lakatos views external history as irrelevant for understanding science, Kuhn accuses rational reconstructionism of narrowness insofar as it neglects data (such as the role of idiosyncrasy in theory creation and choice, as well as blind spots and outright mistakes on the part of scientists) that are central to the task of the historian of science.

With regard to the above history of research into political belief systems, how can this issue be resolved? The easy answer (of course) is that both kinds of history are needed, but such an answer does not provide much help. Internal history does hold some claim to priority, though not the kind apparently desired by Lakatos. In no way should

internal history become a ruse by which to show how all scientific developments can be made rational by hindsight. Clearly, the actual history (insofar as it can be arrived at given the influences of perspective and time) of inquiry must be respected.

Yet internal history does have priority for another reason suggested by Lakatos. It is primary because it is the means by which we set problems for external history. In the case of belief systems research, the above (more or less internalist) history provides a decent tracing of the origins of growth of knowledge problems. It explains those problems by a neglect of heuristic considerations by political scientists as they frame and pursue their inquiries. But such an account does not go far in answering the question of why this kind of neglect has occurred. I have made some efforts along this line, namely in tracing the research contexts of Converse and Lane to certain aspects of academic training or to various features of the zeitgeist at the time each began his inquiries. This is clearly not enough, however, for a fuller answer to this why question requires some information about patterns of scholarly communication, other aspects of the field's invisible colleges, the gatekeeping functions played by political science journals and associations, and the psychological tendencies that lead one scholar into one kind of pursuit and another into a quite different kind. Thus, it is only when an internalist historical account

shows obvious gaps or misinterpretations, or when it can pursue a question no further, that external history need come into play.

Additionally, with the history of belief systems research in mind, it seems that internal history is primary insofar as it coincides with our self-understandings of inquiry. We like to think of ourselves as responding to intellectual demands and as making contributions to the growth of knowledge. And when dealing with contemporary inquiries, the dearth of knowledge about the psychosocial influences upon inquiry is very disconcerting. An external history of contemporary fields of study can often run into roadblocks established either by an inability to step back from ongoing struggles or by an unwillingness of participants to (say) submit to a battery of psychological and personality tests. Thus, the best strategy appears to be to examine internal history, to explore the self-understandings of scientists, in order to discover whether or not the inquiry makes sense (as well as progress) on its own intellectual terms. If it does not, then we must begin to offer some other, more externalist account.

It should be clear, then, that yet another further direction for research should be the provision of this more externalist account of the history of the belief systems field in political science. Such an account would be a necessary

supplement to the one already given above. An internalist account has been chosen for this essay because of a conviction that it is primary for the reasons just provided, and for the reason that Bennett's misintepretation of the field's history had to be corrected.

AFTERWORD

In providing this history of political scientific research into belief systems, I have endeavored to show that the growth of knowledge problems attending the field are due not to the pathologies of intradisciplinary communication but to neglect of (an inattention to) the research contexts of the major figures in the field. My hope is that this study will serve as a reminder to scholars to keep in touch with the development of their concerns and inquiries, so that true scientific cumulation may occur.

Appendix A

In his overview of political belief system studies, Lance Bennett is concerned that a situation of competing definitions of the same concepts (such as constraint or economy or attitude stability) threatens and inhibits productive intradisciplinary communication. He believes that communication among scholars in the belief systems field has become problematic because they have not followed the steps requisite for developing adequate conceptualizations. These steps include: (1) the definition of a concept in relation to a body of theory; (2) the location and definition of the concept vis-a-vis similar concepts; and (3) the creation of operational definitions to guide the search for a concept's empirical indicators. [Bennett 1977, 481] To a certain extent, however, this process has been followed by Converse and others with regard to the concept of attitude stability, as Bennett's own earlier discussion of the concept's relation to presumptions about a democratic polity [Bennett 1975] indicates. The links Converse attempts to draw between information, cognitive capacity, constraint and stability also provide an indication that the conceptualization process sketched by Bennett has been pursued. The process is not always followed explicitly, but it can be traced.

Productive communication within the field becomes problematic, however, not so much because of a lack of attention to process but because of a misconception of the process. The standard positivist view regards conceptualization as a process of transforming "vague classifications of discriminable types into empirical indices ..." [Gregor 1971, 145; cf. Hempel 1952, 11 and Kalleberg 1969, 28] While sophisticated proponents of this view recognize that concepts are theory-laden (as well as that concept and theory formation go hand in hand), the usual result of this view is a narrow focus on questions of definition (e.g., is a given definition of a concept real, nominal, or explicative?) and on questions of operationalization.

What is required, instead, is a recognition that many political science concepts (fundamental ones such as freedom and ideology, as well as more limited ones such as attitude stability) are what W. B. Gallie has called "essentially contested concepts." [Gallie 1968, 158ff] According to William Connolly (who follows the ideas of Gallie closely) such concepts are: (1) appraisive; (2) descriptive of internally complex practices that reference several dimensions at once; and (3) applied by the use of relatively open rules or criteria. [Connolly 1974, 10] Essentially contested concepts, moreover, are only partly shared within a given community of inquiry, and hence, for situations outside familiarity the concept will be applied differently by different

people for different reasons. To use a concept, then, "is to characterize a situation from a vantage point of certain interests, purposes, or standards." [Connolly 1974, 23, emphasis deleted] In short, conceptualization occurs in a context not only of theories and background information but also of a researcher's guiding questions and his or her intellectual aims.

With this in mind, we can agree with Bennett that conceptual studies need to be done and that the process of conceptualization in the belief systems field needs further exploration. Yet it should be clear that such studies must occur by reference to and in light of heuristic investigations such as this one, in order to ensure the advance of communication among scholars.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ In his discussion of essentially contested concepts, Gallie comes to the same conclusion. The criteria that he establishes for the identification of such concepts, he says, "embody an historical approach to, and appreciation of, the special character of essentially contested concepts. ... [U]nderstanding of how concepts of this kind function or can be used requires some appreciation of how they came to be" used in such-and-such a way. [Gallie 1968, 168, emphasis in the original] Moreover, he observes that this historical appreciation and understanding of concepts will not only moderate debate (by limiting it to non-fanatical partisans) but also raise the level of argument (by means of its recognition of the value of each of the competing uses of a concept). [Gallie 1968, 188-89]

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