

1963 *The Civic Culture:
Political Attitudes
and Democracy in
Five Nations*

Gabriel A. Almond
and Sidney Verba

What attitudes sustain successful democracy? How can its features be replicated? Using surveys and interviews conducted in Britain and the United States (as examples of successful democracies)

and Germany, Mexico, and Italy (as examples of developing democracies), Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba attempted to answer these questions and, by doing so, to get to the heart of democratic political culture. They argued that the most distinctive characteristic of political life in the twentieth century was the newfound political power of the ordinary citizen.

The Civic Culture represented the best early fruit of a new research agenda in political science—focusing on the attitudes and behavior of ordinary citizens. Following its lead, political scientists began to replace their previous inclination to conduct largely legal studies of formal political institutions with a concern for how individuals related to the political system in formal and informal ways. Seminal books like *The Civic Culture* spawned a generation of comparative research that changed the way political scientists studied politics at home and abroad. It continues to influence work on civic engagement and democratization. Robert Putnam, the author of *Bowling Alone*, has said of *The Civic Culture*, “Few books in political science of the last three or four decades have had the impact and continuing power of *The Civic Culture*.” The late Aaron Wildavsky said, “*The Civic Culture* remains the best study of comparative political culture in our time.”

