Studying Elite *vs* Mass Opinion

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INTRODUCTION: THE ELITE CONCEPT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF PUBLIC OPINION

Power and elites are universal social phenomena. The distinction between elites and non-elites is therefore an important aspect of social analysis. The fathers of elite theory, Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca (cf. Bottomore, 1993), conceptualized power as dichotomous and therefore assumed the existence of a clear distinction between elites and non-elites (or 'the masses'). While this crude distinction may be an acceptable simplification of social reality for studying ancient and feudal societies in which power was concentrated in the hands of a small hereditary nobility, it is certainly a gross misrepresentation of the character of modern democratic societies. These societies are not only characterized by a more or less continuous distribution of power, but also by the lack of a single center of (political) power and a high degree of horizontal differentiation.

In pluralist societies, power and influence are based on a variety of resources. The most important of these are political authority, judicial discretion, economic power, academic or administrative expertise and, last but not least, influence on public opinion. Moreover, while intra-organizational power relations can be assumed to follow the model of a clearly defined hierarchy of power, such a model is certainly unrealistic with respect to inter-organizational interactions, which involve multilateral bargaining on a more or less equal footing. This is especially true for political decision making, which routinely involves a broad set of political institutions as well as public and private organizations (public administrations, political parties, voluntary associations, private businesses, mass media, academic institutions, etc.). It also implies the existence of a free market of ideas and associations, considerable conflict over what collective goals should be, and a pluralist elite structure (cf. Aron, 1950; Keller, 1963).

Elites are customarily defined as incumbents of leadership positions in powerful political institutions and private organizations who, by virtue of their control of intra-organizational power resources, are able to influence important (political) decisions. They belong to the small stratum of top (political) influentials who are part of a more

or less inclusive elite network. In modern democracies, this network does not have any clearly demarcated outer boundaries, but instead influence levels off as we move from more central to more peripheral actors. Moreover, the composition of the network of relevant actors depends on the subject matter at stake, and it is also not invariant over time.

Because of their regular involvement in public affairs, elites are generally more knowledgeable about politics than non-elites (or the general public). This is due to their greater interest in public affairs, their regular interactions with the elites of other organizations, and their involvement in elite bargaining over public policies. It can therefore be assumed that the value orientations and political attitudes of elites differ from those of the broader public. For studying the determinants of public opinion formation, it is thus not sufficient to rely exclusively on public opinion surveys. Instead, complementary data on elites are required as well.

SURVEYING ELITES WITH STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRES

While general population surveys based on probability samples are well-established, a great deal of skepticism continues to prevail with respect to the possibility of surveying elites with structured questionnaires. Many scholars have claimed that elites are unwilling to reveal their true beliefs, and also resent structured questionnaires because they feel that the differentiated nature of their political views cannot be adequately captured by questions with fixed-choice options. It has therefore frequently been assumed that elite interviewing requires a different approach, thus making elite–mass comparisons inherently difficult if not impossible.

However, the sheer number of elite surveys that have been conducted in a variety of countries does not support such an assertion. Experience shows that only few elite respondents refuse to accept structured questionnaires. On the contrary: missing values due to *don't knows* or refusals are generally lower among elite respondents (cf. Wildenmann, Kaase, Hoffmann-Lange, Kutteroff, & Wolf, 1982, p. 20; Czudnowski, 1987; Sinclair & Brady, 1987). Response rates are generally somewhat lower, though; this is primarily because elites are busy people and have little spare time for lengthy interviews even if they are willing to participate in a survey. Time constraints as well as distrust in either the purpose of the research or the trustworthiness of the researcher may therefore contribute to less than satisfactory response rates. Thus, organizing the field-work for elite surveys requires more efforts in explaining the purpose of the research to potential respondents, making appointments and actually completing the interviews. Response rates also vary considerably depending on the elite sector involved. While response rates among parliamentarians come close to those of general population surveys, they tend to be much lower among business elites, military elites and religious leaders, let alone politically dissatisfied *counter-elites* (Wagstaffe & Moyser, 1987).

Compared to public opinion surveys, elite surveys have been relatively rare, and the number of studies that have included both elite and non-elite respondents is even smaller. Moreover, most of the latter surveys have been limited to comparing parliamentarians and voters in established democracies. Without denying the merits of such studies, it is obvious that more comprehensive elite surveys, including a larger set of elites from a broad spectrum of sectors, are needed to gain insight into the differentiated nature of elite beliefs. Unfortunately, such studies have been rare, and empirical evidence is therefore limited. The most favorable situation exists for Germany, where two comprehensive surveys were conducted in 1981 and 1995, involving interviews with both a broad spectrum of German top elites and a cross-section of the general population (Hoffmann-Lange, 1992; Bürklin & Rebenstorf, 1997). Additionally, a number of community studies have also included surveys of elites as well as voters (e.g. for Germany: Arzberger, 1980; for Great Britain: Parry, Moyser, & Day, 1992).

Finally, two American attitude surveys on civil libertarianism provide relevant data on elite and non-elite attitudes (McClosky & Brill, 1983; Lock, 1999).

THE ELITE THEORY OF DEMOCRACY: ELITES, NON-ELITES AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC VALUES

The breakdown of democracy in a number of western European countries in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as public opinion research, have shattered optimistic expectations regarding the existence of high levels of support for democratic values among mass publics. Opinion surveys comparing political activists and political leaders to the electorate at large have regularly shown that elites have a much better understanding of basic democratic values and their implications for everyday life. Herbert McClosky's study, which compared the democratic value orientations of convention delegates and voters, showed for instance that while support for fundamental principles of democracy (universal suffrage, free and competitive elections, majority rule) was nearly universal among both political elites and the general public, support for some of the less obvious institutional implications of these democratic principles was much lower among the general public than among the elites (McClosky, 1964). These included the rule of law, the protection of civil liberties and minority rights, political equality, the right to organized opposition, party competition, a free market economy, etc. McClosky therefore concluded that it is the elites who should be considered as the main carriers of the *democratic creed*. Later surveys in the US and other countries have confirmed his conclusions. Based on these results, the *elite theory of democracy* concluded that the stability of democracy rests primarily on the existence of an elite consensus on democratic rules of the game.

The differences between elites and mass publics have been explained by several factors. The most important among them is the higher educational level of elites, which implies a longer exposure to civic education. Other authors have argued that elites enjoy a more secure social status and can therefore afford to be more tolerant of deviant minorities. Finally, it has been assumed that elites are inclined to support the existing political order for obvious reasons, since this order provides the basis of their superior social status, regardless of whether this order is a democratic or a non-democratic one. The latter argument especially has far-reaching theoretical ramifications, because it implies that elites in autocratic societies should be less supportive of democratic values, even if they are highly educated. A summary of these arguments can be found in McClosky and Brill (1983), as well as in Lock (1999).

Civil libertarianism

While relatively few studies have dealt directly with democratic value orientations, the available evidence from elite surveys in a variety of democratic countries confirms that elites show more support for civil libertarianism than the public at large. The two most elaborate studies on civil libertarianism were conducted in the US and surveyed a broad spectrum of elites (McClosky & Brill, 1983; Lock, 1999). In the introduction to their comprehensive volume, McClosky and Brill argued that tolerance is not an innate human trait, but rather a posture that has to be learned (McClosky & Brill, 1983, pp. 13–24).[1] This assumption was tested by not only studying elite–mass differences, but also by performing separate analyses for several specialized elite groups, among them lawyers, leaders of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and police officers. The study showed that the elite groups were generally much more supportive of civil liberties than the mass public. This held true for a broad range of attitude questions, from support for freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and the guarantee of due process all the way to the right to privacy and personal lifestyle.

The authors identified four explanatory factors that accounted for these attitudinal

differences between elites and the general public. The first factor is the elites' socialization into the dominant values of American democracy acquired through formal education. This explains why elites are on average more supportive of civil liberties than the general public. A second factor is the socializing effect of elites' participation in public affairs. It explains why political activists are more tolerant of deviating opinions than their non-active counterparts. Professional norms are a third factor. Defense lawyers who were professionally engaged in protecting the rights of their clients were the second most libertarian group, only surpassed by the activists of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). On the other hand, police officers took a more restrictive stance and tended to attribute primacy to upholding law and order. Finally, political ideology was also related to civil libertarianism. Respondents with high scores on (economic) conservatism measures were less supportive of civil liberties than those with liberal policy preferences.

Shmuel Lock's (1999) more recent study partly supports and partly challenges the earlier results of McClosky and Brill (1983).[2] Lock found that lawyers as well as non-elite respondents with higher educational levels and higher levels of political information showed more support for civil liberties, albeit the differences he found between lawyers and ordinary citizens were not as great as might have been expected on the basis of previous studies. Moreover, it turned out that the level of political information was more important than formal education. Lock also studied the effects of an important mediating factor that had not been taken into account earlier, namely the beliefs of respondents about the root causes of crime. Those who believed that crime is caused by inequality of opportunities, and that the judicial system is biased against members of underprivileged minorities, were more supportive of civil liberties. Finally, Lock's data also show an impact of the more conservative political climate of the 1990s. Even lawyers and political knowledgeables with otherwise libertarian attitudes tended to approve of a number of recent Supreme Court decisions curtailing the rights of the accused and strengthening law enforcement.

Lock's study confirmed previous results as far as the more civil libertarian attitudes of elites are concerned. It also showed, however, that political reality is more muddled than had been assumed. Political and judicial decision-making frequently involves a conflict between civil libertarian values and the perceived necessity of upholding law and order. Lock's questionnaire asked respondents specifically how they felt about a number of issues that implied a conflict between the rights of the accused and the protection of public safety. This may explain why the differences between elites and non-elites were less pronounced in his study than in previous ones.

The conflict over *civil liberties* and *law and order* is deeply rooted in virtually all democratic party systems. It distinguishes leftist and liberal parties on one side from conservative parties on the other. As the empirical results show, the general public is much more *conservative* than the elites in this respect, even if party affiliation is being controlled for. This is probably due to the fact that elites are more inclined to accept the public expression of dissent because they are themselves regularly involved in policy disputes. They are therefore less inclined to curtail civil liberties for the sake of public order.

Competing conceptions of democracy: Representative vs plebiscitary democracy and the role of government

In the late 1960s, activists of the students' movement as well as a number of younger social scientists were the first to raise entirely new questions regarding the quality of democracy in western democratic societies. Having grown up during an extended period of political stability following World War II, they were no longer as preoccupied with the stability of democracy as the members of preceding generations, because they took it for granted. Instead, they started to dispute the narrow

conception of representative democracy institutionalized in the constitutions of their countries and demanded more participation rights for ordinary citizens. Ronald Inglehart's theory of postmaterialism (1977, 1990) aptly explains the causes and the impact of these new political demands. Inglehart has argued that among the cohorts whose members have been socialized after World War II under conditions of economic affluence and political security, materialist value priorities have increasingly been replaced by postmaterialist ones. He also expects this development to be strongest among the most highly educated segments of the younger generation.

There is a wealth of data confirming Inglehart's hypothesis that age and educational level are the strongest predictors of postmaterialist value orientations in mass publics. Since most elites have completed a secondary or even tertiary degree, we should therefore expect postmaterialism to be even more prevalent among elites. The two German elite surveys of 1981 and 1995 confirm this expectation. However, due to the very high average educational level of the elites, the impact of education on postmaterialist value orientations is negligible at the elite level. At the same time, the degree of postmaterialism is more strongly related to political ideology and party preference (Hoffmann-Lange, 1992, p. 277; Bürklin & Rebenstorf, 1997, pp. 374–379). The percentage of postmaterialists is disproportionately higher among elites with leftist policy preferences. At the same time, the impact of age on postmaterialist value orientations is as strong among elites as it is among the electorate at large. A slow, but steady replacement of older, more materialistic cohorts by more postmaterialistic ones can therefore be expected in the future within both elites and the public.

One essential element of postmaterialism is support for 'more influence for citizens on governmental decision making.' It is therefore not surprising that postmaterialist value orientations and the dissatisfaction with traditional elite-dominated representative democracy are closely related. *Postmaterialists* tend to advocate the introduction of direct democratic instruments (voter initiatives, referenda, recalls, and the like) more often than *materialists*. They are also more prone to engage in *elite-challenging* modes of political participation.

Among elites, support for participatory democracy is closely related to cohort membership and party preference. Younger German elites and those supporting political parties of the left (SPD, PDS, Green Party) or the liberal FDP show greater support for direct democracy than those with a preference for the conservative Christian Democratic Party (Bürklin & Rebenstorf, 1997, pp. 391–419).

Elite–mass comparisons, however, show that overall support for participatory democracy is somewhat higher among the voters than among the elites, even if cohort membership and party preference are controlled for. This indicates the existence of a conflict of interest between elites and ordinary citizens. Elites have a natural interest in protecting their freedom of action by reducing non-elite involvement in decision making, while citizens emphasize the need for controlling elite actions.

The new central-eastern and eastern European democracies are especially pertinent cases for studying elite–mass differences in the meanings associated with the concept of democracy. Miller, Hesli, and Reisinger (1997) found that elites in Russia and the Ukraine tend to emphasize different aspects of democracy than the electorate. While elites associate democracy primarily with the rule of law, voters tend to associate it with individual freedom. The elites also favor a market economy (individual rather than government responsibility for employment, economic reforms, acceptance of socioeconomic inequality) to a much higher degree, while voters tend to emphasize governmental responsibility for the economy and for social security instead. Data for East Germany confirm that support for a strong welfare state is generally higher among the electorates of post-communist countries than among those in established liberal democracies. Longstanding experience with a paternalistic state has obviously shaped the preferences of the eastern

European mass publics. While they cherish their newly won political liberties, they still expect government to take responsibility for the economic well being of the populace.

At the same time, data from the two German elite studies conducted in the mid-1990s mentioned above show that East German elites are more skeptical regarding the benefits of an unfettered market economy than the elites in the other two post-communist countries as well as the bulk of West German elites (Welzel, 1997; Rohrschneider, 1999). However, since economic policy positions are closely related to party preference, the overall distribution of answers to these questions depends to a considerable degree on the partisan composition of the elite sample which, in turn, is determined by the electoral strengths of the different political parties. These may vary considerably from one electoral term to the next. Without sufficiently large elite samples that can be broken down by political party, it is therefore not possible to draw any definite conclusions regarding the existing spectrum of policy positions in different countries.

STUDIES OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION: COMPARING PARLIAMENTARIANS AND VOTERS

In 1963, Warren Miller and Donald Stokes published a groundbreaking article on political representation in the US. Their analysis started out from a theoretical distinction between three different normative models of political representation: the *trustee model*, the model of the *instructed delegate*, and the *responsible party model*. The trustee model is based on Edmund Burke's notion of a free mandate and demands that deputies should follow their own judgments of what they consider to be in the best interest of the country, even if these are not in line with the actual preferences of their voters. This model implies a great deal of discretion on the part of the deputies, and of trust in the deputies' good judgment on the part of the electorate. Conversely, the model of instructed delegate requires deputies to act in line with the policy preferences of their voters, regardless of their own preferences. The responsible party model, finally, is based on the assumption that representation is achieved through the collective efforts of political parties to aggregate the interests of their followers into coherent policy programs, which they try to implement once they come to power. In this model, political parties serve as mediators of representation, resulting in shared policy preferences of deputies and voters. Moreover, deputies are also considered to represent only the voters of their own parties rather than the electorate at large.

In order to determine which of these models governed the actual roll call behaviors of members of the House of Representatives, Miller and Stokes (1963) developed an elaborate research design, their famous diamond. Based on opinion surveys among members of the House and voters, their questionnaire included indicators for three independent variables: the policy preferences of the voters, the representatives' preferences and the representatives' perceptions of their constituents' preferences. In their analysis, the authors tried to determine how these three independent variables affected the roll call behavior of the deputies on a number of policy issues (see Figure 5.1).

Miller and Stokes (1963) found that different models of representation explained the roll call behavior, depending on the specific issue at stake. In foreign policy matters, deputies mostly followed the trustee model, i.e. they voted according to their own political preferences, regardless of their constituents' preferences. Moreover, their perceptions of constituency preferences were frequently inaccurate. In matters of social welfare, roll call behavior instead conformed to the responsible party model. The deputies' positions on these issues as well as their roll call behavior were generally in line with their party affiliations. At the same time, the deputies' own preferences mostly coincided with the preferences of the electoral majority in their constituencies. This congruence was reflected in more accurate perceptions of their

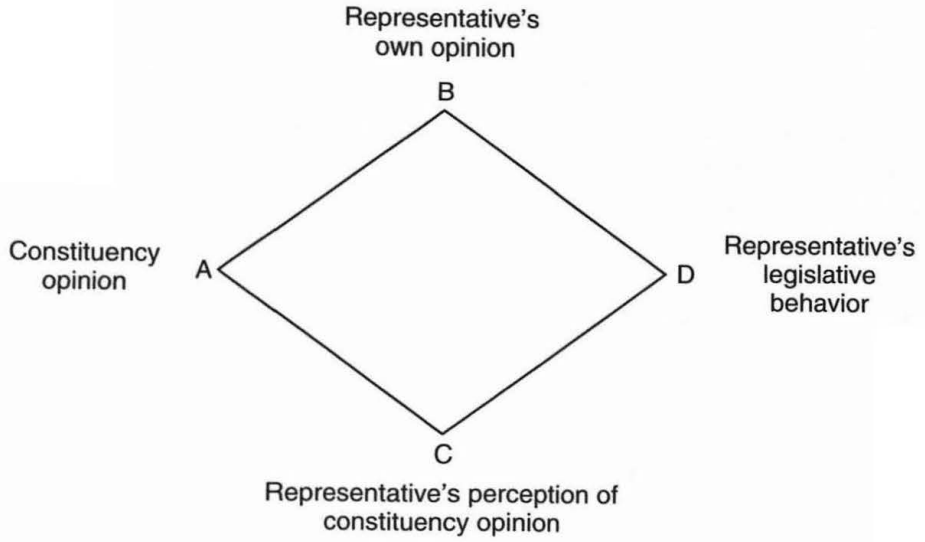

Figure 5.1 The Miller/Stokes diamond of constituency representation
Source: Adapted from Miller and Stokes (1963, p. 50). Reprinted by permission of Cambridge University Press: American Political Science Review, vol. 57, pp. 45–56

constituents' preferences. Finally, in matters of civil rights, deputies mostly followed the instructed delegate model. They voted according to the perceived policy preferences of their constituencies even if their own preferences were different.

Taking the same theoretical framework as a starting point, similar representation studies were later conducted in France (Converse & Pierce, 1986), Germany (Farah, 1980), Italy (Barnes, 1977), the Netherlands (Thomassen, 1976), and Sweden (Essaiason & Holmberg, 1996). However, the research design, which made sense in the American context of a presidential system with plurality elections in single-member districts and a strong emphasis on constituency-based representation, was not well suited to these other countries. Unlike the United States, all of them are parliamentary democracies in which parliamentary votes are characterized by a high degree of party discipline. The original design of comparing constituency voters to constituency deputies does not make much sense under these conditions. Moreover, Italy,[3] the Netherlands and Sweden use proportional electoral systems with multi-member districts. This precludes constituency-based comparisons. Finally, roll call votes are rarely taken in parliamentary democracies. Thus, the subsequent studies also lacked the dependent variable of the American study.

The authors therefore had to change the focus of their analyses to studying the degree of congruence in policy preferences among the deputies and voters of the same party. This *dyadic correspondence* (Dalton, 1985) was then interpreted as indicator of the quality of representation for a particular political party in a particular country. For most of the issues studied, the data showed a very low degree of congruence. Systematic variations according to country, issue, and party were not very pronounced either. The single exception was a much higher congruence for the small political parties of the extreme left and right.

In a volume summarizing the results of the entire set of studies, Roy Pierce (1999) explained the low level of dyadic correspondence among deputies and voters in the European democracies by referring to the complexity of the multi-party systems of these countries. Ironically, and contrary to the theoretical expectations, attitude congruence among deputies and voters of the same party turned out to be higher in the American two-party system, even though party discipline is considerably lower in the US Congress. Pierce therefore concluded that political representation in continental European countries with

multi-party systems does not conform to the responsible party model, at least as far as specific issue positions are concerned. He suspected that representation in these countries is based on ideology rather than particular policies, and that the left–right continuum is serving as a kind of 'super-issue' instead.

One interesting final result was the lack of any relationship between attitude congruence and citizen satisfaction. This indicates that other aspects of representation are obviously more relevant, thus giving elected representatives a good deal of latitude in making policy decisions.

THE POLARIZATION THESIS

Disagreement over policies is the essence of politics, and differences in the positions of political parties on policy issues provide empirical evidence of the degree of political polarization in a party system. In this vein, data on the political attitudes of elites and non-elites can also be used to study the degree of attitudinal polarization at the level of both party leaders and party supporters. Studies that have looked into such differences have frequently found that the policy positions of politicians and party activists are much more polarized than those of the party voters. This pattern was first described by McClosky, Hoffman, and O'Hara (1960), and has been confirmed by other studies in the US and West Germany (Jackson, Brown, & Bositis, 1982; Hoffmann-Lange, 1992).

McClosky *et al.* (1960) were also the first to point out the theoretical implications of these findings. They contradict the assumption that elites represent the policy preferences of the voters, instead suggesting that things might actually be the other way round. 'Little support was found for the belief that deep cleavages exist among the electorate but are ignored by the leaders. One might, indeed more accurately assert the contrary, to wit: that the natural cleavages between the leaders are largely ignored by the voters' (p. 426). This view is also consistent with Philip Converse's (1964) influential article on the belief systems of mass publics, in which he demonstrated that the political knowledge and sophistication of most voters is rather low, and that their attitudes on specific policies show little ideological constraint and are not stable over time.

The prevalence of *non-attitudes* in the general population supports the conclusion that the *silent majority* is not silent because of a lack of opportunities to make itself heard, but primarily because it does not have much to say after all. Many democratic theorists have therefore assumed that it is the political elites who develop the political agendas which will then be adopted or rejected by the voters (Schumpeter, 1942).

However, the empirical evidence does not justify the assumption that the political attitudes of party elites are always more polarized than those of voters. Based on Dutch data, Galen Irwin and Jacques Thomassen (1975) demonstrated that multi-party systems may produce different empirical configurations, depending on the format of the party system and the issues at stake. While greater polarization at the elite level generally prevails for issues related to traditional party ideologies, novel issues may produce different patterns. In the early 1980s, for instance, West German voters were much more divided over the use of nuclear energy than the West Germany parties. While a significant minority of more than 10% of the voters were in favor of closing down all existing nuclear power plants and only slightly more than a third favored new constructions, the great majority of the (political) elites favored new constructions and only a tiny minority opted for closing down the existing plants. Even though there was some disagreement between the political parties over the amount of nuclear power needed for satisfying future energy demands, its continued use was not controversial among elites. This reflected a deep-seated concern among voters about the safety of nuclear reactors, while the elites took a much more sanguine stance.

Many studies have also demonstrated the existence of elite–mass displacement on important issues (Putnam, 1976, p. 118).

As reported above, support for civil liberties is much higher among elites, while support for the welfare state and direct democracy is higher among non-elites. Voters also tend to place themselves more to the right on the left–right continuum than party elites, as Russell Dalton (1985, pp. 275–277) found in his comparative analysis of candidates and voters for the European parliament.

Moreover, Holmberg's (1991) analysis of political representation in Sweden demonstrates that these patterns may change over time. Comparing data on members of the Swedish Riksdag and Swedish voters at two points in time, it turned out that issue attitudes were characterized by an elite–mass displacement in 1968/1969, but that the elites of the bourgeois parties had moved to the right by 1985, thus producing a higher level of polarization among the political elites. Holmberg's data also show a linear relationship between the degree of attitudinal polarization and the level of political activity. Of the four groups included in the analysis (namely party voters, party members, party activists, members of the Riksdag), party voters held the most centrist views and members of the Riksdag the most polarized ones (pp. 313–314). This contradicts the widespread assumption of a curvilinear relationship between political status and attitudinal polarization that expects attitudinal polarization to be highest among party activists.

Recent studies on partisan polarization in the US confirm these assumptions. In his book *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, Fiorina (2005) refutes the widespread assumption that today's American electorate is deeply polarized over values and moral issues such as abortion and homosexuality. Instead, he argues that this inaccurate picture of deep polarization between the red and the blue states reflects the fact that 'the thin stratum of elected officials, political professionals, and party and issue activists who talk to the media are indeed more distinct, more ideological, and more polarized than those of a generation ago' (p. 28). While Fiorina did not provide empirical evidence to support this claim in his book, he later referred to a *New York Times* Poll conducted in 2004 that had revealed a 72 percentage point difference on the question of 'active government' between Democratic and Republican convention delegates, while the difference between Democrats and Republicans in the population at large was only 13 percentage points (www.vailvalleyinstitute.org/amdiv/Fiorina.html).[4] These data confirm that elite and voter attitudes vary independently of each other. It can be assumed, though, that they influence each other in complex ways that still need to be studied in more detail.

CONCLUSION

Even though most of the studies discussed in this chapter have been conducted in a rather small number of socio-economically developed democratic countries, some general conclusions can be drawn from the available empirical evidence. First, the substantial differences found between elites and non-elites indicate that elite (political) culture is an object of study in its own right. The value orientations and political attitudes of elites cannot simply be inferred from general population surveys. Instead, special elite surveys are needed to compare elite opinions to (general) public opinion. Second, all of the studies have confirmed the tremendous impact of formal education on the opinion-formation of individuals. Higher educational levels do not only foster interest and involvement in social and political affairs: a higher level of (political) information also implies that citizens have a better understanding of the way social and political institutions work, and of the interrelations that exist between specific policy issues and more abstract values and ideologies.

This is not the whole story, though, since elites are not only distinguished by their much higher average education, but also by their professional backgrounds and experiences. Lawyers are on average much more supportive of civil liberties than other elites,

let alone the general public. Journalists are another professional group whose members are generally more libertarian in their outlook, because of the mass media's function of providing information on social and political developments which, in turn, is the basis for an effective public control of government actions. The 'liberal media bias' denounced by the American Media Research Center (see also Lichter, Rothman, & Lichter, 1986) can therefore not be considered a conspiracy of the media against a silent, much more conservative majority, but rather as resulting from the role of the media, which requires a critical stance of journalists vis-à-vis the established structures of social and political power.

Finally, the available evidence confirms that neither elites nor non-elites should be considered as cohesive groups. Instead, both are internally divided according to age, education, political ideology, party affiliation, and professional background. Not much is therefore to be further gained by simply comparing elites to non-elites. Instead, more differentiated analyses are needed that take into account those additional factors.

NOTES

1 McClosky and Brill's study was based on two different mail surveys, the Civil Liberties Survey (CLS) of 1978–1979 and the Opinion and Values Survey (OVS) of 1976–1977. These surveys encompassed representative population samples of 1,993 and 938 respondents respectively, as well as elite samples. The elite component of the CLS survey included 1,891 community leaders from government, colleges, the press, the clergy, the police, schools, labor unions, other voluntary organizations and the legal profession (lawyers and judges). For the OVS survey 2,987 national elite respondents were interviewed, who had been randomly drawn from the membership lists of 23 national organizations and two sub-samples from the *Who's Who*. Both surveys covered a large number of attitudinal questions.

The Opinion and Values Survey focused on political ideologies, the Civil Liberties Survey on attitudes toward civil liberties (1983, pp. 25–31). Taken together, this huge project is the most comprehensive survey of opinion-leaders conducted to date, even though it cannot be regarded as elite study in the strict sense. The focus was on opinion-leaders rather than holders of powerful positions.

2 Lock's study encompassed a telephone survey of the adult population ($n = 811$) and a mail survey of 410 lawyers.

3 Italy introduced single-member electoral districts for its lower house only in the 1990s.

4 A report on the marginals for this survey is posted on the web: www.nytimes.com/packages/html/politics/20040829_gop_poll/2004_gop_results.pdf. The full wording for the item quoted by Fiorina (2005) was: 'Which comes closer to your view: Government should do more to solve national problems; or Government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals?' Support for the first position was 79% among the Democratic delegates, 7% among the GOP delegates, 48% among Democratic voters and 35% among GOP voters (p. 6).

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