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## RESEARCH REPORTS AND NOTES

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### THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF AUTHORITARIANISM IN MEXICO: A Reexamination\*

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Despite certain early efforts to interpret Mexico as a pluralist constitutional democracy, or democracy-in-the-making (Scott 1959; Tucker 1957), scholars today almost universally agree that the political system of Mexico is authoritarian.<sup>1</sup> The trappings of Mexico's liberal constitution and elections notwithstanding, Mexico's Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) serves to integrate the polity under the highly centralized control of a single institution that dominates access to all public office. At the apex of the PRI is the Mexican president, who not only chooses his own successor but controls access to the PRI's candidate lists for all other public offices and therefore dominates both the party and the congress. In sum, as Coleman and Davis argue, Mexico fits the ideal type of authoritarian political organization because "decisions are made almost

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exclusively by the ruling elite rather than by democratic, pluralist processes" and because "there are severe restrictions placed upon political mobilization" (1976, 195).

In light of the authoritarian nature of the Mexican political system, it is not at all surprising to find that research almost universally concludes that Mexico is largely characterized by an authoritarian political culture.<sup>2</sup> The early research on Mexican authoritarianism was more psychoanalytical than social psychological. The classic work of Wolf (1959) argued that much of Mexican politics could be understood as a reflection of the behavior of Mexico's culturally and socially disinherited mestizo "power seekers." Octavio Paz's widely read essay (1961) and Samuel Ramos's psychoanalytical study ([1934] 1962) both emphasized *machismo* and inferiority as characteristic of the Mexican mestizo and at the very core of Mexican national character.

In marked contrast to these early descriptive studies is the landmark empirical investigation of Almond and Verba (1963). While expressing the hope and belief that Mexicans were developing a more civic (that is, more democratic) political culture, they found that Mexicans remained at some distance from their North American and British counterparts. Countless studies have gone on to use *The Civic Culture* as the primary source for understanding Mexican political attitudes, frequently emphasizing the antidemocratic political culture instilled in Mexican children, which is then carried with them as they grow to adulthood and begin to interact within the political system (see, for example, Scott 1965; Hansen 1971; Needler 1971). Evidence of authoritarianism among Mexico's children was uncovered by Segovia (1975) in his socialization study. According to this study, Mexican school children are intolerant of communists and dissidents. These studies emphasize that apathy and cynicism about politics typify Mexican adults. According to Almond and Verba, one-quarter of them are "parochials" and two-thirds are "subjects." "Participants," who are considered to form the backbone of democratic political culture, barely exist in Mexico.

An exceptionally well detailed and careful psychoanalytical study of Mexican village life conducted by Fromm and Maccoby found little evidence of democratic political culture (1970, 89–90). In their analysis, submissiveness, respect for traditional authority, and authoritarianism were the most common modes of sociopolitical relations encountered among the villagers. Only 7 percent of the subjects of the study were found to have a primarily democratic orientation.

The first research to question the authoritarian nature of Mexican political culture was Fagen and Tuohy's landmark study of Jalapa (1972, 113n). In marked contrast to virtually all prior investigations, this study uncovered elements of strong support for democratic values among their respondents. In a direct test of the classic Prothro and Grigg (1960)

investigation of support for the principles of democracy, Fagen and Tuohy uncovered "overwhelming" (90 percent or higher) agreement with the following statements: "democracy is the best form of government"; "public officials should be chosen by majority vote"; and "every citizen should have an equal chance to influence government policy." Fagen and Tuohy, however, correctly rejected these findings as persuasive evidence that Jalapans possessed a democratic political culture because they saw such statements as "platitudinous" and similar to "resolutions of freedom and motherhood" (1972, 123–24). They were more persuaded to believe those items that measure support for the constitutional rights of minorities. In such items they also found very strong support for the right of minorities to criticize majority decisions and the right of minorities to attempt to influence the opinions of the majority. This support dropped off considerably, however, in questions that discussed specific opposition groups, causing Fagen and Tuohy to conclude that "withdrawal, apathy, feelings of powerlessness, an *indifference to democratic practices* form the dominant textures of citizen orientations" (1972, 130, emphasis added). Their investigation also highlighted a tendency toward higher levels of authoritarianism among lower classes and women in Jalapa.

In sum, previous studies have concluded that the evidence weighs heavily in favor of viewing Mexican political culture as fundamentally authoritarian. But one important problem with most of the studies conducted thus far (especially with *The Civic Culture* and its many replications) is that they may not have employed valid measures of *political* authoritarianism. Attitudes often assumed to do so, such as efficacy, trust, and civic competence, which predominate in *The Civic Culture* and its emulations, could just as well characterize ardent Nazis as members of the American Civil Liberties Union. Evidence of the difficulty found with items of *The Civic Culture* type is provided in Baloyra (1979), who has convincingly shown with data from Venezuela that several of the key *Civic Culture* items measure citizen evaluation of the performance of their government and the incumbent politicians rather than citizen support for democratic norms.

This essay empirically tests for a political culture of authoritarianism in Mexico. The central research question asked is whether Mexicans are politically authoritarian. Survey research data incorporating measures specifically designed to measure directly support for democratic and authoritarian norms serve as the data base.

## THE MEASUREMENT OF AUTHORITARIAN AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN POLITICAL CULTURE

In light of our criticism of prior measurement, we take a different approach to measuring democratic and authoritarian orientations. We rely upon the work of Muller (Muller, Seligson, and Turan 1982), and Sullivan, Pierson, and Marcus (1979), who explore support versus rejection of democratic liberties as derived from Dahl's 1971 theoretical treatment of democracy in comparative perspective. Two key mass attitudes are viewed as underlying a political culture that supports liberal representative institutions: support for a system of widespread political participation and support for the right of minority dissent (extending civil liberties to critics of the regime). Dahl argues, with specific references to Argentina, that support for both participation and minority dissent is essential for the establishment and the maintenance of democratic regimes. Citizens with such democratic political attitudes would be likely to oppose the suppression of key democratic liberties and therefore could play a crucial role in the maintenance of democratic systems under stress by preventing what Linz and Stepan (1978) call the "breakdown of democracy," an occurrence of epidemic proportions in Latin America.

We employ three sets of items to measure the extent to which democracy or authoritarianism characterizes the political culture of Mexico. Support for widespread participation is measured as support for basic civil liberties as demonstrated by signing petitions, participating in legal demonstrations, attending community groups, and working for a political party or candidate during a campaign. Support for the right to dissent taps the degree of support for extending to critics of the system the right to vote, to conduct protest marches, to run for office, and to enjoy freedom of expression. For both scales, each questionnaire item is measured on a ten-point continuum. Question wording is contained in table 1.

As noted above, a crucial test of support for democracy involves opposition to the suppression of democratic liberties. We have operationalized this concept by measuring the respondent's degree of opposition to the government's passing laws that would prohibit critics of the system from holding meetings, staging protest marches, and having access to the mass media. Table 1 contains the text of these items. We will first examine these three sets of items individually and then collapse them into three scales: widespread participation (WP), the right to dissent (RD), and opposition to the suppression of democratic liberties (OSDL).<sup>3</sup>

## DATA

The data for this investigation are drawn from a 1978–79 purposive sample of 430 urban Mexicans, divided between working-class and middle-class citizens of voting age. Approximately 60 percent of the respondents resided in six northern industrial centers while the remaining 40 percent were residents of Mexico's second largest city, Guadalajara, in the central state of Jalisco. The sample design's principle feature, its purposeful concentration on two distinct social-class groupings, facilitates measuring class membership's impact upon support for democratic liberties. Area probability techniques were employed to locate one portion of the respondents while others were located by using lists of employees at industrial enterprises. Respondents were assigned to either the "working-class" or "middle-class" categories on the basis of a combination of factors consisting of income, residence, and occupation. The sample excludes rural areas and is not a national probability sample, and hence we cannot generalize to all Mexicans from our findings. Further details of the portion of the sample from northern cities are reported in Seligson and Williams (1982, 12–16).

## FINDINGS

### *Rejection or Support for Democratic Liberties in Mexico*

Our review of the literature leads us to expect high levels of political authoritarianism among our respondents. Table 1 presents the mean scores on our three sets of items of rejection or support for democratic liberties. In each case, we scored the index items from 1 to 10, with 10 representing the pro-civil liberties end of the continuum and 1 representing the authoritarian response that would reject civil liberties. Looking first at the degree of support for widespread political participation (WP), we note that urban Mexicans strongly supported democratic civil liberties (table 1A). Hence, on a scale of 1 to 10, the means ranged from 7.3 to 8.8, definitely in the democratic end of the scale. The highest level of authoritarian responses (respondents who scored 5 or lower on the ten-point scale) was expressed by only 19.6 percent of the sample. This level occurs on the item concerning working on an election campaign (WP1) (percentages not shown in the table). In contrast, as few as 5.8 percent of the sample gave an authoritarian response to the item concerning participation in a new group or organization to solve community problems (WP3).

Among our sample of Mexicans, support for the right of critics to dissent (RD) was somewhat lower than that for widespread participation (see table 1B). This finding parallels those from previous studies (Stouffer 1955; Prothro and Grigg 1960; Fagen and Tuohy 1972; Lawrence

1976), which found that there was higher support for the general principles of constitutional civil liberties than for the application of these civil liberties to specific situations. In our measures, support for widespread political participation involves approval of general civil liberties, whereas support for the right to dissent involves extending those liberties to opposition groups. Despite the lower support for the right to dissent than for widespread participation among our urban Mexican respondents, on two of the three items that compose this scale, the average score fell well in the supportive or prodemocratic range. Urban Mexicans expressed willingness to support the right to vote and, even more strongly, to support the right to hold peaceful demonstrations—even for those critical of the Mexican system of government. In percentage terms, 32.3 percent of the respondents disapproved of the right of critics of the system to vote while 46.4 percent approved of that right (the remainder neither approved nor disapproved). Indeed, 32.8 percent strongly approved of the vote for critics of the system (score of 10), while only 13.3 percent strongly disapproved (score of 1). Still stronger support for the right of dissent emerged regarding the freedom of critics to stage a peaceful demonstration. Here, 63.6 percent of the respondents approved of the right of critics of the system to hold such demonstrations, while only 15.0 percent disapproved.

We note, however, that Mexicans were somewhat less democratically oriented regarding the right of critics to run for public office. Whereas on the previous two right-to-dissent items (voting and demonstrations), the mean scores (table 1B) were both in the approval range, for the item concerning the right of critics to seek public office, the mean score fell just within the disapproval or authoritarian range (4.7). In percentage terms, 51.7 percent of the respondents disapproved of critics seeking public office in contrast with 26.2 percent who approved. Over one-quarter (28.2 percent) gave the most strongly authoritarian response (scale score of 1), whereas 17.2 percent very strongly approved of this right for critics (scale score of 10). Because this single item contrasts markedly with the other measures of support for civil liberties among Mexicans, one might speculate that the right of critics of the system to run for public office is perceived as potentially more disruptive to the smooth functioning of that system than would be critics' right to vote or demonstrate. Mexico's painful history of crises surrounding presidential succession during the first twenty years after the revolution began could well have sensitized Mexicans on this issue. One might account for this antidemocratic response, then, in terms of fears (generated by a series of assassinations and coups against presidents by aspirants) about allowing those who might threaten the stability of the polity to seek public office. Such an interpretation would support those who view political culture as responding to long-term political circumstances. As we will show below,

however, this concern about permitting critics to seek office is not unique to Mexico, and therefore it is difficult and unnecessary to attempt to find a link to the peculiarities of Mexican political history.

In many ways, the third set of variables—opposition to suppression of democratic liberties (OSDL, table 1C)—should be viewed as the most stringent test of commitment to or rejection of democracy. It is the key test because these OSDL items measure the extent to which individuals would oppose the government's suppression of existing liberties. This series of items thus goes beyond testing mere support for civil liberties to focus upon the degree of support for or repudiation of a government that might take overt actions to limit the participation of its critics. Mexicans showed consistent opposition to any measure that might suppress the democratic liberties of groups critical of the Mexican government. Indeed, between 43 and 45 percent of urban Mexicans strongly disapproved (scale score of 10) of government efforts to restrict the right of critics to hold public demonstrations, to hold meetings, to express their points of view, and also disapproved of government efforts to censor critics' propaganda. Fewer than 10 percent of the Mexicans sampled expressed the authoritarian position of strong approval for governmental suppression of these civil liberties.

Taken together, the data presented provide clear evidence that urban Mexicans strongly support democratic liberties. Further evidence that corroborates the prodemocratic disposition of popular political culture in contemporary urban Mexico may be seen by comparing our data with an identical set of items asked in New York City. The data in table 1 (right column) show that New Yorkers scored, as expected, in the prodemocratic end of the scale on all eleven items comparable to those gathered in Mexico. The New York item means reflect somewhat more supportive attitudes toward democratic civil liberties than Mexicans on nine of the eleven variables. Mexicans, in contrast, supported the right of critics to demonstrate more than New Yorkers (items WP2 and RD6). Overall, despite the New York sample's somewhat stronger allegiance to democratic values than that of urban Mexicans in most respects, we note that Mexicans were comparatively prodemocratic. Indeed, given the authoritarian nature of Mexican political structure and the widely held expectation that Mexicans would manifest an authoritarian political culture, it is remarkable that the differences between the responses of Mexicans and New Yorkers in support of democratic liberties are so small.

### *Social Class and Support for Democratic Liberties*

Our study has revealed that a majority of the Mexican urbanites sampled supported all three categories of democratic liberties measured in this study. It could be argued that the aggregate data we report in table 1

TABLE 1 *Political Authoritarianism: Support or Rejection of Democratic Liberties, Mexico and New York City (Mean Scores)\**

	Mexico	New York**
A. <i>Widespread Participation (WP)</i>		
To what extent would you approve or disapprove of:		
1. participating in a petition signing campaign	8.0	8.3
2. participating in a legal demonstration	8.2	8.1
3. participating in a new group or organization to try to solve community problems	8.8	8.9
4. working for a political party, candidate, or election campaign	7.3	8.5
B. <i>Support for the Right to Dissent (RD)</i>		
To what extent would you approve or disapprove of people who say bad things about the Mexican form of government having the right to:		
5. vote	6.3	7.1
6. hold peaceful demonstrations to express their point of view	7.6	7.0
7. run for public office	4.7	5.7
C. <i>Opposition to Suppression of Democratic Liberties (OSDL)</i>		
To what extent would you approve or disapprove of the government passing a law that would prohibit critics of the Mexican form of government from:		
8. holding public demonstrations	6.3	8.3
9. holding meetings	6.4	8.1
10. expressing their point of view	6.4	7.8
11. To what extent would you approve of the government censoring radio, TV, or newspaper ads that criticize the government.	6.4	8.3
	(N)***	(618)
	(430)	

\*These mean scores are based on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 indicating highest support for civil liberties. Note that the scale on the OSDL items has been reversed in conformity with the other indices so that on all three sets a high score means support for democratic liberties.

\*\*Computer tabulations made available by Edward N. Muller from 1978 New York City Probability Sample. For sample details, see Muller, Jukam and Seligson 1982.

\*\*\*Varies slightly owing to nonresponse.

obscures a hard core of authoritarianism among the working class. As noted above, Fagen and Tuohy found reduced support for democracy among their lower-class respondents in Jalapa. Moreover, other studies have found considerable evidence of working-class authoritarianism (Adorno et al. 1950; Milbrath 1965; Lipset 1981).<sup>4</sup> Although our sample



contains a larger proportion of working-class Mexicans than it does of middle class (60.1 percent working-class), we still may have overrepresented middle-class respondents, who are presumedly more democratic, and therefore may have inflated the level of support for democracy emerging from our data.

To test this possibility, we contrasted the rejection or support for democratic civil liberties of the working-class respondents in our sample with those of the middle-class respondents (table 2). In every case, for all eleven items in each of the three dimensions measured, we found statistically significant differences (*t*-test) between the middle-class sample and the working-class sample. Clearly, the middle-class respondents manifested greater support for democratic liberties than the working-class respondents. It might thus appear that we have uncovered among our working-class respondents the bearers of the authoritarianism that we had expected to characterize Mexicans generally. Such a conclusion, however, would be a grave misinterpretation of the data. An examination of the means displayed in table 2 reveals that in every case but one (permitting critics to run for office, variable RD7), average scores for working-class Mexicans fell in the democratic end of the democratic-authoritarian continuum. Hence, while the data in table 2 reveal lower support for democratic liberties among working-class Mexicans than among their middle-class urban counterparts, one would err in concluding that working-class respondents were politically authoritarian. In fact, on ten of eleven variables, the average working-class score fell in the range that is supportive of democracy.

We are nonetheless concerned about the implications of these findings for two reasons. First, our sample does not include rural folk. If the rural working class is less supportive of democracy than the urban working class, by extension Mexico's rural folk may actually "cross the line" and be opposed to democracy. Second, because our survey avoided the methodological errors that may have led other investigators wrongly to attribute authoritarianism to working-class respondents (see note 4), we are puzzled as to why our working-class respondents are still less supportive of democracy. We suspected that the finding may have been spurious; authoritarian tendencies among the working class in our data may be a function of some other variable associated with working-class status. In order to investigate this hypothesis, we examined a number of political variables that may have varied strongly across class lines. The data in table 3 provide the results of this analysis. First, we expected that those who support the dominant political party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), would be less likely to tolerate criticism of the system because the PRI in many ways is the system of government (see Seligson 1983). If more of our working-class respondents than middle-class respondents had supported the PRI, then that difference would

TABLE 2 *Social Class and Political Authoritarianism, Mexico (Mean Scores)*

	Middle	Working	Sig.*
A. <i>Widespread Participation (WP)</i>			
1. petition signing	8.3	7.7	.020
2. legal demonstrations	8.7	7.8	.001
3. group to solve community problem	9.1	8.5	.003
4. working for candidate, party or in a campaign	8.6	6.4	.001
B. <i>Support for the Right to Dissent (RD)</i>			
5. vote for critics	7.3	5.7	.001
6. peaceful demonstration for critics	8.0	7.3	.007
7. run for office for critics	5.8	4.0	.001
C. <i>Opposition to the Suppression of Democratic Liberties (OSDL)</i>			
8. prohibit public demonstrations	6.9	5.9	.001
9. prohibit holding meetings	7.0	6.0	.003
10. prohibit expressing point of view	7.1	6.0	.001
11. censor radio, TV, newspaper	7.0	6.1	.005
(N)**	(169)	(261)	

\*Significance test is t-test for difference of means.

\*\*Varies slightly owing to nonresponse.

partially account for the apparently class-based authoritarianism that we uncovered. As table 3 reveals, however, no significant difference existed between the two classes in their support for the PRI.

Another, more direct measure of allegiance to the Mexican political system comes from Easton's (1975) conceptualization of diffuse support (see Muller, Jukam, and Seligson 1982). We measured diffuse support by using a five-item scale (table 3). As above, one would expect those with greater diffuse support for the system to have less tolerance for critics of that system; however, the data again fail to reveal significant differences in diffuse support between the two classes. Two other key variables on which one might expect class differences are perceived government responsiveness and voting participation. As above, no significant differences appear between the working-class and middle-class samples.

None of these four key political variables permits us to account for the reasons why working-class respondents in urban Mexico support democratic liberties less than do middle-class urban residents. Demographic and socioeconomic variables, however, may help us do so. Of special importance is educational attainment, which varies sharply according to class. The average number of years of formal education for the

TABLE 3 Selected Political Attitudes, Mexican Middle Class versus Working Class

Variable	Class (percentages)		Significance (t-test)
	Middle	Working	
Percent supporting the PRI*	59.0	58.4	NS
Diffuse support for political system** (scale score, range = 5-50)	29.9	28.4	NS
Perceived government responsiveness*** (scale score, range = 4-12)	8.4	8.5	NS
Voting (N)****	69.1 (169)	67.8 (261)	NS

\*"Which political party do you support?"

\*\*The diffuse support scale is based upon five items, each scored from 1-10, which rank respectively the respondent's belief that the Mexican political system protects his or her rights, is worthy of pride, is the "best possible political system," merits support, and includes representation of his or her peers. For details and crosscultural validation of this scale, see Muller, Jukam, and Seligson 1982.

\*\*\*This scale is based upon four items, each scored from 1 to 3, drawn from the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center's Government Responsiveness Scale (Robinson, Rusk, and Shaver 1973).

\*\*\*\*N varies slightly due to missing data.

working-class sample is 8.4, while the average for the middle-class sample is 13.5 years.

Table 4 presents the final stage of three stepwise multiple regression equations. The dependent variables were summated scales based on the three measures of support for democratic liberties presented in table 1. The independent variables were class, education, sex, and age. Age had no significant predictive effect on any of the three measures of support for democratic liberties and therefore was excluded from further analysis. Sex did play a role (independently of class and education) in the prediction of all three aspects of rejection or support for democratic liberties. Females were less supportive of democratic liberties than males, a finding consistent with that of Fagen and Tuohy. The differences, however, are significant but relatively minor. In an examination of the mean scores on each variable that formed the three scales of support for democracy, we found that in only one case—support for the right to vote of critics of the system—did the females score in the antidemocratic end of the continuum. In all other variables, even though females were more politically authoritarian than males, the mean scores of the females were supportive of democracy. One therefore should neither exaggerate the importance of sex in explaining these attitudes nor interpret these data to suggest that Mexican females are politically authoritarian.<sup>5</sup>

Education plays a key role in predicting support or rejection of

TABLE 4 *Final Step of Multiple Regression Analyses: Class, Education, and Sex as Predictors of Political Authoritarianism in Mexico*

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Simple r</i>
Widespread Participation (WP)	Class	.27	<.001	.32
	Sex	-.12	.015	-.23
		R = .34		
Support for the Right to Dissent (RD)	Education	.22	<.001	.27
	Sex	-.16	.002	-.22
		R = .31		
Opposition to Suppression of Democratic Liberties (OSDL)	Education	.26	<.001	.31
	Sex	-.16	.001	-.24
		R = .35		

civil liberties. As shown in table 4, education is the best predictor of support or rejection of both the right to dissent (RD) and of opposition to the suppression of democratic liberties (OSDL). In both of these indicators of authoritarianism, the presence of the education variable in the equation entirely overrides the impact of social class. Class thus completely vanishes as a significant predictor of support or rejection of democratic liberties, a finding consistent with the argument made some years ago by Lipsitz (1965), and accepted by Lipset (1981, 476–84). Education, rather than class, emerges as the key determinant for these two aspects of authoritarian or democratic attitudes. Class, however, remains the strongest predictor of support for widespread participation.

In sum, we have seen that social class is an important predictor of only one of the three dimensions of support for democratic liberties, support for widespread participation. For right to dissent and opposition to the suppression of democratic liberties, which are the more stringent tests of commitment to democratic liberties, education is the most powerful predictor. The data suggest that the degree to which Mexican workers are less supportive of democratic liberties than middle-class urban Mexicans stems from limited access to education, a structural limitation that is imposed upon the children of the poor but is not suffered by the offspring of the more affluent.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are disturbing because they challenge the validity of the connection that social scientists have long made between political culture and political structure. There was a time, especially during and immediately after World War II, when it appeared obvious to many observers that regime type was a direct outgrowth of what was

then called *national character* (Dicks 1950; Broderson 1957; Duijker and Frijda 1960). More sophisticated analyses have argued that political structure and culture have a reciprocal relationship in which each one serves to reinforce the other (Inkeles 1961; Martindale 1967; Lynn 1971). Gabriel Almond, who is generally considered to be the father of the study of political culture, in his most recent formulation argues for a “relaxed version of political culture theory,” which holds that “the relation between political structure and culture is interactive, that one cannot explain cultural propensities without reference to historical experience and contemporary structural constraints and opportunities, and that, in turn, a prior set of attitudinal patterns will tend to persist in some form and degree and for a significant period of time, despite efforts to transform it” (1983, 127).

Whether one accepts the earlier view of a direct causal linkage or Almond’s relaxed reciprocal view, culture and structure are seen as inextricably linked by students of political culture. Our analysis has failed to uncover that link and hence must call into question the theory. That is, our data have uncovered a largely democratic political culture within an essentially authoritarian regime; and it is difficult to understand how either one could be the cause of the other or how they could be mutually interacting. Admittedly, the data we have presented is limited to only one country, and the sample does not reflect its entire population. Yet, we believe that the findings are sufficiently clear to require us to attempt to explain them.

Our data suggest that one cannot explain the authoritarian nature of the political system of Mexico as the consequence of an authoritarian, mass political culture. If our data generally reflected the attitudes of the broader Mexican population, we could conclude that Mexicans strongly support basic civil liberties, a pattern far removed from the authoritarian political culture we had been led to believe exists in Mexico. We have demonstrated that on three separate dimensions, urban Mexicans of both middle- and working-class status demonstrated strong support for democratic liberties. Although when compared with data from New York, Mexicans’ opinion reflected slightly less allegiance to democratic civil liberties, our urban Mexicans were still distinctly prodemocratic. The relatively minor differences in these comparative attitudinal data could not begin to account for the vast systemic differences between the two polities.

Furthermore, within a number of separate subpopulations, we have failed to uncover evidence of majority support for antidemocratic attitudes in urban Mexico. We determined, however, that both those with less education and females were somewhat less supportive of democratic values than those who are better-educated and males, although the differences remain small. Finally, we found that social class

did play a role: working-class Mexicans supported democratic liberties significantly less than middle-class Mexicans, but only on one of the three dimensions, widespread participation. Educational level, not class status, appeared as the major differentiator of attitudes of support or rejection of democratic liberties on the two most crucial dimensions.

Having examined and rejected a direct link between authoritarian urban political culture and systemic authoritarianism in Mexico, we conclude that other explanatory factors require careful consideration. Environmental influences—particularly those linked to levels of economic development and to external dependencies—and structural factors—particularly class inequality, the party system, and the role of political elites—emerge as fertile fields for continued analysis. Both the preponderant weight of Mexican political tradition (a history of centralist and authoritarian rule predating the colonial era and continuing unbroken to the present) and the revolution appear to have given Mexico its contemporary authoritarian institutions.<sup>6</sup> External dependency, inequality, and poverty may reinforce continuously the product of this tradition, namely the contemporary Mexican state and party system.

Certain other less direct and more complex linkages between Mexico's elite-managed authoritarian rule and popular political culture may also be at work. Alba argues that Mexico's long-predominant liberals (agents of formally representative liberal constitutionalism and rhetorical supporters of democratic political values) have actually played a highly authoritarian role in the political system (1960, 406–45). For that reason, the Mexican citizen (whom Alba portrays as a prodemocratic, often participatory individualist) has democratic norms that harmonize with the current official political ideology, yet finds his or her actual participation constrained by structural authoritarianism. In a similar vein, Reyna (1977) believes that democratic values strengthen the existing system by supplying a citizenry that is relatively allegiant and cooperative, one therefore ideal for the manipulative participation that is so characteristic of the Mexican system of demand and conflict management. Several studies have shown how such elites manipulate various social sectors—the Mexican urban poor (Davis 1976; Eckstein 1977), peasantry (Varela 1979; Landsberger and Gierisch 1979), and labor union members (Handelman 1979). The system mobilizes the mass public into organizations integrated into and controlled by the PRI. The incorporation of such organizations into the party and state apparatus permits their regularized manipulation by the national elite at the same time that their members experience a certain amount of participation and limited policy influence. The public participation and demand-making that do occur (which are carefully managed by the PRI), plus official propaganda and socialization efforts all combine to promote popular support for civil liberties, even though much of what actually transpires

under such auspices is highly managed. The corporatist-populist elite of Mexico may in essence delude Mexicans into support for democratic values that simultaneously reinforce the system.

Thus, we encounter the paradox of a persistently authoritarian, yet popular, political system sustained by a prodemocratic citizenry. Mexicans, then, find themselves hoisted by their own petard, and their democratic attitudes may ironically both result from and help sustain the very authoritarian and undemocratic system under which they live.

#### NOTES

1. For useful reviews of the evolution of scholarly interpretations of Mexico, see Needleman and Needleman (1969) and Koslow and Mumme (1977). Among those treating Mexico as authoritarian are Alba (1960, 1967), Brandenburg (1964), Carrión (1970), González Casanova (1970), Hansen (1971), Córdova (1972), Cosío Villegas (1972), Stevens (1974), Purcell (1975), Coleman and Davis (1975), Padgett (1976), Eckstein (1977), Hellman (1978), Johnson (1978), Smith (1979), Coleman et al. (1980), Craig and Cornelius (1980), Véliz (1980).
2. An excellent review of much of this literature is found in Craig and Cornelius (1980, 342–55).
3. A factor-analytic validation of the three measures revealed that they formed three distinct factors. All factor loadings for variables that loaded on a given factor were between .44 and .83. The three factors together explain 61.7 percent of the variance.
4. One should note, however, that the findings on working-class authoritarianism have been challenged on methodological grounds (Rokeach 1960; Kirscht and Dillehay 1967; Altemeyer 1981, pp. 13–146). Fortunately, however, our indices largely avoid the serious problems of social-desirability response set that plagued earlier efforts to measure democratic and authoritarian values. The problem of social-desirability response set is avoided in our indices because the questions employed were self-anchoring and phrased so as to neutralize possible response bias for either negative or positive alternatives. Altemeyer's (1981) impressive effort to devise a new authoritarianism scale, valuable though the scale ultimately may prove to be, is not directly applicable to our research because it measures attitudes toward sex, crime, feminism, etc., as well as attitudes toward political authoritarianism.
5. For further elaboration on the values of Mexican females, see Aranda (1976). In Latin America in general, there is some evidence of a more politically conservative stance among women. For example, Chaney (1974) and Neuse (1978) discuss the role that women played in eroding Allende's electoral and popular base.
6. See Alba (1960, 1967); Sierra (1969); Cosío Villegas (1972); Paz (1972); Véliz (1980).

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