BEING FAIR TO HIERARCHISTS

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    *Dan Kahan and Donald Braman propose to conduct a new survey of atti-
tudes toward gun control. They use the cultural theory of risk developed in the
1970s and 1980s to analyze public concern about dangerous technology. This
Commentary offers background on the cultural theory of risk after a quarter cen-
tury of refinement. It also demonstrates some of the difficulties in applying cul-
tural theory of risk to which Kahan and Braman's work is not immune. In cri-
tique of the Kahan and Braman article, Professor Douglas focuses on the difficulty
of excluding observers' bias from the construction of a survey on culture.*

INTRODUCTION

    Dan Kahan and Donald Braman propose to use the cultural the-
ory of risk as the basis of a new major survey on attitudes toward gun
control.[1] The debate on gun control raises the very problems for
which cultural theory of risk was devised in the 1970s and 1980s. It is
about irreconcilable conflict of values. I was present at the inception
of cultural theory[2] and rejoice at Kahan and Braman's undertaking,
but I quail at the problems they face in the course of building their
analytical model and deducing their conclusions.

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[1] Dan M. Kahan & Donald Braman, *More Statistics, Less Persuasion: A Cultural The-
ory of Gun-Risk Perceptions*, 151 U. PA. L. REV. 1291 (2003).
[2] For one of the first discussions of cultural theory of risk as applied to technical
and environmental dangers, see MARY DOUGLAS & AARON WILDAVSKY, RISK AND
CULTURE (1982). A theory of cultural bias was available previous to its focus on risk.
See MARY DOUGLAS, NATURAL SYMBOLS: EXPLORATIONS IN COSMOLOGY (1970) (pro-
viding an early attempt to relate cosmological ideas to the kind of social arrangement
they could be used to support). It started with my own student interest in why West
African societies often pay cult to ancestors, while Central African societies relate more
readily to nature spirits. It is not difficult to explain the former as suitable for a tradi-
tionalist society, respecting age and family linkages. The latter tends to flourish where
long-term lineage systems are not practicable for work or economic reasons. This was
a very general approach, not even a theory, but over the next twenty years Aaron
Wildavsky developed a cultural theory of risk based on it. And in 1990, he with Mi-
chael Thompson and Richard Ellis produced *Cultural Theory*. THOMPSON ET AL.,
CULTURAL THEORY (1990). Risk is one of a number of dangers and disasters which
can be used for casting blame. It is part of a theory of social accountability.

Gun control is passionately debated and divides opinions strongly. It has been the object of much empirical research, but the more it is researched by traditional methods, the more the issues become confused and prospects for agreement recede. The surveys that have uncovered a spread of attitudes on the gun control issue have samples stratified in the conventional ways, with indicators based on social class, education, religion, ethnicity, income, and party political commitment. Out of all this, very little can be glimpsed by way of consistent trends. There is a weak tendency among women, the aged, and ethnic minorities to prefer government control of firearms, and a stronger trend toward an individualist bias against government control of guns growing out of a historical pride in independence.[3] No clear system of categorization accounts decisively for the vociferous debates, yet we are looking at one of the fundamental problems of American domestic politics.

If the right to carry a gun expresses the same deep distrust of government that lay behind the 1970s conflict about risk, it is no trivial issue. In the 1970s, a radical political lobby was demanding that highly risky technology (such as nuclear reactors) be stopped or placed under government control. The business and industrial sectors of society resisted these demands, which would have put their own activities under difficult constraints. Like the risk debate, the present gun control debate encapsulates a serious recurring contest about political judgment and attitudes toward authority. It sounds superficially like another argument between cultures: macho individualists wanting no controls, and cautious hierarchists and radical communitarians wanting controls.

In Part I, I introduce cultural theory. Essentially, it is a way of stratifying the public according to their deepest allegiances, the things they value most and hate most. My general aim is to explain the way that culture is conceived in the theory and how it is presented in diagrammatic form. Along the way, I emphasize the importance of identifying the cultural types very carefully, rooting them in appropriate kinds of occupations and social environments. Specifically, Part I discusses the assumptions underpinning the theory. I describe the four kinds of cultures which the theory identifies. Names by themselves are misleading, but it may yet be helpful to say that they are hierarchical, individualistic, radical communitarian, and fatalistic. Here, I explain and illustrate the central principle that a culture, in this technical

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[3] Kahan & Braman, *supra* note 1, at 1300 & n.36.

sense, is defined to be incompatible with each of the others. In politics, members of each culture can, and do, make alliances for particular purposes, but when it comes to practice, their values keep them apart. To conclude the Part, I take a closer look at the cultural identities and focus on the fundamental incompatibilities between them. In any community, there will be a continuing four-sided struggle among the constituent cultures.

We have to confront a real cultural difficulty that assails everyone who tries to do this research: how to control one's own bias and keep it from distorting the analysis. A regular problem in modern Western democracy is the antipathy to any kind of control and authority. This gets summed in the prevalent attitude toward hierarchy. The problems of objectivity—how to be fair to hierarchists, indviidualists, radical communitarians, and fatalists—are serious issues for survey design. My examination of *More Statistics, Less Persuasion* in Part II focuses on this point. I acknowledge the difficulties of accurately characterizing cultural forms and capturing their members, but I equally stress the importance of producing a bias-free survey. I conclude by noting that cultural theory was formulated foremost with objectivity in mind. If applied faithfully, cultural theory is capable of bias-free results.

In the 1970s, the experts on risk regarded the public response to risk as a matter of personal attitudes. Consequently, the research focused on "psychometrics," a sophisticated and formal analysis of personal estimates of danger.[4] It was based on psychological studies of personal preferences and a search for universal principles about, for example, time preference and anxiety about loss. Anthropologists, on the other hand, took the questions about risk perception as concerned with communally shared opinions. Culture puts pressures on individuals. They don't make major decisions without consulting friends. The courage they have to stand up to a risk, or to fail, or to protest, comes from their culture. The gun control debate encapsulates a serious, recurring contest about political judgment and attitudes toward authority. Kahan and Braman say very little about how they identify cultural bias, or how cultural processes work, which is why I need to dwell on cultural theory for some pages. It is a matter of assessing social pressures on the individual.

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[4] Research using such analysis includes Daniel Kahneman & Amos Tversky, *Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision Under Risk*, 47 ECONOMETRICA 263, 263-90 (1979); Amos Tversky & Daniel Kahneman, *Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases*, 185 SCIENCE (n.s.) 1124 (1974).

I. GRID-GROUP METHOD[5]

A. *The General Design*

Grid-group is a method for identifying social pressures and plotting them on a map of social environments. As I will later explain, it means assessing two dimensions of social life: one is the amount of classification that is going on, and the other is the amount of moral pressure to conform that a community puts on its members. In a high-grid environment, everything is classified and individual choice is heavily restricted. What you eat, how you dress, where you live, and how you bring up your children are all prescribed. A high-group position on the chart means that each member of a group is under personal pressures. When the two are combined, a high-grid/high-group society is very loyal, stable, and compartmentalized, and coordination is very effective; it is a hierarchy. At the other extreme of the scale, where grid is weak and group very ephemeral, you have an environment in which you have to negotiate everything for yourself, and everyone you know is wheeling and dealing to her best advantage. Essentially, the scheme describes social environments that generate their own appropriate values and ideals.[6]

The grid-group method starts with recognizing the exigencies of organization and not with examining ideologies, worldviews, or moral norms. Problems of coordination call for solidarity and cooperation, which may be secured from members of a community either by coercive force, by individual incentives, or because of the values in the supporting culture. The level of organization and the emotional and cognitive commitment combine to produce solidarity and cooperation.

Social thought traditionally draws a distinction between two competing cultures, not always recognizing that they are at the same time different forms of social organization. It is right to recall that Henry Sumner Maine, writing on Roman law, distinguished relations formed on the basis of contract from those based on ascribed status.[7] There is no need to list all of the varieties, but the contrast still dominates social thought to this day: the command economy versus the competitive market, hierarchist versus individualist, "cathedral" versus "ba-

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[5] For a more in depth discussion of the issues discussed in this Part, see MARY DOUGLAS, *Cultural Bias, in* IN THE ACTIVE VOICE 183 (1982).
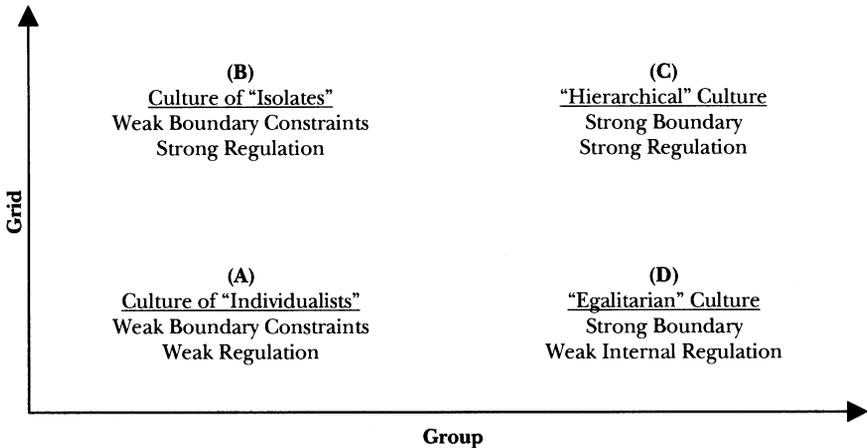
[6] THOMPSON ET AL., *supra* note 2, at 2.

[7] HENRY SUMNER MAINE, ANCIENT LAW 295-333 (1861).

zaar." Cultural theory takes this usual dual system of two contrasted forms of social organization for its starting point. Then, it splits each of them so as to arrive at four kinds of culture. The four different social environments are defined according to how society constrains individual members and how the members defy or circumvent the rules and boundaries of their particular social environment.

The competing cultures of hierarchism and individualism provide the basis for grid-group method. To capture the relevant variations, cultural theory splits both members of the traditional pair. On the one hand, the strongly bounded hierarchical community can have a lot of internal boundaries at different levels organized by complex internal regulations. This describes traditional hierarchists. On the other hand, a community can have only an external boundary, inside which the members do as they like with minimal regulation. This kind of group tends to be egalitarian. So we recognize two sorts of groups, one classified and regimented, and the other free of formal control. The individualist environment is split between individuals living in a freely competitive environment and those living under close and strong regulations, where competition is impossible. The two dimensions, individualist and collectivist, provide a parsimonious model: grid runs from minimum to maximum regulation, and group runs from weak constraints on individual members to a multipeaked system of corporate groups.[8] By the intersection of the two dimensions, four cultures are mapped on the diagram.

Originally, the four types were referred to simply as *A, B, C,* and *D,* with reference to the four corners of a diagram intended to measure the social pressures that constrain personal choice. Grid pressure is exerted by regulations, and group pressure is moral. The four cultures came to be labeled Individualist, Isolate, Hierarchical, and Egalitarian. Figure 1 offers a visual depiction of this model.

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[8] *See generally* DOUGLAS & WILDAVSKY, *supra* note 2, at 138-39 (explaining the quadrants of the grid-group method); THOMPSON ET AL., *supra* note 2, at 5-6 (same).

Figure 1: The Grid-Group Diagram

Several assumptions govern this model.[9] The first assumption is that each of the four kinds of culture is a form of moral commitment that enables a community to actualize its preferred forms of collaboration. In other words, the cultural type and the form of organization are two aspects of the same thing—internal relations of a system.

Another assumption is that each culture flourishes in opposition to the others, each presenting consistent challenges to the premises and values of the others. The gun control debate illustrates this phenomenon through its aggressive and insulting rhetoric.[10] Because the model is dynamic, past history does not account for the present distribution of cultural values; the current form of social organization does. Changes in the economy, demography, or technology, for example, will entail changes in cultural bias. Note that this undercuts some of the favorite explanations of the gun control debates that rely on cultural heritage and history. There is no credibility for the influence of a dead hand from the past. Culture is alive and always moving. Pressure from the past is exerted by live individuals.

Third, a culture is a collective product—the outcome of efforts to form an acceptable, workable social order. Individual visions of an

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[9] For a general discussion of the assumptions imbedded in the grid-group method, see DOUGLAS & WILDAVSKY, *supra* note 2.

[10] *See infra* text accompanying note 15 (discussing the war of words characterizing the gun control debate).

ideal world are ephemeral, and therefore irrelevant to cultural theory analysis. Rather, cultural theory looks to collective beliefs and values explained uniquely by reference to current collectively shared experiences. Cultures justify features of organization. By anchoring cultures to the organizations that they justify, this assumption protects the interpretation from the interpreter's own bias.

Cultural theory has had its share of detractors, some not very well read in the theoretical field nor thoughtful about the nature of culture;[11] others are among my best friends who just don't like any theory at all.[12] Independent of the criticisms levied against cultural theory generally, there are questions about its usefulness in broad contexts. The application of the grid-group method is difficult in a huge and regionally diverse nation. Most of the problems lie in misunderstanding the idea of culture. For example, many historians and economists assume that culture is static and that its ideals are always traditional and retrospective. Development economists tend to blame the culture of apathy when a poor community makes no effort to help itself. For another example of misunderstanding culture, there is the tendency to focus solely on the intellectual and emotional aspect, without regard for the constraining economic and social environment. Kahan and Braman tend to this bias when they explain rejection of gun control as based on an old, heroic stage of American history. Anthropologists are tougher, and have a less romantic idea of cultural constraints, based on hard economic realities. Distractions and pitfalls in mind, I see immense potential in cultural theory and disclose my hope for the success of the ambitious survey conducted by Kahan and Braman.

B. *The Cultural Process*

The typology for cultural theory is based on two intersecting dimensions: regulation on the vertical axis and integration on the horizontal. "Integration" means a community that holds all of its members together. The combinations of each intersecting axis represent four viable types of community. Their extreme forms are shown in

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[11] *See, e.g.,* Asa Boholm, *Risk Perception and Social Anthropology: Critique of Cultural Theory,* 61 ETHNOS 64, 64-66 (1996) (claiming that because attempts to empirically test the cultural theory hypothesis "have not been particularly successful . . . the shortcomings of cultural theory are serious indeed").

[12] In D. Douglas Caulkins, *Is Mary Douglas's Grid-Group Analysis Useful for Cross-Cultural Research?,* 33 CROSS-CULTURAL RES. 108 (1999), the author takes up the cudgels on behalf of the theory and against the critics.

the four corners of Figure 1. The whole diagram is a social field in which various movements are taking place, settling down continuously into social environments that are (theoretically) viable over the long term. No viability would be possible without a match between community worldviews and the demands the organization makes on community time and resources. It is only reasonable to expect that the dominant ideology will legitimize the dominant type of organization; we can also expect that organization will not be stable unless it receives this ideological support from enough of its members. At the same time, the theory expects that a community is in continual dispute both about the ideal form of organization and about its supporting culture. One of the assumptions that distinguish cultural theory from other typologies is seeing culture as legitimizing organization. The other distinctive assumption is that cultures are considered to be always in competition with one another. Focusing on the organization is very effective for analyzing what is going on at the micro level, but we shall see that such focus encounters special difficulties at higher levels of abstraction.

A culture flourishes only thanks to continual competition from the other cultures. Individual alignments are ratified in tense debates about the exercise of power and trespass on carefully drawn boundaries.[13] In *Cultural Theory*, Thompson, Wildavsky, and Ellis formally presented culture as a never-ceasing four-sided contest.[14] The effect was to make the theory into a set of field glasses for watching an exciting game. The debate on gun control is a splendid arena. It is a war of words: opponents leap out of the bushes to hurl insults at each other such as the pejorative labels of "blue-blooded elitists" and "hicksville cowboys," or accusations of "macho-Freudian hang-ups."[15] The different cultures try to incite fury about gun control so as to lambast each other. However, they are not necessarily all that interested in the question itself. Instead, they may seek to use their rhetoric as a stick to whip up their followers' support and to ridicule their opponents. In the four-player game, the object of each culture is to cover the game board as much as possible with its own symbols, slogans, and

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[13] See MICHIEL SCHWARZ & MICHAEL THOMPSON, DIVIDED WE STAND: REDEFINING POLITICS, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIAL CHOICE (1990), for probably the most influential and the most quoted book on the subject.

[14] THOMPSON ET AL., *supra* note 2, at 50-51. The model discussed included a fifth culture, that of a "hermit," which cultural theorists largely dismissed as unnecessary because of its similarities with isolates. Further discussion of this detail is beyond the scope of this Commentary.

[15] Kahan & Braman, *supra* note 1, at 1318-19.

representatives who will promote its values. Each player aims to re-
strict the activities of the other players by undermining their credibil-
ity. Since the isolates are politically passive, many analysts prefer to
drop them and investigate on the basis of only three cultural types.
While it depends on the field of analysis, for politics, I personally
think it is a pity not to use all four quadrants because the passive, non-
interactive public is very important.

C. *Four Incompatible Organizations*

Knowing the institutional basis of the patterns of value protects
cultural theory research from subjective bias. This is a central con-
cern. A plan to base gun control research on the cultural theory of
risk must incorporate the idea that cultural bias is firmly located in
forms of organization. If research into cultural attitudes does not lo-
cate the cherished values in specifiable institutional forms, the door is
open to unconscious manipulation. We would be back where we al-
ways have been, guided by our prejudices and writing our political bi-
ases into our research design.

A theory has no grip if its definitions are mutually contradictory,
overlapping, or fuzzy. Cultural theory asserts that the polarizing ten-
dency of cultures is necessary to the cultural process. Recall that the
four cultural types were originally defined on the principle that each
supporting form of organization is incompatible with the other sup-
porting organizations. I repeat, then, that cultures are sets of princi-
ples and values founded in particular institutional forms. Since the
rooting of culture in organization is so central to the theory, we must
pay attention to the four organizational types.

1. Hierarchy

The hierarchical way of organizing a society is by establishing
principles of order in space and time and between persons. It reduces
competition and introduces a respected division of labor according to
age, gender, seasons, and places. If Kahan and Braman think that
they can identify hierarchists by attitudes toward gender that have
nothing to do with times and places, then they are probably going to
get a quite different cultural response. For example, a question about
homosexuality will not exclude individualists and sectarians who have
little regard for the separate spaces that organize gender for hierar-
chists.

Some think of hierarchy as elitist, an error which comes from focusing on the top. According to the description of the working-class homes in Elizabeth Bott's survey of Londoners in the 1950s,[16] the sacred principle was the division of labor. Hierarchy undeniably reigned in the home. As to spaces, women excluded men from the kitchen; in turn, men excluded women from men's work places and also from the pubs. Times for meals and what could be eaten at a given time of day were closely prescribed. In his recent book, *Respect*, Richard Sennet vividly evokes how divisions in space and time are used to mark inequalities and also try to disguise them.[17] This hierarchical pattern shows up clearly in more recent research in other parts of England.[18]

2. Individualism

In complete contrast, the individualist way of life is nominally free of prescription; every detail has to be negotiated. Members of the household, including children, compete for the seating, light, food, and control over the conversation and television. No places or times are sacred. Individualists and hierarchists are the cultures that normally dominate a community: The people made responsible for maintenance of society develop hierarchist values. They respect times and places. The people who are expected to go forth entrepreneurially, get new ideas, work hard, and compete for esteem and income naturally hold individualist values. A limited coalition between the two cultures, individualist and hierarchist, is needed for the organization of the community. They are allies and rivals at the same time.

3. Fatalism and Egalitarianism

The other two cultures are defined by their dissent from the majority. There are isolated individuals: some prefer not to be involved and others have been pushed out of the mainstream. There are also the egalitarians, so-called because they have formed a group of like-minded friends who reject the rankings, formalities, and inequalities

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[16] ELIZABETH BOTT, FAMILY AND SOCIAL NETWORKS 22, 70-71 (1957).

[17] RICHARD SENNETT, RESPECT: THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER IN AN AGE OF INEQUALITY (2003).

[18] *See* Karl Dake & Michael Thompson, *The Meanings of Sustainable Development: Household Strategies for Managing Needs and Resources, in* HUMAN ECOLOGY: CROSSING BOUNDARIES 425-26 (Scott D. Wright et al. eds., 1993) (presenting a theory of household cultures).

of the outside society. On the diagram, the isolates appear on the top left-hand corner, they are high grid and low group, so there are very few options they can choose. Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky always refer to them as "fatalists."[19] It is true that they tend toward a fatalistic outlook, and not surprisingly, since there is little they can do about anything in their lives. The egalitarians who have organized themselves into a dissident community appear diagonally opposite, on the bottom right; they are strong group and weak grid. Their culture is quite different, radical, and angry. The four cultures are bound to disagree on most points of policy because their values lead them to use everything in incompatible ways, especially space and time.

4. Incompatibility

You want examples? Go to any town meeting and when voices are raised and excitement mounts you will find they are arguing about somebody's right to infringe on someone else's territory. The individualists value efficiency; being on time matters to them; they often need to cover large distances at high speed. If it is a question of making roads that cut through ancient residential districts, individualists won't hesitate to vote for it. They must contend with the negative vote of hierarchists who cherish traditional values and places, and are never in a hurry. The dissident communitarians will make a coalition with the hierarchists over this issue, as they disapprove of life in the fast lane.

By rallying their supporters against an enemy, they all keep their cultures alive; the whole community is more interesting because of the animosity between its cultures. Cultural theory has worked incompatibility into the definitions of the four types of culture. Each one is opposed to the others. Adhering to one's own culture's standards of behavior is a matter of personal integrity. To support one's sense of identity and to negotiate the hazards of social life, a person needs to recognize the cultural flag that other like-minded persons are showing. There is no end to the ways of declaring cultural commitment. That is what gossip is all about. For example, part of the pleasure of shopping is to be able to point to garments that one "wouldn't be seen dead in." But that is not to say that the same flag always has to be waved in all contexts, that total consistency is normal, or that there is no changing cultural allegiance. Culture is not, in itself, stable or

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[19] THOMPSON ET AL., *supra* note 2, at 7.

highly coherent.[20] It depends on the organization that generates it for whatever stability and coherence it can achieve.

II. CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING, IDENTIFICATION, AND BIAS IN *MORE STATISTICS, LESS PERSUASION*

A. *Puzzling Behavior of Hierarchists*

I now turn to the article by Kahan and Braman. The abstract begins with questions about motives and evidence. They have carried out a recent survey based on data from the General Social Survey 1988-2000 (GSS)[21] and the National Election Study 2000 (NES).[22] The results of the survey confirmed the hypothesis that "individuals' positions on gun control derive from their cultural worldviews."[23] Kahan and Braman go on to report that "individuals of an egalitarian or solidaristic orientation tend to support gun control."[24] To my ears this was startling because I am used to thinking of the egalitarians as radicals; they tend to be against big government. I could have been persuaded to correct my first reaction if the authors had given more information about how they stratified their samples. Radical policy often expects to use government to introduce and enforce the desired reforms. Egalitarians might favor many forms of centralized control, including gun control. It depends entirely on whom the individualists recognize as the sinister desperadoes they want under government control.

Reading on, however, the next surprise from the survey of Kahan and Braman was less easy to accept: individuals of a hierarchical or individualist orientation tend to oppose gun control.[25] It is very plausible that the individualists cherish their independence. But who can

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[20] *See, e.g.*, Eero Olli, *Rejection of Cultural Biases and Effects on Party Preference, in* CULTURAL THEORY AS POLITICAL SCIENCE 59, 59-70 (Michael Thompson et al. eds., 1999) (noting that the individuals surveyed did not indicate a "coherent attitude toward cultural biases," and urging cultural theory to give attention to the ways in which individuals combine cultures).

[21] NAT'L OPINION RESEARCH CTR., GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY CUMULATIVE CODEBOOK 1972-2000, *available at* http://www.icpsr.umich.edu:8080/GSS/homepage.htm.

[22] NAT'L ELECTION STUDIES, NATIONAL ELECTION STUDIES, 2000: PRE-/POST-ELECTION STUDY [DATASET], *available at* http://www.umich.edu/~nes/studyres/nes2000/nes2000.htm.

[23] Kahan & Braman, *supra* note 1, at 1291.

[24] *Id.*

[25] *Id.* at 1291-92.

these "macho" hierarchists be? It is hard to imagine the police, the army, the clerks, civil servants, and other functionaries or bureaucrats, usually identified as hierarchists, coming out in favor of unlicensed guns.

Hierarchy is based on love of order. We would, therefore, expect hierarchists to line up in favor of control. If hierarchists really want to let guns loose on the streets, they are implausibly choosing gangster-dom above order. The survey presents an inconsistency that needs interpretation, something more than a reference to the role of guns in American folklore, which is the extent of Kahan and Braman's explanation.[26] Cultural theory does not give much credit to the weight of history as explanation of living culture because the culture selects what history will be remembered.[27] The hierarchists reported as being against gun control may be revolutionaries. There are many historical examples of revolutionary hierarchists.[28] But if this is what is happening in contemporary America, it is too interesting to ignore.

More Statistics, Less Persuasion describes the hierarchical bias in exactly the terms that one would expect when that word is used normally. "The *hierarchical* orientation favors deference to traditional forms of social and political authority and is protective of the roles and status claims that they entail."[29] Kahan and Braman also say that hierarchists have "confidence in the competence of authorities to solve society's problems."[30] All this fits the way the word hierarchy is usually used in the social sciences.[31] In the same vein, Karl Dake's analysis of hierarchists found that the "obedient and conforming citizen" corresponded to the cultural bias of hierarchy and showed a "cautious, conservative, moderate, and unassuming personality style, as well as a highly conservative political orientation."[32]

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[26] *Id.* at 1300-02.

[27] *See supra* pp. 1354-55 (explaining that, within the cultural theory model, "past history does not account for the present distribution of cultural values").

[28] *See, e.g.,* RICHARD GRIFFITHS, THE REACTIONARY REVOLUTION: THE CATHOLIC REVIVAL IN FRENCH LITERATURE, 1870-1914 (1966) (discussing the critical politics of the Catholic Church).

[29] Kahan & Braman, *supra* note 1, at 1297.

[30] *Id.* at 1298.

[31] For a general overview, see Louis Dumont's book on Indian caste, HOMO HIERARCHIUS: THE CASTE SYSTEM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS (Mark Sainsbury et al. trans., Univ. of Chi. Press Complete Rev. English ed. 1980) (1966).

[32] Karl Dake, *Orienting Dispositions in the Perception of Risk: An Analysis of Contemporary Worldviews and Cultural Biases,* 22 J. CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOL. 61, 78 (1991).

Kahan and Braman explain the discrepancy between the hierarchist's atypical attitude toward gun control and their usually respectful attitude toward authority with another enigmatic statement: "The association of guns with traditional gender roles and with state authority should make gun control anathema to individuals of a relatively hierarchical orientation."[33] Intriguing! Could "hierarchy" be confused with aristocracy? Aristocrats can have codes of honor and be strong individualists. I think they are referring to an honor code which obliges each man to defend the name of his female dependents with a gun. If these meek and cautious hierarchists favor state authority and tend to defer to traditional authority, why should they find state licensing of guns repugnant? Persons of an individualist orientation, by contrast, *should* oppose gun control. As Kahan and Braman recognize, "they are likely to see [gun control] as denigrating the ideal of individual self-reliance."[34]

I agree with Kahan and Braman that the gun debate is "about *who* you are and *who* you aren't"[35]—we want more than ever to know *who* the hierarchists and individualists are and what sort of positions they hold in Western democracy. In other surveys it has been difficult to distinguish these two cultures. Special procedures are commonly used to place their characterization on a secure basis. Kahan and Braman would have done well to observe these procedures in their survey.

B. *Identifying Hierarchists*

Unfortunately, the indicator questions for understanding hierarchy in Kahan and Braman's survey focus more on rigidity and moral intolerance than on particular values preferred. Items selected as hierarchical indicators concerned attitudes toward race, sex, the military, and capital punishment. Hierarchists were expected to condemn homosexuality (this is the only point that reflects their attitudes toward gender) and to be favorable toward the military and capital punishment (this last item covers their attitudes toward law and order). That is all. Their responses are coded to favor bigotry, sexism, and racism. Somebody here doesn't like hierarchists.

The approach described in *More Statistics, Less Persuasion* has not succeeded in drawing a clear distinction between the culture of indi-

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[33] Kahan & Braman, *supra* note 1, at 1302.
[34] *Id.*
[35] *Id.* at 1294 (quoting Zell Miller, *The Democratic Party's Southern Problem*, N.Y. TIMES, June 4, 2001, at A17 (emphasis added)).

vidualism and the culture of hierarchy. It focuses on the vertical stratification of hierarchical society and on attitudes toward the outsider. It does not touch on hereditary privilege, rejection of competition, or on the idea of order which produces the typically hierarchical internal compartments and status regulations. Furthermore, it forgets that an individualist culture also has vertical stratification, based on power and money, not on birth. Worst of all, it overlooks that hierarchy is a forum of organization that is efficient for certain risks because of its ability to delegate authority and to organize the division of labor.

When they are at home, cultural theorists twit each other for allowing their own moral biases to slip into their analyses. It often happens. I hope it is not offensive to accuse Kahan and Braman of a prejudicial view of hierarchy. The scholar should control feelings of contempt or simple antipathy. The alleged hierarchical responses designed by Kahan and Braman sound like caricatures of old-fashioned cinema characters, French officers in *Casablanca*[36] or Japanese officers in *The Bridge on the River Kwai.*[37]

I want my feeling that bias has crept in to be corrected. I am sure that if bias could be excluded and the principles of allocating the cultural types to the four slots were clarified, then the central hypothesis of Kahan and Braman, that cultural orientation will best explain public alignments on this topic, would be justified.

C. *Bias Against Hierarchy*

Part of the trouble in recognizing hierarchists is in the word itself. It turns out to be a misleading label. In contemporary America, the word "hierarchy" has developed a particular, pejorative connotation. It means vertical stratification, and so implies strong up/down social distinctions and contempt for the lowest strata; it means "bureaucratic," and therefore is rigid, soulless, and much else that is unflattering. The persons who are in the upper stratum are liable to be arrogant and unjust, while those in the lower strata are too passive and deferential. It is true that hierarchies have their own pathology. There is always something funny about the functionary exerting her little authority over a helpless public. India, and the India Office, have often been the butt of anecdotes warning against the deadening effect of a stale, decrepit hierarchy. Richard Sennett, talking about the decline of bureaucracy as it grows and includes too many people,

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[36] CASABLANCA (Warner Bros. 1942).

[37] THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI (Columbia Pictures 1957).

cites Indian writer Amit Chaudhauri, who "well evokes that degenera-
tion in describing an office given over to a time-tested culture of tea-
drinking, gossip and procrastination."[38]

The distinguished sinologist Benjamin Schwartz seems to have
been right when he said that Westerners find it impossible to under-
stand hierarchy as a viable and honorable political system.[39] For this
reason, he said, we tend to misunderstand the most important things
about Eastern civilizations.[40] Yet, we need not go so far as ancient
China to spot the difficulties. It is possible, albeit surprising, to find
that the GSS and NES scales, which were the basis of the Kahan and
Braman's survey, allow no opportunity to inquire about tradition, in-
heritance, stewardship for the group, justification of social distinc-
tions, or ideas of justice and fairness which are typical of hierarchies.
If so, Kahan and Braman probably would have done better to con-
struct a more complete, more objective model of hierarchism.

Kahan and Braman, however, are in good company. Other social
scientists have difficulty imagining a hierarchical society. Even the
pioneer Karl Dake did not succeed in clearly distinguishing between
hierarchy and individualism.[41] His questions, designed to identify the
one, might easily pick out the other. Dake's hierarchy scale embodies:

1. *Patriotism.* "'[F]or my country, right or wrong.'"[42] (Not a typi-
cally hierarchical attitude in normal circumstances. Wartime evokes
hyperbolic patriotism from a wide cultural range.)

2. *Law and order.* "'The police should have the right to listen in
on private telephone conversations when investigating a crime.'"[43]
(Backing the police is generally an upper-class attitude. In a random
survey, the question should separate the rich and well-educated hier-
archists from poor hierarchists and from the individualists of the same
type.)

3. *Pride in personal ethical standards.* "'I think I am stricter about
right and wrong than most people.'"[44] (Hierarchists would never say

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[38] SENNETT, *supra* note 17, at 180 (citation omitted).

[39] *See* BENJAMIN I. SCHWARTZ, THE WORLD OF THOUGHT IN ANCIENT CHINA 68
(1985) ("To many modern sensibilities, this frank acceptance of hierarchy as a neces-
sary and even good aspect of a civilized and harmonious society creates an enormous
barrier to any effort at 'understanding' . . . .").

[40] *Id.*

[41] Dake, *supra* note 32, at 60-81.

[42] *Id.* at 69 (quoting Leonard W. Ferguson, *The Isolation and Measurement of Nation-
alism,* 16 J. SOC. PSYCH. 215, 224 tbl.7 (1942)).

[43] *Id.* (quoting H.J. EYSENCK, SEX AND PERSONALITY 153 (1976)).

[44] *Id.* (citation omitted).

this because they don't consider morals to be matters of private judg-
ment, and they tend to penalize each other for boasting of their own
superior morality.)

    4. *Discipline in today's youth.* "'Hierarchy also expresses the belief
that there is little discipline in today's youth.'"[45] (This sounds as if hi-
erarchists are middle-aged or older. If that is the case, the elderly hi-
erarchists show up in the results of the survey as pro-guns and against
control, which sounds counterintuitive.)

    5. *Favoring central government control and centralization.* "Hierarchy
also . . . supports the notion that centralization is 'one of the things
that makes this country great.'"[46] (I am baffled if this discriminates hi-
erarchists from the rest; it ought to put them on the side of gun con-
trol.)

    On final analysis, Karl Dake's survey had trouble distinguishing
the concept of hierarchy from the concept of individualism. Indi-
vidualists and conservatives turned out to hold very similar views and
to contrast much more strongly with the egalitarians than with each
other. Neither culture showed deep concern with political corrup-
tion, worldwide starvation, absence of strong national leadership, en-
vironmental pollution, economic growth, or restriction of civil liber-
ties. All these matters worried the egalitarians deeply.[47]

    One could say that Dake's survey design did not give an adequate
representation of hierarchy as a complex system of reciprocal rights
and duties. This would explain why Dake's questions proved ineffec-
tual in European surveys.[48] Or one could conclude that America is di-
vided into two main cultures: radicals, those with a social conscience,
and conservatives (hierarchists), those without one. But why bother
with naming three or four cultures if you are only concerned with
two—the divide between radicals and conservatives? Why bother with
opinion surveys at all if you know in advance that the hierarchists are
"the baddies"?

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    [45] *Id.* (citation omitted).
    [46] *Id.* (citation omitted).
    [47] *Id.* at 71 tbl.1, 71-73.
    [48] *See* HELENE KARMASIN & MATTHIAS KARMASIN, CULTURAL THEORY: EIN NEUER
ANSATZ FÜR KOMMUNIKATION, MARKETING UND MANAGEMENT (1997).

One can learn from several other models of questions designed expressly to identify the hierarchists. For example, Gunnar Grendstad used as indicators the following five hierarchy items (some based on Karl Dake's work), in his Nordic surveys:[49]

1. One of the problems with people today is that they challenge authority too often.

2. The best way to provide for future generations is to preserve the customs and practices of our past.

3. Society works best when people obey all rules and regulations.

4. Respect for authority is one of the most important things that children should learn.

5. Different roles for different sorts of people enable people to live together more harmoniously.

These questions concern authority (1 and 5), tradition (2), regulation (3), and division of labor (4).

Hierarchists are integrated in strong influential social groups that exercise control over the members' sayings and doings and take care of their welfare. This last point should discriminate between the hierarchical and the individualist culture.

D. *Being Fair to Hierarchists*

For different problems and different kinds of community, cultural theorists tend to make up their own names for the different axes or the extreme positions in the diagram's four corners. They also vary the axes to suit the kind of society and the questions they seek to clarify.

For example, Dennis Coyle compares the cultural typologies of six contemporary political scientists. He matches their terminology with their types corresponding to places on the grid-group diagram.[50] Because Coyle has a particular theoretical demonstration in mind, he changes the names of the quadrants to "Libertarianism," "Despotism," "Hierarchy," and "Egalitarianism."[51] Libertarianism corresponds to individualists, and Despotism to isolates. This typology would not always work well, but I like this constructive flexibility. The researcher

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[49] Gunnar Grendstad, *Comparing Political Orientations: Grid-Group Theory Versus the Left-Right Dimension in the Five Nordic Countries*, 42 EUR. J. POL. RES. 1, 18, app. (2003).

[50] Dennis J. Coyle, *The Theory That Would Be King, in* POLITICS, POLICY, AND CULTURE 219, 221 (Dennis J. Coyle & Richard J. Ellis eds., 1994).

[51] *Id.* at 221 fig.11.1.

takes note of how the diagram was originally devised, and treats it like an invitation to fill in the blank quadrants on the two-by-two square to match the sectors of the world he is studying. The challenge is to think of the kind of community of cultures that could live together in accordance with the given dimensions. A community in which a majority supported the idea of living according to comprehensive prescriptive regulation would seem to be reconciled to a hierarchical system. If only a minority supported it we would look at the distribution of power and suspect tyranny, and predict revolt. A stable hierarchy depends on support from the lower ranks.

Karl Dake, in connection with risk and technology, suggests the personality style for hierarchists is a tendency to be "patient, forbearing, conciliatory, and orderly."[52] Hierarchists "tend not to be aggressive, or autonomous, or exhibitionistic, but are more likely to be cautious, shy, and seek stability rather than change."[53]

These examples are enough to show why I challenge the hierarchists in Kahan and Braman's survey. They are acting like boldly independent individualists. I suspect they have been misplaced in the scheme. Something is wrong with the specifications for hierarchical cultures.

E. *Being Fair to Egalitarians*

The cultural theorist is bound to accept the reasons that people give for their adherence to a particular cultural type. The adherents of the quadrant we once named "sectarian" (and now, "egalitarian") may have seen or even suffered from gross injustice, and therefore have determined to lead just lives, embracing equality as a basic fairness principle. For these people, justice is the prime virtue, as order is for the hierarchists, and liberty for the individualists. Having banded together to build an exemplary community in opposition to the artificiality and injustice of the outside world, they expect to live together in all simplicity. But the goal of simplicity is elusive. Flanagan and Rayner have shown that it is extremely difficult to maintain an egalitarian system, which requires complicated redistributive rules and precautions against unequal accumulations of power or possessions.[54]

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[52] Dake, *supra* note 32, at 73-74.

[53] *Id.*

[54] *See* James G. Flanagan & Steve Rayner, *Introduction, in* RULES, DECISIONS, AND INEQUALITY IN EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES 1, 2 (James G. Flanagan & Steve Rayner eds., 1988) (arguing that egalitarian relationships are governed by complex rule systems

Egalitarians in small dedicated groups drag down their leaders. They are prone to factions. Threats to equality only engender more complex institutions. Their closed community is apt to solve its internal problems indirectly by inculcating hatred against the outside. They build up the wall of virtue that makes insiders saints and outsiders sinners. This leads them to see everything in dire contrasts of black and white. They become a group unable to generate leadership and riven by factionalism.[55]

My discussion of egalitarianism is entirely focused on the extreme point in the model, the far bottom-right corner. This area is of greater concern for theory than for reality. For the sake of cultural theory, I am particularly interested in finding types of society that could reasonably represent the four extreme positions. I am also interested in explaining egalitarianism in the grid-group terms that describe ways of life. Cultural theory has made it obsolete to describe worldviews or cultural norms without indicating the way of life that generates and preserves them. Cultural theory provides its diagram of all possible social environments a field of force, like a magnetic field. It is necessary to think beyond the four extreme types.

There is a culture of egalitarian protest that does not depend on a group, so where should I locate it? There are undoubtedly forms of life based on collective challenge to authority and on egalitarian principles that are not based on small groups.

Where are egalitarians? Fortunately, the solution is easy. All that is necessary is to shift these freedom-loving egalitarians further to the left on the same baseline, away from the extreme corner and nearer the middle of the diagram. Simply by moving them away from the extreme end I have accommodated the fact that their lives are not dominated by strongly bounded, enduring groups. I still need to ask whether they have any institutions at all. Who are they? Are they mostly academics? Or students? Or pastors? Or theater people? Another way of identifying their typical institutions is by reference to their polar opposites. Presumably, the strongest contrast is not with individualism; hierarchy is their explicit enemy since, by cultural defi-

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and that "egalitarian systems of social organization place costly demands upon their members for participation and vigilance"); Steve Rayner, *The Rules That Keep Us Equal: Complexity and Costs of Egalitarian Organization, in* RULES, DECISIONS, AND INEQUALITY IN EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES, *supra,* at 20, 37-39 (discussing the complexity of rules necessary in two types of egalitarian communities).

[55] MARY DOUGLAS, HOW INSTITUTIONS THINK 116-20 (1986).

nition, egalitarians are resistant to authority and regulation.[56] Still another way to match egalitarian cultures with particular institutions is to watch when the individuals act in concert. Do they join up to promote charitable causes? For entertainment? For protesting important issues? For voting? How long does their membership last? A day? A year? A lifetime? Cultural theory requires us to indicate more about the institutional basis (however weak) that transforms privately held values into a collectively established culture of egalitarianism.

F. *Being Fair to Isolates*

We should do the same exercise for the isolates. Of course, we don't despise them as useless rejects. However, because they are politically inactive, apathetic, and fatalistic, isolates tend to be left out of the cultural game by fellow players. So it is understandable that cultural theorists focused on politics tend to ignore isolates. For some projects, this may be a big mistake.

When isolates are a large proportion of the total community, they have great disruptive potential. According to cultural theory, it is disastrous for economic development and democratic politics if the fatalist-isolates should outnumber the supporters of the other cultures. Even though lacking a political voice, isolates can nonetheless play an important role (for good or for bad). Though in some respects they are pawns of the politically effectual players, they also are influential as an uncoordinated mass. They affect the polls by their silence or their enthusiasm. They join protest marches. Their opinions deserve consideration: they are volatile; they are susceptible to panics and crazes; they do not make a habit of attending to complex arguments; they are supposed to be apathetic. Isolates intervene erratically in mass demonstrations of grief or joy. They often can't be bothered to vote. The media always kow-tows to large numbers, and tries to amuse and interest the isolates. The strength of this permanently unaligned sector of the population may be important to the gun control controversy. Kahan and Braman may therefore do well to reconsider their research design, currently based on three cultures, in order to use the full complement of four cultural types.

To include isolates in the survey has the advantage of giving a space to those who want to respond "Don't Know," instead of being obliged to choose among the perspectives on gun control held by

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[56] *Supra* p. 1354 fig.1.

strongly aligned cultures. Who are these isolates? Where are they? How many are out there? The ambivalent response to a question-naire, "Don't Know," is very instructive. Sometimes it means, "Don't Care." Among other things, it reveals the strength of the preferences for each sector in the cultural theory model. In any case, being fair to the isolates, and showing who they are, ought to be a permanent prac-tice of political research.

CONCLUSION: A BIAS-FREE INSTRUMENT

Objectivity was originally the primary concern of cultural theory. Because one's own culture is invisible to oneself most of the time, bias only too easily infects our thinking. In all innocence, the survey de-signer often may not recognize the influence of culture. In America, during the 1970s and 1980s, the culture we have labeled "Competitive Individualism" was ideologically prominent. The late Aaron Wildav-sky, the founder of cultural theory in politics, hoped that it would serve as a method for becoming culturally aware, a liberation from the shackles of one's culture. In his own political views, he disliked the idea of hierarchy, was hostile to politically active egalitarianism, and despised the "fatalism" of the isolates. Conscious of his own antipa-thies, Wildavsky was all the more alert to the dangers of importing bias into the design of the research. He was a self-styled individualist. I suspect that he secretly saw the individualist culture as the best and most natural way of constituting society. However, he believed that the investigator must somehow manage to eliminate bias.

Aaron Wildavsky wanted cultural theory (which he actually called a "bias-free theory") to serve as a strategy for controlling bias. Each of the four cultures is a way of living and must be respected by the re-searcher. Worldviews are not capriciously picked out of the air. Cul-tural theory gives no normative lessons about preferring one culture to another.

I hope that this Commentary will be useful for Dan Kahan and Donald Braman. Dan particularly wished me not to pull my punches but to have my uninhibited say. I have tried to write out the basic idea of cultural theory and risk theory as clearly as I can because there is a very critical readership out there, both those who have been practic-ing the art for decades and those who are new to it. If, when they have finished their survey, Kahan and Braman are satisfied with the results, their work will be like a beacon light for others who want to control their own subjective bias when designing their surveys.