The relationship between the value patterns and the political process of a society may be considered on another level than has been discussed so far—that of the effect of these patterns on the social character of the citizen. As pointed out in Chapter 3, European travelers to America have remarked over the course of American history that, compared to parents in their own countries, American parents were much more permissive with their children. This they perceived as related to the general emphasis on equitarianism. Anthropologists and psychologists, in their recent work on "national character," would agree that there is a relationship between such differences in child-rearing practices and the modal personalities of the members of various societies. The character of the citizens may in turn affect the functioning of the society's political system.

There is ample evidence that the differences in early socialization and training reported in the nineteenth century between, American and European countries have persisted to this day. American children are much more likely than their European counterparts to feel free to "talk back" to their parents or their teachers, to have their wishes respected, to be paid attention, and to perform duties in the family which would in other countries be restricted to adults. The retention of more ascriptive values in European societies may account for such differences in child-rearing practices.1 British middle-class respondents are somewhat more likely than

achievement, and their tendency to choose reference groups outside the family, have affected their reaction to stratification. Their characteristically universalistic, self-interested approach has influenced the character of the institutions, such as trade unions, that are associated with it. A psychiatric study comparing American and German reactions to military life suggests that Americans approach the military hierarchy also in terms of a need for individual achievement which has been fostered by American socialization practices. It concludes:

The abuse of the privileges accorded status by the officers, the widespread black-market and looting activities of all lower ranks, the rejection of authoritarian and disciplinary demands that tend to overwhelm and subordinate the self, the reluctance to expose ego to damage until machine power has done all it can, and the relatively speedy withdrawal from the group when under stress, are all very positive indications ... [that] the central orientation of the American character is self interest. It is the dynamic force that binds all the traits together, that gives the type its Gestalt.6

Thus the value system of a society influences the character of its institutions and these shape the character of its citizens as they grow up. The character of a society's members in turn reacts upon the character of its institutions. Several versions of such an argument have been proposed specifically with regard to the political system.7 Alex Inkeles reports generally that:

There is substantial and rather compelling evidence of a regular and intimate connection between personality and the mode of political participation by individuals and groups within any one political system. In many different institutional settings and in many parts of the world, those who adhere to the more extreme political positions have distinctive personality traits separating them from those taking more moderate positions in the same setting.8

7 The effort of Harry Eckstein to relate the stability of democratic systems to the type of authority relations in different societies is closely related to the attempts to link political systems to modal personal character in given cultures. A Theory of Stable Democracy (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Center of International Studies, 1961).
A comparison of German and English boys’ answers to a projective test also, suggests differences between the two national characters along the lines outlined by Inkeles’ definition of the democratic as opposed to the authoritarian person. The German boys were most likely to dislike cowards, whereas English boys were most likely to dislike bullies, ruffians, and girls. The German boys were in almost complete agreement in seeing corporal punishment as the only sequence to an offense, whereas English boys showed greater flexibility, sometimes trying “to fit the punishment to the crime.” In general, there was a marked tendency toward conventionalism and rigidity in the German boys’ answers, whereas the English boys seemed to “allow more free play to their imaginations.”

A comparison between German and American popular plays also suggests “the needs, assumptions and values” expressed in the drama of the two nations differ along these same dimensions. Thus the greatest percentage of German plays analyzed are concerned with idealism and power whereas the greatest percentage of American plays are concerned with love and morality. As the authors point out:

... the German plays are strikingly more preoccupied with social and political problems than are the American plays. Their level of action is primarily ideological. . . . The problems portrayed in the American plays, on the other hand, are overwhelmingly personal. ... The German ideological emphasis is obviously tied up closely with the emphasis on the idealism theme."

As a result, the American hero is seen as struggling against immoral or anti-social tendencies in himself, whereas the German hero rises above the masses in pursuit of an ideal goal. American plays are often climaxed by a marshaling of evidence that causes the hero to change his attitude;

German plays are often resolved through an exercise of power, since the characters are usually portrayed as inflexible and uncompromising.

But if these and other studies are suggestive of a relationship between the social requirements of political systems and the model, if not the dominant, cluster of personal traits of its citizens, the evidence to justify this conclusion is, far from in.

If we assume with Inkeles that what he calls the democratic personality facultates the stabilization of democratic institutions and reduces the potential appeal which extremist tendencies may have, then it is necessary to posit the aspects of the social structure which are conducive to the predominance of such traits. Psychological analysis confirms that in large measure such traits are derivative from childhood experiences, particularly parent-child relationships. In its extreme form we have the conclusion of Ralph Linton that ”nations with authoritarian family structure inevitably seem to develop authoritarian governments, no matter what their official government forms may be.” Such conclusions are clearly unwarranted by any substantial body of data. They do point, however, to the need to relate the types of family structures and child-rearing experiences found under different systems of stratification and value orientations to the ability of people to adapt to the operation of a democratic polity, with its inherent need for the toleration of differences.

It would be in line with the general approach being discussed here to argue that American children have more “democratic” characters-in the sense that they have a greater independence of mind and tolerance for ambiguity-than do the children in Europe, since there is less stress on home discipline in the United States. Some of the direct evidence available would seem to support this contention. For instance, Maurice Farber’s study comparing British and American attitudes toward socialization

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15 A questionnaire study based on a Swedish sample reports that "significant positive correlations were also found between authoritarianism of upbringing and authoritarianism of both political and child-rearing attitudes." R. H. Willis, “Political and Child-Rearing Attitudes in Sweden," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 53 (1956), p. 77.
17 Ralph Linton argues: “It seems highly improbable that any totalitarian type of organization could be made to operate in the United States for any length of time. The average American is reared with little respect for his parents’ authority and finds this attitude reinforced by a general indifference or hostility toward government.” Loc. cit.
Democracy in Comparative Perspective
(cited earlier), shows that in bringing up children the British try to "suppress those impulses which are socially disturbing," whereas the American pattern aims at developing the skills required to succeed. It could be argued that this difference reflects national personality differences as demonstrated in the variations in the mosaics that British and American children construct when subjected to psychological tests. British children are much more likely than American children to construct "abstract, symmetrical, balanced, conventional patterns," whereas even when American children construct this type of pattern "it is much more apt to show a color or piece variant which breaks its symmetrical perfection." And British youth, in turn, are seemingly less rigid than German youth. These variations among the psychological responses of American, British, and German young people would appear to agree with the hypothesis that national personality traits and political systems are closely related. Such a conclusion would be unwarranted, however. British values, for example, emphasize more rigid family authority relations than do American—but, as we have seen, the greater British acceptance of elitism also fosters a viable parliamentary democracy.

Could we say, however, that there is some minimum level of so-called democratic traits that are requisite in "national character" for a nation successfully to develop a democratic polity? The French case suggests that even this relating of the degree to which "democratic" traits are prevalent to a polity's democratic potential is too simple. French youth fall somewhere between British and American personality responses along a continuum between individual free expression and traditional ways of thinking. While insisting that the child copy pre-existing models in order to train his mind, the French school also encourages individual thinking and the development of l'esprit critique. The object is not so much to suppress impulses as to train them. And although discipline is strict in the French family, the father takes more of a supervising than a strictly authoritarian role. “Democratic” traits do show up in tests of French national character; but France has not been able to develop a viable democracy. Thus, simply ranking polities according to the degree to which “democratic” traits are prevalent does not tell us much about the necessary conditions for successful democratic institutions.

Values, Social Character, and the Democratic Polity

Since similar family and educational structures are to be found in both stable and unstable democracies, the question clearly arises whether a democratic system requires "democratic personalities." If we recognize, as the previous chapters have argued, that stable democracy is possible under varying value systems and kinds of hierarchical relationships, it is probable that the kind of personality most congruent with any given political structure varies, not with the political structure itself, but rather with the value system of that political structure. The modal personality response which encourages democratic stability in a society emphasizing the values of achievement and equality may be very different from the one best related to a social system organized around ascriptive and elitist norms. For instance, an emphasis on respect for authority and the need for discipline can conceivably be linked to the absence of organized expressions of populist intolerance, as in Sweden or Switzerland. But similar emphases on home discipline in the German context are frequently cited as being causally related to the supposed propensity for political authoritarianism of many Germans.

Research in this as yet underdeveloped area of political inquiry will be considerably strengthened if it continues with the recognition that highly different social structures and value systems are congruent with stable democracy or authoritarianism, and that varying ways of organizing social systems around different value patterns may each be related to different modal personality characteristics.

The Inner-directed versus the Other-directed Personality

There has also been considerable discussion in the last decade on the way in which value patterns affect the propensity of citizens of various societies to exhibit “inner” or “other” directed behavioral or personality traits. These distinctions of David Riesman, discussed in Chapter 3, refer to the sources of individual goals. As we have seen, Riesman suggests that the inner-directed individual has his goals implanted in him from strict disciplinary parents, has internalized these goals, and works toward them relatively protected from the buffeting of his external environment.” In contrast, the other-directed person has been led by different socialization processes to find his source of direction from his contemporaries; as

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18 Farber, "English and American Values..." op. cit., pp. 245-246.
20 Metraux and Mead, Themes in French Culture, pp. 32-35. 21 Ibid., pp. 16-18.
22 Eckstein, A Theory of Stable Democracy, suggests, in effect, that societies with more authoritarian social relations require a more "authoritarian" form of democracy than those with more equalitarian patterns of behavior.
their "signals" shift, so do his goals.²³ (For purposes of this discussion, the issue of whether or not the reactions subsumed under these headings are deeply rooted in personality is irrelevant.)

Earlier I attempted to demonstrate that there is a causal relationship between an emphasis on achievement and equilibrarianism and other-directedness, together with the converse proposition, that inner-directed behavior is more prevalent in ascriptive and elitist oriented societies. Specifically, I argued that the achievement-equilibrarian pattern results in a stratification system which denies stable status, and that the consequent acute status anxiety presses people to behave in an other-directed manner. Conversely, ascription and elitism reduce the need to propitiate others in order to establish or perpetuate a claim to high esteem.

These behavioral or personality constructs may be linked to a specification of the functional requisites for democracy, since democracy obviously entails a great deal of bargaining and compromise; behavior which seems more in line with other-directedness than with inner-directedness. Hence, the effect of a stress on achievement and equilibrarianism, together with the growth of bureaucracy and urbanism—factors which Reisman suggests increase other-directedness—would seem to strengthen the conditions for democracy. However, this conclusion seems less obvious when we consider the implications of a purely other-directed populace attempting to function in a consensual-decision process. Such a populace would be engaged in an endless search for approval and for direction, a situation conducive to high anxiety and great anomic potentialities on the level of the total population, and to weak leadership on the elite level. It is this supposed emphasis in American society on other-directedness that leads Riesman to suggest that power in America is fragmented and is characterized by interaction among various "veto-groups."

He argues that the American elites are so concerned with the need for approval that they are inhibited from acting in ways that will be opposed by a significant segment of the polity. Democracy requires conflict as well as consensus, and other-directed man is incapable of participating in sustained real conflict, in taking positions that will make him unpopular.

Ralf Dahrendorf, in a perceptive essay on this very problem of the


skills on which the achievement of individuality and adulthood depend. Thereafter they are able to make reasonable choices, to elaborate in their own way upon what they already are; they are formed.27

However, the difference between the fostering of inner direction in French and American socialization practices can be only a matter of degree. As in the case of the pattern variables, the personality or behavioral constructs of inner- and other-directed men cannot and do not involve any assumption that men or groups are entirely one or the other. Clearly, no one who reacted wholly in the way assumed by one or the other type could function. The matter at issue at any time is the extent to which the socialization process or structural conditions press men to behave more like one polar type than the other. Requisite to the functioning of a political democracy are citizens (and especially political leaders) who are sufficiently inner-directed to sustain a desired policy direction, and to have internalized a strong valuation of certain rules of the game. However, they should be sufficiently other-directed to be willing to re-examine their premises when faced with the disapproval of others, to perceive needed adjustments and compromises, and to make these without experiencing traumatic psychological disturbances.28

To prescribe the type of social structure which would produce the optimum ratio between "inner" and "other" directedness is clearly impossible. The very notion of optimum ratio is itself merely an analytic construct: every social and political system will be somewhat different. If we assume, however, the need to "protect" individuals from constant concern with what others think of them, then a certain degree of ascription-particularism-diffuseness-elitism is necessary. This conclusion relates back to the previous discussion of the conditions which would inhibit the destructive tendencies of populist contempt for due process. To

27 Metraux and Mead, Themes in French Culture, p. 27.
28 In a perceptive essay which attempts to find implications of personality typologies for political and social science, Robert Lane suggests that "other-direction" is functional in a pluralist society such as the contemporary United States, while "inner-direction" best fits the political needs of a non-pluralistic democracy, that is, one in which the citizenry is relatively "atomized" and not linked to the polity by identification with various secondary, mediating institutions. In the latter situation, supposedly characteristic of the early days of the American Republic, strong moral attitudes dictated political participation and concern; pluralism, however, has too many sources of conflict among the various organizations and interest groups to operate well if those involved in such groups all feel they must win—or else. See "Political Character and Political Analysis," Psychiatry, 16 (1953), pp. 387-398.