
CHAPTER 1:

CULTURE AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Given that individuals find themselves in different social contexts in different areas of their lives, the interesting question is how they cope with this situation. Is there a strain towards consistency of the individuals or do individuals compartmentalize the rival ways of life? The challenge for future research lies in specifying the conditions under which one is more likely than the other.

- *Cultural Theory* by Thompson, Wildavsky & Ellis (1990, p.266)

This thesis is an investigation of some central and unclear aspects of cultural theory¹. The role of context and its relation to cultures and the individual is still an open question in cultural theory. My questions are simply, do we as individuals have **one** - and only one - cultural bias, several cultural biases that are **sequentially** organized, or several cultural biases that are **synthesized** together in the individual?

Within cultural theory there exists an internal debate about the relationship

¹ Just for clarification, I will use **cultural theory**, capitalized or not, to refer to the grid-group theory in its general form as put forth by Mary Douglas, Aaron Wildavsky, Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, Karl Drake, Steve, Rayner, Per Selle, Gunnar Grendstad and others. Whereas *Cultural Theory*, in italics, will always refer to the book by Thompson, Wildavsky and Ellis (1990). In my notes I will often refer to *Cultural Theory* simply by *CT*.

between the individual and culture.² I take my starting point in this unclear relation between the individual and culture, and present **three specifications** of cultural theory: The Coherent Individual, The Sequential Individual and The Synthetic Individual. These three specifications differ in the way individuals' cultural biases are effected by **context**, and in the way **rejection** of a cultural bias is treated. Coherent individuals' cultural bias is stable and determined by the context. Sequential individuals shift from supporting one cultural bias to supporting another when the context changes. The synthetic individual's cultural bias is a put together from several cultural biases, and is not coherent even if it is the same in all contexts. Another important difference is in how they treat **rejection** or dislike of a culture. In the Coherent Individual Approach the individual supports one culture and rejects all the others by default. In Sequential Individual Approach the individual supports several cultural biases, one at a time, and either rejects or is indifferent towards the cultural biases that she does not support. In the Synthetic Individual Approach the individual supports or rejects all four cultural biases in different degrees. These three specifications could be essentially different theories, since they differ in such crucial aspects.

In the **first chapter** I will give a short introduction to cultural theory³, discuss the role that the individual's multiple cultural biases and rejections of cultural biases have in the theory, and then present my three specifications of cultural theory:

² Grendstad & Selle (1994) describe this debate as a result of vertical conflation, since the unit of analysis is unclear. Some authors claim that cultural theory is about socialized individuals (Dake and Wildavsky, 1992) and others see cultural theory as a theory about organizations (Rayner, 1992). Until now the major positions have been described as coherent individual, and its opposite, coherent culture.

³ The readers who wish a more thorough presentation can refer to Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky (1990) or Grendstad and Selle (1995).

The Coherent Individual, The Sequential Individual and Synthetic Individual

Approaches. In the **second chapter** I will present my research design and the survey I use as data material, develop an apparatus of measurement for cultural biases and examine their reliability and validity.

In each of the **three following chapters**, I will run the same analysis based on different specifications, (i.e., Coherent, Sequential, and Synthetic) of the relation between individual and culture. Theoretical assumptions and expectations constrain the analyses in different ways. Therefore none of the analyses alone can give an answer to all questions, and yet each specification must be evaluated on its own premises. To **examine** each of these specifications, it is necessary to use statistical analyses that resemble the **structure** of the current specification to see how the data could have been created by mechanisms described by just this version of the theory. Each of these parallel analyses contains several parts: First, I will make an operationalization of individuals' cultural biases based on the apparatus of measurement developed in the second chapter; Second, I will illustrate cultural biases through some common sociodemographic background variables like age, level of education, and social position. (this will also serve as a check for the operationalization, since we know more about sociodemographics than cultural biases); Third, I shall explore respondents' cultural biases helps us to understand their party preferences. Here I study the effect that cultural biases have on individuals' other preferences. These three analytical chapters can also be adressed as an showcase of cultural theory and the different specifications.

The **last chapter** contains a discussion and evaluation of these empirical

analyses and their underlying assumptions. I hope that these analyses can prove to be an improvement to the unspecified view of the individual's relation to culture found in *Cultural Theory*.

1.1 Introduction to Cultural Theory

Cultural theory was originally founded by anthropologist Mary Douglas and later applied to political science by Aaron Wildavsky. I will present, and use later, the version of cultural theory found in the central work, *Cultural Theory*, by Thompson, Wildavsky and Ellis (1990). Sometimes I will refer to other writers and their versions to show problems, conflicts and areas that still lack a consensus.

The use of some concepts in cultural theory differs from their 'normal' usage. To clarify my use of concepts here I want to present some definitions used in *Cultural Theory*:

Cultural bias refers to shared values and beliefs. *Social relations* are defined as patterns of interpersonal relations. When we wish to designate a viable combination of social relations and cultural bias we speak of a *way of life* (CT, p. 1).

Cultural theory is based on the notion that our social relations have an effect on **cultural bias**, i.e., our shared values and attitudes, and vice versa; our values and attitudes have an effect on our social relations. In other words, there is a reciprocal relationship between social relations and cultural bias.⁴ Those combinations of cultural bias and social relations that support each other are viable and called **ways of**

⁴ In *CT* the authors claim that this relationship is functional as defined by Jon Elster (CT 200-210), but it can be shown that the theory does not full fill all of Elster's criteria for a functional relationship (Harald Grimen, in Grendstad and Selle's *Kulturer som levemåter*, 1996)

life, or cultures. Cultural biases have many different facets. One can see them as values and opinions legitimating certain social relations; as world-views defining concepts like nature, society and human nature; or as schemas providing shortcuts to opinions and solutions in different problems (*CT*, p.1, 27,58).

According to the theory, our **social relations** can be presented with the help of two dimensions, **grid and group**:

Group refers to the extent to which an individual is incorporated into bounded units. The greater the incorporation, the more individual choice is subject to group determination. *Grid* denotes the degree to which an individual's life is circumscribed by externally imposed prescriptions. The more binding and extensive the scope of prescriptions, the less of life is open to individual negotiation. (*CT*, p.5)⁵

Membership in a strong **group** gives people their identity. An important characteristic of a group is the clarity and exclusiveness of membership, i.e. the strength of the group boundaries (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p.138). In a strong group there is no doubt about who is a member and who is not, the boundaries around the group are high and the individual is bounded by the group decisions, and spends large parts of her⁶ day within the group boundaries (*CT*, p. 5). When there are well-defined boundaries between us and the outside world, it is a strong group. Examples of organizations with strong group boundaries, or high group⁷, could be a convent or a commune.

Grid is referring to the strength of the prescriptions (i.e., rules) and the proportion of our lives they encompass. Many inflexible rules concerning a large proportion of

⁵ *Cultural Theory* takes its basic definitions of grid and group from Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1970), viii. (*CT*, p.100)

⁶ For the sake of simplicity I shall use her to refer to both genders instead of his/her .

⁷ It is common to refer to a strong group as a high group, since group is also a dimension. Thus a strong group has a high value on the group dimension.

one's life can be characterized as a situation with strong, or high, grid. Both a commune and a convent have strong group boundaries, i.e., high grid, but they differ in the origin and number of rules; in the convent the rules are many, given by the religion and interpreted by the leader, whereas in the commune there are few rules, and they are made by the members. So in the first case, the rules are externally prescribed over the members, whereas in the second case the rules are a result of negotiation between the members. The convent is thus high grid-high group, and the commune low grid-high group. In this manner grid and group are two separate dimensions of social control:

Individual choice [...] may be constricted either through requiring that a person be bound by group decisions or by demanding that individuals follow the rules accompanying their station in life (CT, p. 6).

Certain combinations of grid and group are supported by certain cultural biases. Cultural theory claims that there are **five cultural biases**: Egalitarianism, Individualism, Hierarchy, Fatalism, and Autonomy⁸. Four of these are ways of organizing human interaction or enforcing social control, and the fifth, autonomy, is a voluntary absence of social life.⁹ These

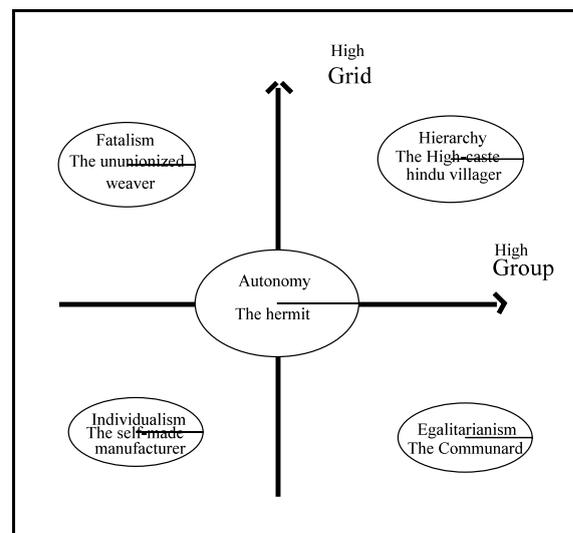


Figure 1.1 The Five Cultural Biases Mapped into Grid-Group Space

⁸ The following presentation is mainly based on *Cultural Theory* but it also takes ideas and interpretations of cultural theory from Schwatz & Thompson (1990) and Grendstad & Selle (1994).

⁹ I will leave the autonomous culture out of my treatment of cultural theory, because of several aspects are still unclear. Autonomy, or Hermit culture, is a very special culture which has been little studied empirically, since the adherents do not engage themselves in the social life in the same sense as the other cultures do. Rather, they prefer solitude and a safe distance from the rest of the society. Of the work done that involves Autonomy,

cultural biases are presented in their grid-group locations in Figure 1.1.

The **egalitarian** cultural bias thrives in a high group-low grid situation. Values and attitudes typical for egalitarianism are preference for collective decisions and distaste for authority and clear roles, which can lead to difficult internal conflicts and fear of fractions. An example of an individual who lives in a such situation with a strong membership in a group and few predefined rules would be a member of a self-sufficient western commune. The ultimate organizational solution would be a small group with flat structure. The preferred strategy is equality in terms of results. Nature is seen as ephemeral: nature's balance is easily disturbed, and there is no room for human errors; any action may cause a collapse.

The **individualistic** cultural bias is best supported by a low group, low grid position. Here are few boundaries, and even they are subject to negotiation. The authors give a self-made Victorian manufacturer as an example of an individual in this kind of context. The ultimate organizational solution is the free market economy, where everything will be bought and sold, resulting in the largest total benefit, according the individualists. Equality is understood here as equality of chance where everybody should have the chance to become rich and famous, and if one does not it is one's own fault. The individualists view nature as benign; Whatever we humans do, nature will always fall back to a state of balance again.

The **hierarchical** cultural bias is found in positions with both high group and high grid. This is a culture with a preference for clearly defined authority relations, many means for controlling its members, and strong division of labor. An

example of a hierarchical individual is a high-caste Hindu villager whose social position defines his rights and duties in the society. The ultimate organizational solution is a large and efficient bureaucracy, where everybody performs their duties according to the prescribed rules. The preferred form of equality is procedural equality. Nature is understood as a combination of nature tolerant and nature perverse; nature is forgiving within some limits, but if these limits are passed, collapse will result. Hierarchists support experts who can regulate our actions so that we will not pass these hidden limits.

The **fatalistic** cultural bias is based on a combination of high grid and low group. We have a situation where there are many rules but not any group to identify oneself with; thus, the control is purely external. Their lives are determined by somebody else. An example of individual with a fatalistic cultural bias is the Victorian mill owner's hired hand who is object for the owners exploitation. In this culture, the lack of belief in one's possibilities to take control over one's life is prevalent. Life is "like a lottery"¹⁰. Naturally, we find neither an ultimate organizational solution nor a moral preference; life is only about personal survival. For fatalists, nature is not any more explainable than the rest of the world; it is capricious. Nature is a random force of which we cannot attain any knowledge.

Besides the social organization based on pure cultures, cultural theory has a notion of **regimes** and alliances between the cultures. The concept of regime does not refer to cooperation but merely to coexistence:

An "alliance" differs from a "regime" in that regime refers to the strengths of

¹⁰ Elizabeth Gaskell, quoted from *Cultural Theory* p.8.

the ways of life that exist within a given entity, while alliance refers to how those ways of life relate to each other. To describe a regime one would want a snapshot of the distribution of people among the grid and group axes; to describe an alliance one would have to know about how the adherents of one way of life got along with adherents of rival ways of life. (CT, p.100 note 7)

Regimes contain individuals from two predominating ways of life, who thus compete and provide a check for each other's weaknesses¹¹. Schwarz and Thompson (1990) believe that each of the cultural biases has a limited perspective on the world, while having several cultural biases gives an organization a broader perspective. Something similar can also be seen in *Cultural Theory*:

A nation in which ways of life are nicely balanced (or, at least, "never entirely excluded") is less prone to being surprised and will have a wider repertoire to draw from in responding to novel situations (CT, p.96).¹²

On the group level this process of balancing and mutual benefit can be seen both in the regimes and the alliances the ways of life form with each other, but there is no room for benefits for individuals who combine cultural biases. Individuals will actually suffer from difficulties in making up their minds.¹³

In *Cultural Theory* the authors maintain that three assumptions are necessary for the theory: the compatibility condition, the impossibility theorem and the requisite variety condition. **The compatibility condition** states that

Shared values and beliefs are [...] not free to come together in any which way; they are always closely tied to the social relations they help legitimate.

¹¹ There are eight possible regimes, which are formed as combinations of two viable ways of life (the autonomous life style is excluded). More about the regimes and the cultures' dependency on each other can be found in *Cultural Theory* (p.4).

¹² This argumentation leads to support for a particular mode of government: "[...] it implies that those political systems that promote diversity of ways of life are likely to do better than those that repress the requisite variety (CT, p.96)."

¹³ "Just as to the man in Dostoyevsky's famous novel *Notes from the Underground*, evidence for all positions would always appear equally compelling, so that we could never make up our minds. (CT, p.265)"

(CT, p.2)

The values and beliefs have a reciprocal relationship with social relations: certain values and beliefs help to support certain social relations; and the opposite, certain social relations help to support certain values and beliefs. From this understanding the authors derive their **impossibility theorem**, which claims that:

Five and only five ways of life — hierarchy, egalitarianism, fatalism, individualism and autonomy — meet [...] conditions of viability (CT, p.3)

The third assumption, **the requisite variety condition**, can be stated as:

[...] there may be more than five ways of life, but there cannot be fewer (CT, p.4).

In other words, we can have other combinations of cultural bias and social relations than the five named above, but the other combinations, not being viable, will not survive over the long run. Further, all five cultures must be present in a society.

1.2 Rejecting and Combining Cultural Biases

Because of cultural theory's systemic character and its generality, it has been difficult to find cases that could be used to test the theory¹⁴. In *Cultural Theory* the authors mention one such case; lack of congruence between cultural bias and social relations:

¹⁴ *Cultural Theory* views society as a system in which cultures are in a permanent, dynamic imbalance, like a flock of starlings:

"Always in disequilibrium, always on the move, never exactly repeating itself, always having a definite shape, yet never staying the same shape (unless, of course, all its constituents, the starlings or the people, are wiped out). Yet, for all its indestructibility, no single shape (or regime, as we might say, in the human case) has material permanence. It is only the competing destinations - the inextinguishable cultural biases for the four ways of life that persist. (CT, p.86)"

Given this perpetual movement on a societal level, it is difficult for social scientists to find the stability needed for empirical research anywhere but in the cultural biases. The real problem arises when we add the unclear relation between cultural biases and individual (CT, pp.265-267). If stability is only found in cultural biases, and we do not quite know how they relate to individuals, it is hard to do research on the individual level.

What would count as evidence against our theory? Most damaging would be a demonstration that values are little constrained by institutional relationships. If the same cultural biases thrived in dissimilar social contexts or, conversely, if dissimilar biases existed in similar social contexts, then our faith in cultural theory would be greatly weakened. (*CT*, p. 273)

There have been very few quantitative tests of cultural theory. The openness has made it difficult, if not impossible, to find general social phenomena that could not be explained by the theory. I hope that by specifying the theory in three different ways, I can help cultural theory to gain the precision needed to conduct empirical tests of individuals' relations to cultures.

In an attempt to force the authors of *Cultural Theory* to clarify their hidden assumptions, Selle puts forth **three sets of assumptions** (Selle 1991a, p.108-112) from which the cultural theorists need to choose: First, **Coherent Actors**. Here the actors are assumed to behave coherently over time and in relation to their context, i.e., act like an egalitarian in an egalitarian organization. Second, **External Preferences** (preferences are formed outside the individual). Here the grid-group placement defines individuals' value preferences (culture). This can also be expressed as the assumption of coherent culture. Third, **Free Choice**. Here the individuals can choose between the cultures before joining them. Selle is thus asking for a discussion of dominance and coercion in cultural theory. I think Selle's critique is very well placed and identified problems in the cultural theory.

My approach is partly based on Selle's criticism. Coercion in cultural theory can be studied by how, and if, cultural biases are forced upon individuals. I have explicitly added the notions of the presence of **multiple cultural biases** within the individual, and the **rejection of a cultural bias**, which help to systematize the problems identified by Selle. Until now cultural theory has presented conflicting

views of individuals' relations to cultures, and, at its best - as in *Cultural Theory* - this issue is left an open question (*CT*, p.265-267).

The idea of multiple cultures makes it possible to explain how the individual relates to several cultural contexts. *If an individual's cultural bias does not fit her social relations in a given situation, there are several ways to solve the stressful dilemma.* If the dominant solution is **avoidance**, the individual maintains a coherent cultural bias, and tries to avoid contexts that conflict with her cultural bias. This responds to Selle's coherent actor. If the dominant solution is **compartmentalization** of the cultures, the individual develops a sequential cultural bias, which corresponds to Selle's coherent culture. If the dominant solution is **adaption** or learning, the individual develops a synthesized cultural bias, which resembles Selle's free choice alternative in its lack of dominance. The concept of strain in my approach is an explicit mechanism of coercion and dominance by context over the individual. Strain can have both social and cognitive sources. It can have its origin in one's social relations and can, for example, be seen in the pressure groups can put on individuals to achieve unanimity on an issue. Strain can also have its origin in the interdependence of belief systems. It can be hard to justify beliefs that are clearly contradictory (*CT*, p.264). Even if dominance is not the main focus, I am addressing it indirectly, by defining the ways the individual is influenced in trying to solve the stressful situation.

In my view there is too narrow a range of answers if we are only to be interested in which culture the individual supports (as in Coherent and Sequential Individual). We should instead ask **how individuals relate** to the different cultures. This allows possibilities for different types of answers. I base my view on following

arguments.

The concept of the **possibility of combinations** of cultural views should not present anything surprising; the examples of the different cultures given in *Cultural Theory* are not everyday examples: a Hindu high-caste, an unorganized weavery worker, a factory owner from the last century and a member of a self-sufficient western commune. These examples are special cases. If this theory has the universal applicability *Cultural Theory* claims it has, why are these examples so far fetched? To explain political values and attitudes we need a theory that can reflect reality for most of the population, not for a minority who have chosen extraordinary ways of life. Further, our everyday life does not involve clear-cut situations. I believe it is much more realistic to assume that these cultures have an effect as combinations.

There is no reason why individuals cannot be **self-contained regimes**¹⁵, drawing upon the advantages that supporting several cultures can give. This view is strengthened by the notion of compatibility between the cultures; how none of the cultures alone are a proper base for organizing society, but the combinations form a balance and weigh out each others weaknesses. So, if this is the way it works in society, why would individuals rely on only one culture, and suffer from the weaknesses of the one they choose?¹⁶ If I were an egalitarian (either coherent or sequential individual) I would prefer only a negotiable order, and strongly reject

¹⁵ In *Cultural Theory* the authors use the concept "self-contained regime" together with what I call the Sequential Individual. I believe that self-contained regime can just as well be applied to the Synthetic Individual Approach.

¹⁶ Cultural biases are not only a source of values and attitudes, but also of a worldview and short cuts to action. In a complex world the cultural bias offers an effective way to make priorities and in some ways resembles a scheme.

competition between individuals and clear relations of authority. It does not seem likely that individuals are so narrow-minded. The merging of cultures also makes it easier for the individual to deal with an unfamiliar situation; they have the same advantages as regimes on the organizational level (several perspectives give several possible solutions to any given problem). I believe that individuals can enjoy the same kind of advantages from cultural combinations as an organization does from a cultural alliance or regime.

My second argument is based on the fact that even if in *Cultural Theory* there are references to people rejecting cultures, there is no theoretical discussion of the importance and role of rejection. At present, cultural theory focuses mainly on support for a culture. I think that, opposition, **rejection of a culture as a solution**, is often at least as important as support for another one. We are all familiar with social situations in which we are expected to act in a certain manner, but we know only how we do not want to act. Many people expend much more effort in working against something than they do in supporting something.

Besides opposition there is also the **state of indifference**, where the culture in question is acceptable for the individual, but neither preferred nor detested. My suggestion is that an *individual's cultural bias might be best described by her attitude to all four cultural biases, which might range from support through a state of indifference to rejection*. If an individual supports two of the cultures, she is likely to find a way of integrating these two in action; life is full of compromises. Or in another combination, if she is supporting only one culture, indifferent towards two and against the fourth, then she is most likely to try to cope with solutions offered by the

supported culture. If she then needs more alternatives, she is most likely to accept a solution based on a compromise with either of the two she is indifferent about, and not likely to even consider the fourth solution which she is opposed to. If this is so, we can probably find out why certain parties and individuals are more willing to compromise, and others less.

There is also a purely methodological reason to include rejection of a cultural bias in the theoretical discussion. The few other statistical analyses based on cultural theory do not discuss the rejection of cultures. This is a serious drawback, because most statistical techniques cannot separate the effects of support and rejection when the strength of a relationship is measured. Thus, most measures of correlation show a moderately high value when there is a system either in rejection or support, and a higher - perhaps even double as high value - when both rejection and support follow a single pattern. Both methodologically and theoretically this is an important distinction which until now has largely been overlooked. In the Coherent Individual and Sequential Individual Approaches I deliberately code variables to remove all information about rejection in order to have analyses that fit each version of the theory.

I will next elaborate these three specifications of cultural theory: the Coherent Individual, the Sequential Individual and the Synthesized Individual. **Table 1.1** is an overview of the three sets of assumptions for cultural theory I am proposing. I will discuss what the theory looks like (given these assumptions), present some authors who, in my view, can be placed within one or the other of the particular sets of assumptions, and hypothesize about what kind of effect I would expect to find in the

| | Coherent Individual | Sequential Individual | Synthesized individual |
|---|--|---|---|
| Individuals' Context | Single | Multiple | Multiple |
| Reaction to multiple contexts | Strain | Strain | Strain |
| Solution | Cultural dominance and avoidance of contexts, selective perception | Compartmentalization, Selective perception, Internalization of bias | Learning over cultural borders, opportunism |
| Organization of Cultures in Individual | Consistent | Sequential separation | Synthesized |
| Stable values and preferences across contexts | yes | no | yes |
| Cultural Biases Present in Individual | One | Multiple | Synthesized |
| Individuals Cultural Bias variable | nominal with 4 categories | nominal with 16 categories | 4 continuous variables |
| The effect of a combination of biases | Should not occur, Strain | Non-additive effect , no interaction | Additive effects, as only interaction |

Table 1.1 Three sets of assumptions for cultural theory

empirical material.

1.3 The Coherent Individual

The idea of a coherent individual¹⁷ in a coherent culture is found in the oldest versions of cultural theory, especially in Mary Douglas' writings (1970, 1982, 1992). The individual is here firmly placed in one grid-group position that renders the

¹⁷ Coherent Individual with capitals is referring to the set of assumptions or approach, coherent individual with small letters, refers to an individual who fulfills these assumptions.

individual within one cultural membership. The theory originally draws inspiration from pre-modern societies, where individuals did not wander around from group to group looking for their own identity, but, rather, had a firm understanding of who they were and where they belonged.

The Coherent Individual Approach can also be identified in Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky's book, *Cultural Theory*. The authors describe two conflicting principles that control the relation between context and individuals cultural bias, and the Coherent Individual corresponds to the first one:

Given that individuals find themselves in different social contexts in different areas of their lives, the interesting question is how they cope with this situation. Is there a strain to consistency on the part of the individuals or do individuals **compartmentalize** the rival ways of life (Thompson et al. 1990, p.266. Emphasis and underlining by me)?

The Coherent Individual Approach is very similar to the end state that would result from strain to consistency: an individual with only one cultural bias. The authors of *Cultural Theory* describe two different mechanisms creating pressure towards internal consistency; social pressure and cognitive pressure (see p. 12). In my approach I will emphasize the results from these pressures: avoidance of conflicting grid-group positions by the coherent individual. It is possible that there is no significant difference, and my Coherent Individual approach is fully compatible with the processes described in *Cultural Theory*.

The Coherent Individual Approach is found not only in these and other works on cultural theory, but also in the entire tradition working with worldviews; including both social scientists and philosophers. In **social science** it is commonly assumed that we have only one cultural identity, or, as psychologists would call it, a

personality. This has been the assumption used in Almond and Verba's landmark study on Civic Culture and in the whole tradition after them.¹⁸ These assumptions also correspond to research done on environmental worldviews, where it is assumed that there exists a strong individuality (personality) that persists independent of context¹⁹.

In the empirical analysis there will be two findings supporting the Coherent Individual Approach. First, individuals actually support only one cultural bias, rejecting the others. Second, as an alternative to this, one of the individual's cultural biases dominates over the other cultural biases. If this is so, the Coherent Individual Approach should explain why people prefer one party over another (this assumes, of course, that cultural theory has some explanatory power, when defined in a proper way). Unfortunately, this is not enough by itself; the explanations should also be better than those provided by either the Sequential or the Synthetic Individual Approaches. There will not be any interaction effects between the cultural biases, because individual has only one bias by default.

To **summarize**, I will reiterate the assumptions used in the Coherent Individual Approach. Individuals have a stable cultural bias, almost like a personality. An individual supports one cultural bias across all contexts (grid-group positions). Further, an individual might have a set of preferences that conflicts with the grid-group position in some of her contexts, and this causes stress. There is a pressure towards a coherent cultural bias. Simultaneous stress and pressure towards a coherent cultural

¹⁸ There is a good presentation of this tradition in *Classics in Voting Behavior* (Niemi & Weisberg 1993).

¹⁹ Good examples of this kind of research are found in Dunlap & Van Liere 1978, Buss, Craik & Dake 1985, Arcury 1990, Cotgrove 1982, Noe & Snow 1990, and Dake 1990 & 1991. Also Inglehart's Postmaterialism-Materialism scale relies on the same assumption (1977, 1988).

bias create cross pressure that is likely to lead to exit from contexts that cause stress, or to a change of the cultural bias. If the Coherent Individual Approach describes the data well I should find that individuals either support only one cultural bias or that only the most supported cultural bias has significant effects.

1.4 The Sequential Individual

To depict the individual's relation to culture, cultural theorists often use the image of a sequential individual operating in coherent cultures.²⁰ This view has been advocated by, among others, Wildavsky, Thompson, Ellis, Grendstad and Selle. As I mentioned earlier, Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky (1990) describe two conflicting principles that control the relation between the individual's culture and the context; the Sequential Individual Approach corresponds to the second one:

Is there a **strain to consistency** on the part of the individuals or do individuals compartmentalize the rival ways of life? (CT, p.266, emphasis and underlining added by me)

Thompson et al. present here the second strategy which they believe individuals adopt in a situation of multiple contexts, compartmentalization. I prefer to call this the Sequential Individual Approach, since the different cultures not only form compartments but these compartments are separated by time and space.

[...] we would expect that an individual's bias will be consistent only to the extent that his social context is consistent. An individual may find himself in cutthroat competition with his business rivals, hierarchical relations in the military, egalitarian relations at home, while treating certain areas of life, say inability to carry a tune, with a fatalistic resignation. (Thompson et al. 1990, p.265)

²⁰ I shall here continue to follow the same system of notation: the Sequential Individual Approach, with capital letters is referring to the set of assumptions, and a sequential individual with small letters refers to an individual who possesses the qualities postulated by the Sequential Individual Approach.

Thompson et al. explain also how it is possible to sustain compartmentalization in an individual:

The compartmentalization of biases may come about either through an individual's failure to perceive contradictions between competing biases [...] or through a positive belief that different biases in different spheres are beneficial (Thompson et al. 1990, p.266).

There are thus two separate processes on the individual level; the contradictions might not be perceived, and if they are perceived they can be considered to be something positive. An example of this would be an individual who is well aware of the different roles he or she has in society. A drill sergeant might have a hierarchical cultural bias when at work, and be an individualist in civilian life. This situation is easy to rationalize for our drill sergeant; the army is best run with one kind of system (strong rules and strong leadership), and the society is best served with an other kind of system (few rules, everybody takes care of themselves).

There is not merely a separation of the cultural biases; they can also vary in their importance for the individual:

[...] most individuals do find themselves inhabiting one way of life more than the others. As within Goethe's Faust, there may be more than one soul dwelling within an individual's breast, but the competing allegiances are not equally divided among the possible ways. (Thompson et al. 1990, p.267)

It seems quite clear that the authors believe that the individual has several cultural biases that might be balanced differently from individual to individual, but still always kept separate, creating a situation where there is *more than one soul dwelling within an individual's breast*. These competing cultural biases will not disappear even if there is pressure towards conformity within the individual, since there will be a multitude of social contexts. The social contexts still determine how many and what

kind of cultural biases the individual will have. The cultural biases are internalized and become an integral part of the individual.

When we apply the assumptions of the Sequential Individual Approach in empirical analysis, there should be no additive interaction effects between individuals' supported cultural biases. This can be studied by comparing monocultural and bicultural individuals' party preferences.²¹

To **summarize**, I will again present the assumptions used in the Sequential Individual Approach. Cultural biases are internalized and closely connected to a context. Individuals support several cultural biases, which vary in their importance, and are kept separate from each other. These are connected to the roles the individual has, so that change of a role can entail change of cultural bias, but it does not need to, since several roles can be based on the same cultural bias. There is a limit for the frequency of cultural bias changes, which leads to situations where individuals' cultural bias and context are in conflict. So, stress can be caused by either too frequent change of cultural biases or a conflict between individuals' cultural bias and social relations. Because individuals have the ability to change their cultural bias to adjust to the dominant culture in a given situation, most individuals' cultural bias will fit the context they are in. There is no core of values, attitudes and beliefs in the individual, unless some cultural biases dominate over others, but even then there is fluctuation from one set of opinions to another set of opinions. The main characteristic for statistical purposes is the lack of additive interaction effects.

²¹ A more thorough explanation of why this is so can be found in Chapter 4.

1.5 The Synthesized Individual

The synthesized individual in multiple contexts has not been used in cultural theory, but I feel that adding this as an alternative to the two first versions is warranted. The synthesized individual differs in several ways from the two other versions of cultural theory I have presented in this chapter. The different **cultural biases** are not kept separate but **synthesized in the individual**.²² This synthesis should reflect the strength of the cultural biases around the individual, or in other words, in the cultures in which the individual participates in. Thus, an individual who spends most of her time in a hierarchical culture probably has most of her values and attitudes from hierarchical bias. One difference between the Sequential and the Synthetic Individual Approaches is in individuals' relations to contexts. The sequential individual separates the cultural biases, i.e., has fairly complete sets of values and opinions for each context. The synthesized individual exhibits coherent opinions across contexts, formed by mixing several cultural biases together into only one set of values and opinions for all contexts. The synthetic drill sergeant would look different from the sequential drill sergeant. The synthetic drill sergeant has a mixture of hierarchical and individualistic cultural biases whether at work or in his civilian life. In the army he would complement the prevailing hierarchical culture with his individualistic ideas and values. He would rely on the same combination of cultural biases also in his civilian life. Cultural biases can in many ways be thought as

²² This synthesis will happen on the individual level. In society the cultural biases can still be seen in their idealtypical representations. An organization that has traits of both Hierarchy and Egalitarianism would still be described as a regime, but in addition to individuals of both cultures there can be individuals who support elements of both cultural biases.

schemas which provide shortcuts to information that can be used to solve a problem (CT, p.57-58). Thus, our drill sergeant can use both the hierarchical and individualistic schemas in any situation.²³ He is probably aware that the individualistic schemas will not work too well in the hierarchical setting of his army unit, but when the hierarchical solutions fail he is likely to use his knowledge from other areas of life, and find an individualistic solution to the problem.

The primary difference between the Sequential and the Synthetic Individual Approaches is that where in the Sequential Individual the cultural biases are separated according to context (grid-group position), in the Synthesized Individual the individual is using elements of the cultural biases across contextual boundaries.²⁴ In other words, in the Sequential Individual learning across contextual borders is difficult and perhaps impossible (what is valid in one situation do not seem to have any relevance in an other situation). In the Synthesized Individual solutions based on any cultural bias can be used at any time and anywhere (all situations are the same). Whether they will solve the problem on hand is another matter, but it is up to the individual to try it out. The functional explanation (viability of a way of life) thus corresponds with, and can be explained on the individual level both with the Sequential and Synthetic Individual Approaches. Individuals will find it useful (practical and easy) to use solutions based

²³ It is not necessary for the concept of synthesis, to give individual as much freedom, as I have done here. It is also possible to imagine, that the context determines individuals' cultural bias, even if individual's bias is a synthesis. I prefer to define the synthetic individual as less dependent of context to create a contrast to the sequential individual.

²⁴ This second characteristic, the loose connection between context and cultural bias, is not a necessary part of the Synthetic Individual Approach. It is possible to imagine an individual with a synthetic cultural bias that is determined by the context, but I feel that by giving the individual more freedom I have achieved a more realistic interpretation of the theory: an individual with free will, influenced, but not determined, by her social relations.

on cultural biases that dominate in a situation. The difference is that where the sequential individual would be pressured to use the dominant culture in a given situation, the synthetic individual can choose freely. Because a solution that corresponds to the dominant cultural bias in a context is most likely to work best, I would still expect the synthetic individual's cultural biases to reflect the contexts.²⁵

If the Synthetic Individual Approach has empirical support, I should find that the interaction effects between an individual's cultural biases are mainly additive. Because the individual does not separate cultural biases but mixes them together, their effects should simply be added together. This should be visible in individuals' party preferences.²⁶ For example, if both hierarchists and egalitarians prefer DNA, the Norwegian Labor party, an individual with both hierarchical and egalitarian preferences prefers DNA twice as much, or at least significantly more than either hierachists or egalitarians.

To **summarize**, the Synthetic Individual is based on following assumptions. Individuals live comfortably in multiple cultural contexts. They form their own stable set of preferences by combining cultural biases into a synthesis on an individual level. The individual can separate different issues from each other, and can utilize the cultural biases to different degrees on different issues. The individual's relation to cultural biases can be described by different degrees of support and rejection. The different levels of support influence what kind of compromise the individual is likely

²⁵ Even if I allow for much more individual freedom in the Synthetic Individual than in the other approaches, the basic condition of viability is still upheld. Cultural biases and social relations still have a reciprocal relationship; only the mechanism has been changed.

²⁶ A more thorough discussion of the effects and how to identify them is in the Chapter five.

to make. Statistically, the main characteristic is the additivity of the cultural biases' effects on individuals' other preferences.

Even if there are some theoretical arguments supporting the Synthetical Individual Approach, it is still an unsolved and primarily empirical question whether the cultural biases in individuals are best described by the Coherent, Sequential, or Synthesized Individual Approaches. Before proceeding to the empirical analysis I will present my empirical material and examine the reliability and validity of the cultural bias measurements.

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