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The Importance of Mass Culture for Democratization

James Melton
Illinois Wesleyan University

James Simeone, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Oral Presentation O4.2

THE IMPORTANCE OF MASS CULTURE FOR DEMOCRATIZATION

James Melton and James Simeone*

Department of Political Science, Illinois Wesleyan University

In the last thirty years, the importance of political culture in political science has risen, declined, and has risen again. Although the theories of political culture have been strengthened and refined in this process, modern culture theorists have yet to empirically demonstrate culture's ability to be used as an independent variable or to make causal claims using culture. This paper makes an attempt to solve these empirical deficiencies in cultural theory by setting up what Brian Barry calls a "critical test." Using the former USSR and the post-communist countries in Eastern Europe, I will test two hypotheses. First, mass values and not elite bargaining caused the transition from communism to democracy in these countries, and second, these mass values were not a result of "rational self interest" or elite manipulation, but they formed through the interaction of different sub-cultures. The first hypothesis will be tested by a quantitative analysis of the relationship between mass political protest and democratization, and to be considered valid, the peak level of democratization should follow the peak of mass political protest relatively closely. The second hypothesis will be tested using a cross-tab between culture and indicators of democratic values from the World Values Survey. To be considered valid, there should be a relatively strong significant correlation with individualist and egalitarian cultures displaying more democratic values than fatalist or hierarch culture. From the data gathered, these hypotheses seem to be valid; however, economic variables seem to play a minimal role as well.