Politically Relevant Cultural Forces

- Moral and Cultural Values
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- Race/Ethnicity
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- Religious Observance
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These dimensions can cause variation on individual attitudes that can effect state capacity:

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- Acceptance of hierarchy → Decision-making unequal
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Culture and Geography

- Even in the Internet age, we are still more likely to interact with people close by us than with people farther away.

- There is a diffusion of cultural norms that exists within a certain locale, that may well not exist in other locales.

- In Riverside, people ask you “How was your Easter?” This may not be asked in San Francisco or Seattle.

- Through repeated social interaction, dominant values arise on the basis of their persuasive power, resulting in a spatial clustering of shared viewpoints.

- We see cultural variation across various social strata (city, neighborhood, workplace, ethnic, religious, economic).

- Cultural measures at the community and statewide levels are often simple averages or general tendencies – individuals are not necessarily uniform.

- State boundaries have a unifying effect – because people within the boundaries experience the same legal traditions and policies.
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Political Culture and Personality

- People with similar personalities/preferences tend to gravitate towards one another.

- People desire to create social and physical environments in which they can comfortably express themselves, without encountering regular conflict.

- Over time, self-selection produces geographic pockets of shared values that both reflect and reproduce local cultures.

- People who share personality trait of “opens to diversity” are found concentrated on parts of the West Coast, closely associated behavior of reading books, attending art exhibits, going to library, expressing interest in other cultures.

- Extraversion is especially high in the Midwest, for some reason.

- Openness is associated with tolerant attitudes on same-sex marriage, marijuana use, and abortion.

- Conscientiousness related to religiosity and lower crime rates.
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Politically Relevant Cultural Forces

- Not all cultural variation is relevant, but three are inarguably central to politics: ethnic/racial diversity; religious observance; economic organization/consumption – including patterns of self-employment and views of thrift/debt

- White responses to black, Latino and other non-white populations define politics in ethnically and racially mixed states

- States' Rights; Plessy v. Ferguson; Brown v. Board, Prop-187; AZ SB-1070

- Participation may be lower among some immigrant populations – may not come from small-d democratic countries – think China, for example

- Some immigrant populations come from societies that are much more collectivist in orientation – thereby cutting against traditional role of individualism in the United States

- The role of women is different in some newly immigrated populations. Thus, political participation among some newer groups may be depressed
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Latino Population

Percentage of Hispanic Population in the U.S.

2010 Percentage of Hispanic Population by County
- Greater than 60%
- 40.1% to 60.0%
- 20.1% to 40.0%
- 10.1% to 20.0%
- Less than 10%
U.S. Hispanic Population
Percent Change by County from 2000 to 2010

Percent change
- 100.0 percent increase or more
- 50.0 to 99.9 percent increase
- 20.0 to 49.9 percent increase
- 0.0 to 19.9 percent increase
- Loss
- Comparable data not available

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010

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Asian Population

U.S. Asian Population: 2010 Census

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Religion as Relevant Force

- Exposure to religious teaching is an important source of political learning

- Religion provides clear moral guidance and inculcates economic values such as hard work, frugality, and conservation

- Impetus for charitable work (for poor and needy)

- Religious right is powerful in the South, but religion was a force behind the Civil Rights Movement; opposition to the Vietnam War

- Seems religion can be used with equal sincerity on the right or the left

- However, religious traditions and denominations within them vary markedly. Lutherans are probably more liberal; Southern Baptists more conservative

- Religious secularism/agnosticism is certainly on the rise – often leads to a huge gap in attitudes on abortion, women’s rights, prayer in school, gay rights, sex education, teaching of creationism in science classrooms. Plays out at state level.
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