

# Political Culture in the Colombian Peace Process

by Devin Cornell

Work done with Marcelle Cohen

# Colombian Conflict and Peace Process

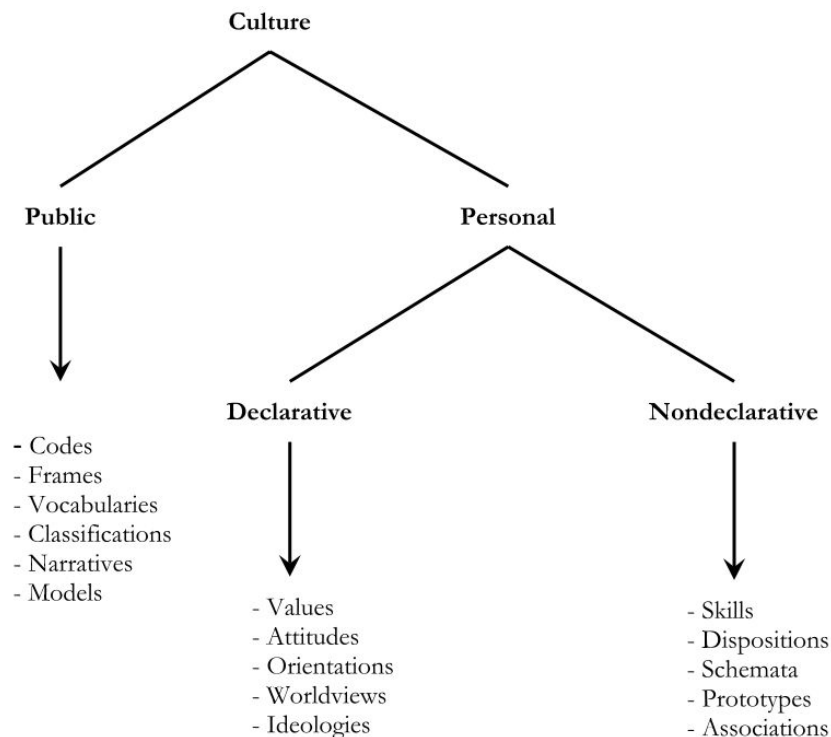
- ~52 year war between FARC and Colombian Government
- Most recent negotiations in Havana for last ~3-4 years
- Culminated in Peace Referendum in Oct 2, 2016
- Public voted “No”, largely because of **Centro Democrático**
- One month later, government passed a modified version
- Currently in implementation stage - congress must pass legislation with details

# Work Inspired by Practice Theories of Culture

- Inspired by work arguing for a focus on deeply held cultural worldviews and surveys rather than repertoires and interviews (Vaisey 2009).
- **Toolkit Repertoires** (Swidler 1986,2001) are cultured capacities acquired and used over the course of one's life to organize larger *strategies for action*.
- **Attack was theoretical and methodological** - said interviews can only capture “post-hoc” justifications rather than unarticulated values that are truly motivational.
- Research from social psychology and cognitive science was used to support this argument, but **I felt like it was an oversimplified use of that research.**
- I wanted to know about **how political discourse, conceptualized as repertoires, can change one's cultural worldviews about politics by tapping into deeply held intuitions.**

# Analytical Dualism of Cultural Knowledge

- **Declarative Culture**
  - Phenomenological knowledge
  - Series of “know thats”
  - Acquired through fast neural binding mechanisms
- **Nondeclarative Culture**
  - "nonepisodic, implicit, durable, cognitive-emotive associations, bodily comportments, and perceptual and motor skills built from repeated long-term exposure to consistent patterns of experience."  
(Lizardo 2017)
- *Enculturation* mediated by public codes





# Public Culture

- Public culture: codes, frames, vocabulary, classifications, narratives, models - mediates enculturation
- I suggest a further analytical distinction: public culture of *semiotic codes* and *social organization* <sup>1</sup>
- How do these kinds of cultural knowledge become personal, and how are they organized into larger, semi-coherent strategies for action?

<sup>1</sup>: obviously this is nothing new - this is my attempt to integrate some ideas from institutional dualism and institutional logics into this line of practice theories

# How does public culture become personal?

- Lizardo (2017) offers three principles:
- **Correspondence**: the two types of cultural knowledge become personal as they are encountered in the world independently.
- **Redundant encoding**: individuals have access to information about the same domain in both declarative and nondeclarative forms.
- **Disassociation**: weak coupling between the two types of culture - encodings, knowledge are independent.
- Most cultural analysts are implicitly familiar with these principles:
  - “Novices rely on explicit rules and strategies when they are beginning to acquire a skill [], but they are able to dispense with this form of representation once the skill has become embodied and can be deployed automatically.” (Dreyfus 2004, cited in Lizardo 2017)

# Political Culture in Colombia: Two Interests

- Political Culture in everyday life
  - How everyday interactions with family, friends, and members of the broader public foster fierce polarization and contentious politics
  - How cultural values become tied to political issues and positions
- Centro Democrático party members
  - How the power-elite navigate within their political institution? - how they identify with the party and differentiate themselves for personal attainment
  - How do semiotic codes become tied with social organization?
  - Repertoire acquisition and innovation - strategically connecting political arguments to cultural worldviews in new ways

# Attended Pro-peace Forums



Left: Desayunos de Paz - Breakfasts for Peace

Right: ReD dinner with pro-peace supporters - Liberal Bourgeois

# Disarmament Event in the FARC Camp



Left: (hashtag) "our only weapon is the word" (presumably for Twitter)

Right: president Santos surrounded by people taking photos



# FARC Camp



## 'Goodbye, Weapons!' FARC Disarmament in Colombia Signals New Era

Leer en español

By NICHOLAS CASEY and JOE PARKIN DANIELS JUNE 27, 2017



# Universidad de Santo Tomas - University Events



Left: panel; "1st Discussion Board in a Foreign Language: Insights on the Peace Process and Post-Conflict in Colombia" - I served on a panel with a Soc professor and international relations person  
Right: University students that came to the event; we spoke in "Spanglish" about the peace process

# Public Culture in the Streets

- Codes, frames, classifications, narratives
- Culture that exists outside the personal barrier - people come to know it in the declarative and nondeclarative senses through *enculturation*
- Includes **social organization**, landscape of the social that people find themselves and navigate through
- Also includes **public codes**, or meanings tied to social actions that people become aware of through experience



# Empathy, Respect for Life



Left: clothing with "empathy" written on it

Right: "Dignity by right, not by weight"; "if I contacted them.."

# Politics of Fear and Public Symbols



Left: posters in congress building - “killed for claiming their lands”

Right: house with “AUC” painted on wall; AUC is paramilitary organization - “United Self-Defenders of Colombia”



# Symbols of Fear, Peace Process



Left: sign next to jewelry “We don’t want another Venezuela”

Center: pro-peace sign with a penis spray painted over it

Right: old decaying sign, “This October 2nd Vote ‘Yes’” (referring to the peace referendum)

# Stress Relief



Left: 80's hair metal bar with music videos playing on large projector screens. A local mentioned that this may provide an outlet for freedom from violence

Right: pride parade in Bogota - huge number of people all down the main street

# Interviews in Bogota

- 23 interviews in total - Marcelle did the interviewing, I was “mute” (I’m not fluent). I attended ~16 or ~17 of the interviews, some done through Whatsapp, Skype
- members of Centro Democratico (congress, ideologues), academics, “former” Colombian military, people active in the peace process, spokespersons for the FARC, victims advocates (against peace), member of conservative party, alternative pro-peace party members, anonymous journalists
- My questions were about describing the tenants of Centro Democratico party, asking politicians to explain why so many people sympathize with them

# Political Practice and Social Organization

- Practice & social public culture become personal
- People 'know' about social org in a declarative sense, but practice allows for learning in a nondeclarative sense
- Individuals learn to navigate their social landscape through practice and experience
- 'strategies for action' means deploying declarative knowledge within a coherent and consistent discursive framework



# Interviews at Congress



Left: at senate with Alfredo Ramos Maya, interviewed him outside senate floor  
Right: at house with Fredrico Hoyos, interviewed him in the house floor

# Forums for Colombia in Bogota



Left: CD sign; notice logo - hand on heart, “firm hand, big heart”

Center: Uribe talking with elite; woman on left traveled 3 hours to see him and candidates speak

Right: Uribe stands on stage next to presidential candidate, candidate orients himself towards uribe



# Forums for Colombia in Popoyan



Left: forum in Popoyan - notice the lack of people wearing suits - contrast to Bogota forum  
Right: "farmer Uribe" speaking to the crowd before presidential candidate forum

# Political culture: political discourse as practice

- **Declarative culture** as *discursive repertoires*: arguments, beliefs, facts about politics
  - Acquired through reading, hearing political points/arguments
- **Nondeclarative culture** as *discursive frameworks*: simultaneously integrates organized deployment of declarative knowledge, morals or ``cultural worldviews'', and social categories/landscapes
  - Acquired through patterns of repertoire use, exposure to moral tones of arguments, and practice in or observation of social contexts

# Practice Theoretical Approach

- Identify discursive frameworks used to organize repertoires, moral backdrop to appeals, and discursive repertoires that CD members use to identify/distinguish themselves from larger party
- Understand how repertoire use and social organization integrate with cultural worldviews and morals

# Discursive Repertoires of Legitimacy

- Farc are illegitimate political actors, terrorists
  - Committed war crimes/acts of terror, trade drugs
  - Not big enough, don't meet requirements of international laws, don't have strong leadership
- CD and Uribeismo is Legitimate
  - Popular democratic support in “No” campaign and presidency
  - Santos doesn't have popular support, weak policies
- **Nondeclarative** - FARC as Anarchists, Communists
  - Anarchy - need to be contained
  - Long history of communism  $\longleftrightarrow$  venezuela, Chavismo
  - Emotions of fear for land, safety, way of life

# Conclusions

- Centro Democratico politicians use similar discursive frameworks: legitimacy of party, illegitimacy of FARC, along with similar moral appeals
- Frameworks distinguished strategically through patterns of repertoire deployment
  - Use of facts about ``results``: statistics, effects
  - Use of democracy: as a standard to compare against, or as a `proxy' for `the people'