Vol. 17 Nos. 3–4

Contents

SPECIAL ISSUE ON ACADEMIC AND MEDIA BIAS

Critical *Review*

Jeffrey Friedman

THE BIAS ISSUE

The issues of academic and media bias raise more than the usual opportunities for misunderstanding and polemic. To preemptively set the record straight, then, let me clarify three points.

1. The "bias issues" investigated here do not involve journalists or scholars deliberately fobbing off one-sided opinions on their readers, viewers, or students. Rather, we are interested in "bias" in the sense of the perceptions of political reality that journalists and scholars take to be uncontroversial, and that therefore honestly, even undeliberately, inform their scholarship and journalism.

Such bias, to the extent that it occurs, is not fostered by any conspiracy, and it is neither avoidable nor objectionable. It simply reflects the prisms through which the people who produce news, scholarship, and other cultural products see the political world. Some such prism is inevitable, given that the world is complicated enough to overwhelm any human observer who tried to grasp it in its entirety. (The answer to such questions as whether supply- or demand-siders are right about marginal income taxes on the rich [Garfinkle below], or whether obscure provisions of federal housing policy have artificially stimulated suburban subdivision [MacCallum below], are hardly self-evident.) Some cognitive filter is needed, lest the world seem a "blooming, buzzing confusion": such filters are what we are calling "biases."

2. By implication, there is no unbiased way to perceive politics (or any other part of a complex world). But to recognize this is not to

Critical Review 17 (2005), nos. 3–4. ISSN 0891-3811. www.criticalreview.com

Jeffrey Friedman, edcritrev@gmail.com, a senior fellow at the Institute for the Advancement of the Social Sciences at Boston University, may be reached at the Critical Review Foundation, 9639 Requa Road, Helotes, TX 78023.

deny that some biases are false and others, true: the latter illuminate the way the world really is, while the former only seem to do so.

We each do our best to perceive the world accurately. That we disagree with each other about politics means that some (or all) of us must be wrong. But for "wrong" to be a coherent concept, there must be something that is "right": the truth. Epistemology, then, is not ontology. The fact that perceptions of reality differ does not mean that there is no reality about which we disagree. That each of us has our own perceptions of truth does not relativize the concept, or the actuality, of truth itself.

On the contrary, it is those who object to bias as if it were scandalous who are the inadvertent relativists. The notion that bias is bad and that "balance" is good presupposes that all biases are equally valid opinions, and that the role of the media or of the academy is not to seek—and convey—truth, but to present a menu of opinion-options among which news or education consumers can choose. But choose, according to what criteria? Their uneducated "preferences"? What, then, is the point of education, or of media that are supposed to "inform"?

A bias that distorts the truth is simply a flawed lens on the world. If one thinks that the journalistic or professorial biases discussed here are erroneous, one is contending that the journalists or professors who hold these biases, being human, have erred. The prevalence of error may be lamentable, but that's the way it is with people: they make mistakes, and that is hardly a scandal. It is certainly not an offense that should, for example, call forth bills of rights that would protect students from being taught what their professors think is true. Given that all professors, like all journalists, think that their opinions are true, they must think that alternative points of view are flawed. Therefore, attempts to force them to "balance" their opinions with those alternatives would simply make them produce biased accounts of "flawed opinions" with which they disagree. This form of bias occurs already, and should not be encouraged through the false notion that there is some way to get a "fair and balanced" view of the world that skips the hard part: listening to divergent viewpoints advocated by their best proponents, even if one must, oneself, come up with better arguments than the best proponents have made.

3. We take no position on the accuracy of the biases discussed in these pages. That is irrelevant to the descriptive question with which we are concerned: How are biases conveyed in modern mass democracies?

The (scarce) scholarship on the subject suggests that there is a division of labor in the production of biases, just as with most things modern. Roughly, the "belief systems" (well-organized biases) that are "transmitted" to the general public originate in acts of "creative synthesis characteristic of only a minuscule proportion of any population" (Converse 1964, 212, 211), so there must be bias transmitters who have somehow, themselves, been taught the biases they transmit.

In tracing the path from the creative synthesizer of an ideology to the transmitter of ideological biases, and thence to the general public, one needs at least a general idea of the content of the bias being transmitted in a given case. Hence the research published here, aimed at establishing the biases being transmitted in the contemporary United States. If our authors were studying a different culture, the biases might be different, but the overall path of their transmission might be similar.

With the preliminaries out of the way, what is it that our authors have discovered? Nothing very surprising. In the best tradition of social science that uses advanced statistical techniques to demonstrate what is already evident to anyone intimately familiar with a topic, our authors find that the biases of academic and news-media personnel in the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century are overwhelmingly "liberal." This should not shock anyone who has read or watched the American news and cultural media; or who has taught or been taught in American universities, attended faculty meetings at American universities, read American scholarship, or studied the list of academic books published each week in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. One of the most telling findings published below is that in universities, the only field in which the adherents of left-wing views seem to be outnumbered (at least using the imperfect measure of party affiliation) is "military/sports" (Cardiff and Klein below, 246).

Given the unsurprising nature of our findings, why is it that they have already, prior to publication, attracted such attention? Presumably it is because previous reports of liberal media and academic bias have tended to be anecdotal, and in our positivistic culture this is sometimes taken to mean that such reports are "unscientific" and therefore of no account.[1] This view is triply erroneous. It conflates what is true with what is scientific; it conflates what is scientific with what has been proven; and it conflates what has been proven with what has been demonstrated statistically. But many truths are not scientific, many scientific truths have not yet been "proven" (indeed, no truth is ever "definitively" proven), and there is nothing unscientific about truths that

are proved anecdotally. The truth is what is real, and what is real is not always perceivable, let alone quantifiable.

In the case of academic and media biases, fortunately, the realities in question, being mental states, sometimes produce *observable* behavior. Still, the most important of such behaviors—the content of what is produced by journalists and professors—mightily resist statistical measurement, because they vary from individual to individual, as do most phenomena in the "human sciences." The biased gestures, inflections, and phrasings (as well as the biased arguments and interpretations) that one can observe in a classroom or on a television screen can be reduced to statistics only by being drained of the peculiarities that often give them force—and that make them "biased" to begin with.[2] The very same words spoken by different newscasters or professors may convey very different messages.

Few of our writers directly confront the question of content, even though that is what really matters. The difficulty lies in how to "measure" content other than by repeating the anecdotes that are usually considered unscientific—and that are usually the province of partisans. (Even "content analysis" must be coded by someone, who is thereby homogenizing anecdotes into interchangeable statistics, and is doing so in a potentially biased fashion.) Thus, our statistical research should be interpreted as inviting the reader who does *not* have at hand a rich storehouse of anecdotal data to infer from numerical data the particular, variegated content of what is taught in the classroom and broadcast on television news. The recommended chain of inference starts from professorial and journalistic behavior that, drained of particularity, is therefore amenable to statistical analysis: academics' voter registration (Cardiff and Klein below); social scientists' answers to questionnaires about their public-policy beliefs (Klein and Stern below); and journalists' use of certain sources (Groseclose and Milyo below).

Such methods may help answer the positivist insistence that one "prove" bias, but our authors have their own acknowledged biases, which color their methods and their interpretation of the proper inferences. For example, Klein and Stern asked social scientists a series of questions about public-policy issues that are often of concern solely to libertarians, and they found (unsurprisingly) that the vast majority of academics do not share these concerns. Outside of economics departments, moreover, public-policy issues of any kind are rarely discussed in the classroom, so for these findings to matter to non-libertarian readers, the inference must go, say, from the professors' non-libertarian eco-

nomic-policy views to broader attitudes about capitalism that would, in turn, probably be reflected in anticapitalist teaching that doesn't touch directly on public policy, and that thus might (by a further inference) produce students who will go into the world of policy debates biased to the left. Thus, the libertarian and public-policy lenses used by Klein and Stern do not deprive their results of interest, once it is recognized that statistics *never* speak for themselves. It is not unreasonable to infer[3] from Klein and Stern's statistics that, for example, historians who favor the minimum wage will tend to portray its early twentieth-century enactment as a victory for working people, and that their students will go into the world with inferences of their own, derived from such teachings.

Would such teachings constitute an intrusion of the professors' politics (or of the similar convictions of journalists) into the classroom (or the newsroom)? Of course it would. Would this intrusion be unwarranted? Not according to the professors' (or the journalists') perceptions of the truth. In this light, Klein and Stern's (and Cardiff and Klein's) most interesting finding may be that *economists*, although still predominantly liberal, are far less so than are other social scientists. The explanation is not far to seek: economics has long been the home of doctrines—such as Adam Smith's—that tend to challenge such "obvious" ideas as remedying poverty with minimum wages. Or, put differently: the ideas taught to economists may encourage different biases than do the ideas taught to historians—and, judging from Klein and Stern's data, economics may encourage different biases different than what is taught in all other fields.

Studies such as Klein and Stern's, therefore, should lead directly to research on the intellectual history of the ideas that dominate the various social-science disciplines, and of modern Western cross-disciplinary political culture. But recognizing the importance of ideas in determining people's political behavior is far from routine in social science, and intellectual history is deeply out of favor in departments of history. Thus, academics rarely perform even elementary research into the ideas broadcast to the public by the mass media—and even less research on the origins of their own biases. The possibility that the way anthropologists, economists, historians, political scientists, psychologists, and sociologists see the world is not simply an obvious reflection of the realities they study; that scholars in these fields *have* "worldviews," let alone biases, let alone that these might have been transmitted to them by their formal education, or by their informal consumption of popular

culture—these possibilities do not seem to occur to them. Thus, the analysis of politics and other cultural phenomena is in such a primitive state that it falls to an underfunded, chronically late interdisciplinary journal with no institutional home to promote the analysis of such basic issues.

The Left-Right Consensus on the Conservative Revolution

Anyone familiar with the conventional wisdom about American politics in the postwar era may find reason to wonder how journalists' or academics' liberal biases could matter—regardless of their existence. After all, have we not now experienced for a quarter century a massive public "shift to the right," suggesting that the public must be immune to the allegedly liberal biases of journalists (let alone the biases of those cloistered in the ivory tower)?

This conventional wisdom is comforting to both the left and the right, which have switched sides on the question of who is in the vanguard of history.

The left, which aims to liberate the oppressed, was never well suited to the twentieth-century claim that in the Communist countries, the oppressed had actually been liberated—and, indeed, had gained political power. After the fiasco of seeing regimes making this claim turn out, in every case, to be vast instruments of oppression, the left's opposition to "power" has returned with a vengeance. The left cannot tolerate political success, since the persistence of social problems after perceived success would imply that there might be something wrong with left-wing solutions to them. Therefore, what has been done is never enough, and "powerful forces" must be standing in the way of fundamental change. In a democracy, however, these forces must have the ability to fool the people into voting against their interests. In its own imagination this leaves the left, however temporarily, as an unpopular minority. (Pre-1917 Marxism was able to maintain both the image of beleaguered intellectual elite and that of tribune of popular revolt by projecting the revolt into the future, after the masses had woken up to the oppression the intellectuals had already noticed.)

Meanwhile, conservatives have eagerly abandoned the view that they were "standing athwart history and shouting Stop!" Starting in 1980, they seized the mantle of a popular movement that expresses the masses' electorally summoned "common sense." The new left-right

consensus, then—at least in the United States[4]—is that liberalism is the ideology of the politically sophisticated elite. This is half of the truth: the other half is that the tenets of liberalism are, in the main, generally accepted by the mass public, too.

That simple fact was masked by the election and re-election of Ronald Reagan, and the subsequent elections of both Presidents Bush, which were taken to signify the popular triumph of conservatism. The overinterpretation of elections as ideological "mandates" is a chronic tendency in democracies, which rest on the assumption that the public knows what it is doing when it votes. Vast bodies of public-opinion research, however, have shown that this assumption is false. Indeed, only tiny fractions of the public (in any country) have the slightest familiarity with politics at all, let alone with belief systems of the complexity that a Ronald Reagan's "conservatism" represents.[5] Thus, opinion surveys reveal that neither in 1980 nor thereafter did the American public have any idea of Reagan's radically anti-government agenda—and they reveal that if the public had known about Reagan's positions on specific issues, it would have disagreed with most of them (Schwab 1991, ch. 1).

Far from voting according to ideological or policy agendas, most members of the public vote according to such criteria as blind party loyalty and the "nature of the times" (Converse 1964). The nature of the times in 1980 was perceived to be worse than it had been since the Great Depression. Unemployment, inflation, and interest rates—combined into what Reagan called "the misery index"—were all in double digits. The media harped relentlessly on the continued "hostage crisis" in Iran, and President Carter was blamed for an attempt to rescue the hostages that produced only a crash of U.S. aircraft in the Iranian desert.

Yet despite all of these advantages, Reagan won only a bare popular majority in 1980 (as so often occurs, the Electoral College exaggerated this victory into a "landslide"). It is true that in 1984 Reagan received 59 percent of the vote, but this genuine landslide followed a notably non-ideological "Morning in America" re-election campaign, in which Reagan's advertisers contrasted the sunny nature of the times (the hostage crisis had ended, the economy had recovered) against the dark days of Carter—and his vice president, Walter Mondale, Reagan's 1984 opponent. In 1988, George H. W. Bush, no conservative but a sitting vice president "presiding" over continued good times was elected, just

as Converse might have predicted. For similar reasons, Bush was deposed in 1992, when the media misreported a recession that had ended long before the election as persisting (Buell 1998, 220). In 2000, Bush's son received half a million votes fewer than the Democrat, and leftist Ralph Nader won an additional 3 million. Finally, in 2004, George W. Bush was re-elected as a wartime leader, not as a conservative. Thus, there is no more evidence in the election results than in the opinion surveys to suggest any right-wing revolution in public opinion.

Accordingly, U.S. domestic policy since 1980 has continued its leftward drift, with the size of government growing by every measure—regardless of who controls the White House or Congress. Republicans who tear out their hair at the complicity of Bush and the GOP Congress in responding to every problem with a government solution might consider that these are politicians doing their best to listen to their constituents—even if they fail to do so as eagerly or persuasively as the Democrats.

Any doubts about the liberal inclinations of the U.S. public should be dispelled by the current popular support for government action against oil companies, so reminiscent of the 1970s. When 60 percent of the public "finds oil companies responsible for rising gas prices" (Harwood 2006), how much of a free-market revolution in public opinion can there have been?[6] What Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rodgers (1986, 43, 53) wrote twenty years ago is still true:

> Americans are opposed to big government, and respond favorably to the myths and symbols of competitive capitalism in the abstract. When it comes to assessing specific government programs or the behavior of actual business enterprises, however, they support government spending in a variety of domestic areas and are profoundly suspicious of big business. . . .
>
> Within this structure, moreover, the trend in public opinion over the past generation has been toward greater liberalism.

The Ferguson-Rogers view, which has been borne out by more scholarly analysts,[7] is, if anything, all too consistent with the possibility that liberal media bias—if it exists—affects public opinion. The media would, in this model, be the literal "transmitters" of liberal ideas to the public. The small body of research on the topic[8] has consistently shown news-media personnel to be overwhelmingly liberal, as confirmed by

(anecdotal) impressions of the content of the news, and by statistical exercises such as those discussed by Groseclose and Milyo below.

But if liberal media bias is real, and if it pushes public opinion to the left, then how is it that Republicans are ever elected? There is also a left/right consensus about the irrelevance of media bias, and it contains conflicting answers to this question.

The Left-Right Consensus on the Irrelevance of Media Bias

The few liberal scholars who discuss the matter tend to deny that liberal media bias is real—usually either because it hasn't been "statistically demonstrated"; or, as in the case of Herbert Gans, whose classic book is critically scrutinized by William G. Mayer below, because the content broadcast by the media is *less liberal than it could be* (which is necessarily true, but irrelevant to the question of whether the media pull the public leftward).

In stark contrast, media personnel themselves seem to realize how liberal they are (e.g., Lichter et al. 1986, 28), but they deny that their liberalism affects the content of their work. Journalists seem to think they can leave their biases at the newsroom door, as if—just as in the imaginings of some of their right-wing critics—bias is deliberate and can be removed at will, like a sweater. Meredith Vieira, the new co-host of the "Today" show—who once exclaimed on "The View" that "the entire pretext for war" was "built on lies," and who marched in an anti-war protest because of how "upset" she was about it—has reassured her viewers that while "there's nobody that doesn't have biases one way or the other," she can be counted upon "to put those aside" (Vieira 2004a, 2004b, 2006).

Conservatives, meanwhile, generally argue that while media bias does affect the content of "mainstream media" news, it has little effect on public attitudes: the people's common sense allows them to ignore media bias, or to turn for relief to conservative media such as Rush Limbaugh or Fox News Channel (which, conservatives fail to realize, have audiences that are dwarfed by those of the broadcast networks and National Public Radio). The conservatives thus tend to assume that liberal[9] media bias is easily detectable by members of the public who, the survey research shows, generally don't even know what "liberalism" means (e.g., Converse 1964). As with the comforting conservative notion that the left-wing doctrines taught in American classrooms are so

obviously absurd that students see right through them, those on the right who scoff at the effect of media bias are guilty of underplaying the complexity of the political world, and thus its susceptibility to multiple, equally plausible interpretations. They fail to realize, for example, that their own conservatism is a bias that did not emanate directly from the world as a set of self-evident truths, but was taught to them by somebody. Had they been taught different biases, formally or informally, they would now have very different versions of "common sense"—as might college students and viewers of the "Today" show, had they been influenced by conservative professors and journalists instead of liberal ones. Note, however, how neatly the conservative view fits with the democratic pretense that the people, not "elites," are in charge.

A less epistemologically naive reconciliation of Republican electoral victories with liberal media bias would try to take account of the scholarly findings about public ignorance of politics in general, and of ideology in particular. We might, for example, accept that journalists are sufficiently more liberal than most members of the public that they will often disagree with the public's electoral decisions—but not because the public is immune to journalistic infusions of liberalism. Rather, liberal news-media bias may be real and effective, *to the extent that the public pays attention to the news.* But in most cases, the public is so inattentive that it takes years of media pounding for media biases to shape public attitudes on any given issue or office holder. Were the public more attentive, it would catch up to the media's most recent version of liberalism faster.

This theory would account for the public's slow drift to the left over time (e.g., Page and Shapiro 1992)—and to the Republican party's ability to win public approval only by following this drift. Media bias (in whatever ideological direction) matters, then, but more subtly than can be detected in election results alone.

In future issues of this journal, we will publish and debate empirical research that tries to test this (and other) theories about media bias and "media effects"—the scholars' term for the ability of the media to shape public opinion. For now, I will make a purely philosophical argument in favor of both media bias and media effects, in the form of two rhetorical questions. *How else would people learn about the political world, if not through the media? And how can a mediated version of a complicated world fail to convey a selective (biased) picture of it?*

Only if politics were graspable in all its detail—meaning, given the

scope of modern politics, only if the entirety of human existence were simple—would we escape the need for the political world's *mediation* to us by other people. Anything short of complete comprehension entails that somebody will transmit a partial picture of the political world to us: a picture that highlights whatever is, according to some tacit or explicit criterion, more important than what the picture leaves out. The selection criterion is the transmitter's "bias."

Bringing in Academic Bias

Nothing about the model just presented dictates that media bias will be liberal, or even that the carriers of bias will be the "mass" media: parish priests used to mediate the world to their parishioners. The form taken by the media, and the outlines of the picture they paint, are contingent, historical matters. But regardless of whether the media are conservative, liberal, or libertarian; whether the mediator is a parent, a teacher, a newscaster, a writer, a filmmaker, or a preacher; whether "the news" is delivered by gossip, newspaper, radio, television, or Internet—the general theory is that the biases of those who mediate the world to us shape our perceptions of it.

The *differences* among the biases displayed by those in economics versus those in other academic disciplines put paid to psychological explanations of academic liberalism—such as Robert Nozick's (1997) claim that academic liberalism amounts to the adult residue of smart kids' resentment that intelligence is not rewarded by capitalism as handsomely as it was in school. Likewise, the differences in the biases of, say, Fox and Al Jazeera should make us doubt pat explanations of liberal media bias as stemming from journalists' innate inquisitiveness or their inherent desire to stand up for the little guy, rather than from cultural sources that vary with time and place. A striking fact about American journalists, for example, is that since World War II, they have virtually all been college graduates (Hess 1991, 60). It is safe to assume that in college, they received an education far different from that of most Arab journalists, and different from that of most prewar American journalists as well. If our authors are right about the direction of *academic* bias, is it so far-fetched to think that journalists who were required by their professors to read a steady diet of left-wing texts may have come away from the experience with left-wing views?

The only barrier to accepting such a model is the academic's convic-

tion that his is a lonely voice that could not possibly find an echo in his students or readers. What power could a mere professor have when compared to that of "the state" and "the corporations"? But corporations can sell things only to ready buyers. And the state, in a democracy, is constrained (when the public is paying attention) by the voting public's views—over which the state itself has no influence that is unfiltered by cultural media.

Who, then, shapes public opinion if not those who run those media? And who more powerfully shapes the views of media personnel than academics if, to a man and woman, media personnel are college graduates? Nobody but the most extraordinarily inept teacher can have failed to notice that teaching works. Students learn the theories they are taught. If those students go on to become journalists, the theories they have learned will stand ready to guide their selection of which aspects of the world are worth mediating to a mass audience, and how those aspects should be framed.

If this model is correct, then the academic study of politics would have to be radically reconstituted, with the media more important than any other institution.

Murray Edelman was, as Stephen Bennett points out below, a rare bird in calling attention to the autonomy of cultural mediations of politics. His view differed from the model offered here only in suggesting that politicians and public officials directly manipulate public opinion—without mediation. The "mass society" framework that Mark Fenster shows Edelman to have used makes little allowance for intellectual elites to be causally aligned with the anti-intellectual masses, and Edelman's left-wing ideological framework, emphasized by Bennett and DeCanio below, seems to have predisposed him to overlook the role in symbol generation of anyone but, broadly speaking, government officials and business interests. Still, Bennett and Fenster point out that in Edelman's most recent work, both elites and masses are ultimately the playthings of symbols that have a life of their own. This opens the door to mapping the history of the ideas that exercise a trickle-down influence on public opinion by way of the beliefs transmitted from belief synthesizers to educators, from educators to media personnel, and from the media to the masses.

Liberal and conservative ideological resistance to this model will probably be as stubborn as positivist, sociological, and democratic biases against it. There is no getting around the ideological touchiness of the bias issue, given the deep hold of the left- and right-wing variants of

populist disregard for the influence of *ideological* elites. But if, as Edelman (1964, 172) had it, "direct knowledge of the facts" of politics is inaccessible, then people's political beliefs *must* be mediated to them by ideas about politics that come from somewhere other than the facts themselves. Even if one ends one's study of the issue by concluding that in the modern world, this somewhere is not the realm of ideological elites who shape public opinion, there would be good reason to focus attention on the issue of elite political bias—if only to guard against the possibility that one's own biases may have predetermined that conclusion.

NOTES

1. One of our authors, Mayer, enunciates the same view. But fortunately, he not only complains about the "anecdotal" nature of the writers he criticizes, Ben Bagdikian and Herbert Gans; he subjects the anecdotes to withering scrutiny, showing that Bagdikian and Gans tendentiously interpreted or misreported their evidence. The process of conjecture and refutation in which Mayer is engaged is just as scientific when it takes place at the anecdotal level as when it involves statistics; indeed, statistics are simply compilations of anecdotes.
2. In twenty years of teaching in history and political science departments at Barnard, Berkeley, Dartmouth, Harvard, and Yale, I was only twice privy to colleagues' teaching of "conservative" texts. These incidents illustrate the danger of non-anecdotal research in this area.

   Once, in a course on the history of political thought, Burke was defended; but the defense was inept (due in large part to Burke). And once, in a course on social-science methodology, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* was required reading, but the lectures and discussion sections, conducted by left-wing scholars, emphasized (so as to ridicule) Smith's naive notion of a natural "propensity to truck and barter," skipping over (what I consider to be) his far more profound explication of the inadvertently "altruistic" consequences of the butcher, baker, and brewer's pursuit of self-interest. Had these two anecdotes been caught in a statistical net, they would have counted as "conservative," but they had the actual effect (in the first case, unintended) of making the students in the courses more liberal.

   Similarly, statistical analysis of course syllabi would surely reveal tens of thousands of courses in which such authors as Marx or Foucault are required reading. But I myself have frequently taught Marx and Foucault—in order to point out fundamental logical errors and unwarranted assumptions in the texts. Statistical analysis alone could not tell *how* I teach Marx and Foucault, so innocent analysts might misconstrue my courses as cases in which these authors are presented as discoverers of great truths. The multitude of courses in which such authors are taught might, for all the statistics tell us, likewise be

debunking exercises. (That, at least, is a logical possibility—although in my experience it is far from what actually happens.) One's interpretation of such statistics will be filtered through the lens of anecdotal experience, and that is as it should be: reality must be interpreted, and one is properly suspicious of interpretations that fly in the face of (what seems to be) one's own experience.

3. Or so my experience, filtered through my biases, suggests.
4. The overinterpretation of electoral results also produced the conventional wisdom that the (non-majority) election and re-election of Margaret Thatcher in Britain, and the later adoption of "neoliberal" policies worldwide, heralded a global popular embrace of free markets. The scholarship never supported this view. For instance, Borchert 1996 showed that European neoliberalism was the province of state elites, not the masses. Stokes 1998 demonstrated the same thing about South American neoliberalism (only by normative assumption concluding that the masses must have retroactively endorsed neoliberal reforms).

   The recent popular rejection of elite attempts to impose genuine neoliberal reform in Europe, and the leftist sweep through South America in reaction to the myth that neoliberal reforms were actually implemented there, should not have been necessary to expose the implausibility of the notion that the masses of either continent had suddenly become readers of Smith, Milton Friedman, and F. A. Hayek. But the clear-headed analysis of politics is difficult given the cultural pressure, in democratic societies, to interpret electorates' and governments' behavior as being aligned with each other, in accordance with democratic norms.
5. The modern originator of this line of research was Philip E. Converse, whose "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics" (1964) will be republished, with extensive commentary and his own reflections, in the next issue of *Critical Review.*
6. "Conservatism" also has cultural and foreign-policy dimensions, of course, but readers are invited to reflect on whether the last quarter-century has not in fact seen a growing tolerance of personal freedom and a diminished appetite for foreign intervention, contrary to the usual conservative positions. On the other hand, it is true that Reagan's 1980 election was preceded by a huge spike in public support for "doing more on defense" (Shapiro 1998, Fig. 6)—presumably due to the U.S. military's inability to end the Iranian "hostage crisis."
7. On the increasing de facto liberalism of American public opinion over time, see, *inter alia,* McCloskey and Zaller 1986, Bennett and Bennett 1991, Stimson 1991, and Page and Shapiro 1992.
8. The best study of news-media liberalism, covering journalists' beliefs, the effect of these beliefs on journalists' work process, and the content of the work itself, remains Lichter et al. 1986—long since out of print, and never accorded the academic attention it should have received.
9. Partisan bias may be a different matter. People are not so blind that they can-

not detect Katie Couric beaming at the Democrats she interviews, and snarling at the Republicans. They may perceive this as "liberal bias" by equating liberalism with Democratic partisanship. But even an awareness of partisan bias will leave all but the most ideological viewers (a tiny proportion, which Converse put at less than 3 percent of the public in the 1950s) vulnerable to persuasion by less recognizable forms of bias in the selection and presentation of stories and interviews that have no partisan content.

REFERENCES

Bennett, Linda L. M., and Stephen Earl Bennett. 1990. *Living with Leviathan: Americans Coming to Terms with Big Government*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Bennett, Stephen Earl. 2005. "Populism, Elitism, and the Populist Ideology of Elites: The Reception of the Work of Murray Edelman." *Critical Review* 17(3-4): 351-66.

Borchert, Jens. 1996. "Welfare-State Retrenchment: Playing the National Card." *Critical Review* 10(1): 63-94.

Buell, Emmett H. 1998. Review of *Renewing Presidential Politics*, by Bruce Buchanan. *American Political Science Review* 92(1): 219–20.

Cardiff, Christopher F., and Daniel B. Klein. 2005. "Faculty Partisan Affiliations in All Disciplines: A Voter-Registration Study." *Critical Review* 17(3-4): 237–56.

Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent,* ed. David E. Apter. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.

DeCanio, Samuel. 2005. "Murray Edelman on Symbols and Ideology in Democratic Politics." *Critical Review* 17(3-4): 339–50.

Fenster, Mark. 2005. "Murray Edelman, Polemicist of Public Ignorance." *Critical Review* 17(3-4): 367–92.

Ferguson, Thomas, and Joel Rodgers. 1986. "The Myth of America's Turn to the Right." *The Atlantic* (May).

Garfinkle, Norton. 2005. "Supply-Side vs. Demand-Side Tax Cuts and U.S. Economic Growth, 1951-2004." *Critical Review* 17(3-4): 427–48.

Groseclose, Tim, and Jeffrey Milyo. 2005. "A Social-Science Perspective on Media Bias." *Critical Review* 17(3-4): 305–14.

Harwood, John. 2006. "Republicans Sag in New Poll." *The Wall St. Journal,* April 27: A4.

Hess, Stephen. 1991. "Reporters Who Cover Congress." *Society* (January–February): 60–65.

Klein, Daniel B., and Charlotta Stern. 2005. "Professors and Their Politics: The Policy Views of Social Scientists." *Critical Review* 17(3-4): 257–304.

Lichter, S. Robert, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter. 1986. *The Media Elite.* Bethesda, Md.: Adler & Adler.

Mayer, William G. 2005. "What Conservative Media? The Unproven Case for Conservative Media Bias." *Critical Review* 17(3-4): 315–38.

MacCallum, Spencer H. 2005. "Residential Politics: How Democracy Erodes Community." *Critical Review* 17(3-4): 393–26.

McCloskey, Herbert, and John Zaller. 1984. *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes toward Capitalism and Democracy.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Nozick, Robert. 1997. "Why Do Intellectuals Oppose Capitalism?" In idem, *Socratic Puzzles.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schwab, Larry M. 1991. *The Illusion of a Conservative Reagan Revolution.* New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction.

Shapiro, Robert Y. 1998. "Public Opinion, Elites, and Democracy." *Critical Review* 12(4): 501-28.

Stimson, James A. 1991. *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles, and Swings.* Boulder, Colo.: Westview.

Stokes, Susan. 1998. "Constituency Influence and Representation." *Electoral Studies* 17(3): 351-67.

Vieira, Meredith. 2004a. American Broadcasting Company, "The View," June 17.

Vieira, Meredith. 2004b. American Broadcasting Company, "The View," August 30.

Vieira, Meredith. 2006. American Broadcasting Company, news conference, April 6.

Christopher F. Cardiff and Daniel B. Klein

FACULTY PARTISAN AFFILIATIONS IN ALL DISCIPLINES: A VOTER-REGISTRATION STUDY

ABSTRACT: *The party registration of tenure-track faculty at 11 California universities, ranging from small, private, religiously affiliated institutions to large, public, elite schools, shows that the "one-party campus" conjecture does not extend to all institutions or all departments. At one end of the scale, U.C. Berkeley has an adjusted Democrat:Republican ratio of almost 9:1, while Pepperdine University has a ratio of nearly 1:1. Academic field also makes a tremendous difference, with the humanities averaging a 10:1 D:R ratio and business schools averaging 1.3:1, and with departments ranging from sociology (44:1) to management (1.5:1). Across all departments and institutions, the D:R ratio is 5:1, while in the "soft" liberal-arts fields, the ratio is higher than 8:1. These findings are generally in line with comparable previous studies.*

The conventional wisdom about the politics of the American university holds that the professoriate, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, has a leftward tilt. Empirical investigation of the topic has primarily taken two forms, surveys and voter-registration studies.[1] The results of the two approaches have been mutually reinforcing, and have confirmed the conventional wisdom. In the humanities and social sci-

Critical Review 17 (2005), nos. 3–4. ISSN 0891-3811. www.criticalreview.com

Christopher F. Cardiff, Department of Economics, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA 95192, tifchris@aol.com, and Daniel B. Klein, Department of Economics, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 22030, dklein@gmu.edu, thank Andrew Western for collecting Berkeley and Stanford data, Patrick Peterson for Santa Clara University data, and Brianna Cardiff for Los Angeles- and San Diego-area university data. The data are displayed (with names redacted) at <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/economics/klein/Voter/FinalApril106Redacted.xls>.

ences, and at elite institutions, a "one-party system" appears undeniable. But our investigation shows that elsewhere on campus, such as in the business school, and at religious and explicitly conservative colleges and universities, the situation is very different.

This paper expands the voter-registration approach. It covers a broad range of schools: public and private, large and small, religious and secular, elite and mid-tier, liberal-arts and professional. Although the schools are all located in California, they are geographically dispersed across the state's three largest metropolitan areas: the San Francisco Bay area, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

Elsewhere in these pages, Klein and Stern 2005b provides a lengthy summary of research on the ideological views of academics, including voter-registration research. Therefore, our summary of previous voter-registration research is brief, and we confine ourselves to the investigation of Democrat:Republican ratios among faculty without directly exploring ideology.

Table 1 compares some of our findings (column D) to the Democrat:Republican ratios discovered in previous voter-registration and survey research. (As the comparisons show, each investigation has its peculiarities, and no method is definitive.) Within any given line of Table 1, our findings tend to be on the low end. This results from our inclusion of Prostestant-oriented, "conservative," and non-elite schools. When there are so few Republicans to start with, just a few more in the denominator can dramatically reduce the D:R ratio.

Our Politics

The topic of this paper is inherently political. Readers will rightly ask who is doing the investigation, and why. The lead author, Christopher F. Cardiff, felt politically homeless through his first four opportunities to vote for president. Eventually, he found that his beliefs are best described as libertarian-tending-to-vote-Republican. As an economist, his chief research interest is education policy. His motivation to conduct this investigation arose from the monolithic political culture that his daughter seemed to confront (in his eyes) as she shopped for an undergraduate education. Daniel Klein, the second author, is an economist whose family members were uniformly Democratic, but around age 17 he went from being apolitical to considering himself libertarian. In 1980 he voted for the Libertarian presidential candidate, but

Table 1. Our D:R ratios compared to previous studies of seven liberal-arts disciplines.

	A	B	C	*D*	E	F
	Survey Studies			*Voter-Registration Studies*		
	Klein & Stern	Rothman et al.	Brookings	*Cardiff & Klein*	5 misc. studies	Horowitz & Lehrer
Anthropology	30.2	*		*10.5*	21*	
Economics	3.0	2.1	3.7	*2.8*	1.6	4.3
English		29		*13.3*	19.3	18.6
History	9.5	14.3	4.1	*10.9*	75	20.7
Philosophy	13.5	5.0		*5.0*	24	8.9
Political Sci.	6.7	7.6	4.8	*6.5*	7.9	7.9
Sociology	28.0	39*	47.0	*44.0*	32*	30.4

*Indicates zero Republicans.

Sources:

Column A: 2003 survey data for academics through age 70 from Klein and Stern 2005a.

Column B: 1999 survey data obtained directly from Robert Lichter, used in Rothman et al. 2005, and detailed in "Lichter" worksheet of the Excel file available at <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/econmics/klein/Voter/FinalApril106Redacted.xls>.

Column C: 2001 survey data from Brookings 2001 and Light 2001.

Column D: 2004–2005 voter-registration data gathered for this paper from California records.

Column E: 2003–5 voter registration data pooled from separate investigations at Capital University, Dartmouth College, Duke University, Ithaca College, and the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, detailed in "Other Schools" worksheet of the Excel file available at <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/economics/klein/Voter/FinalApril106Redacted.xls>.

Column F: 2001–2002 voter registration data for 32 elite schools reported in Horowitz and Lehrer 2002.

has never since voted for any office. For him, this study is part of an ongoing attempt to understand why U.S. political culture does not more readily and thoroughly embrace libertarian ideas, which (in his eyes) seem so worthy.

Methodology

This study takes Klein and Western's 2004 voter registration data on Berkeley and Stanford tenure-track professors (excluding emeriti faculty) and adds data from nine more schools. In selecting the nine additional schools, we sought to include not only major institutions, but also institutions and departments we thought were likely homes for Republicans, and that were geographically feasible for us to study. We extended the study from the San Francisco Bay area to include less-Democratic regions of California. We included two Catholic-affiliated universities (Santa Clara University and the University of San Diego); two Protestant ones (Point Loma Nazarene University and Pepperdine University); a small secular college with a reputation for political diversity (Claremont McKenna College); a top engineering school (California Institute of Technology); a large, mid-tier university (San Diego State University); and two large, elite public research universities (University of California, San Diego, and University of California at Los Angeles).[2]

For these nine schools, unlike Berkeley and Stanford, the faculty data we gathered are comprehensive.[3] Lists of tenure-track faculty (excluding emeriti) were generated from online course catalogs. We collected voter-registration information for these faculty members by searching the records of county registrars of voters, fanning out to surrounding counties as necessary (given cost constraints). For example, Pepperdine University is located in Los Angeles County near Ventura County. If we were unable to locate a faculty member using Los Angeles County records, we then checked Ventura County. Any records still not located would be checked in less likely counties surrounding Los Angeles. Similarly, records were checked for San Francisco Bay-area universities in seven different counties. Because of the large size of San Diego County and the location of the universities within it, we searched only the San Diego registrar of voters for those schools' faculties.

When a search discovered multiple voters with the same name and different party registrations, we marked the result "indeterminate." We included all "inactive" and "pending" status records in our search, and "canceled" registrations when they appeared to indicate the right person. Date of birth was also used to eliminate duplicate records when a voter was obviously too young or too old to be a faculty member.[4]

There is nothing in our methodology that detects or compensates for

Figure 1. Example of departmental naming.

Actual department names	*Generic department name*	*Division*
Africana Studies		
Asian Studies	Ethnic Studies	Humanities
Women's Studies		
Ethnic Studies		

See "Dept. Mapping" in the Excel spreadsheet available at <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/economics/klein/Voter/FinalApril106Redacted.xls> for details about actual department names.

voters who register as members of a party in order to influence its primary election, but who plan on voting against that party in the general election. We believe the number of such voters to be extremely small.

Some individual faculty members are affiliated with more than one department. To avoid double counting, these faculty members were placed in a single department.[5]

We grouped actual department names, which sometimes differ ("political science" versus "government," for example), into a generic department heading; we then grouped the departments into divisions. Figure 1 provides an example.

In this article, when we use the term "department," we mean the generic department. The composition of *divisions* by (generic) departments is as follows:

Fine Arts: Art, Performing Arts, Music.

Humanities: Ethnic Studies, History, Languages and Literatures, Linguistics, Philosophy, Religious Studies.

Social Sciences: Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology.

Hard Sciences/Math: Biology, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Neurosciences, Physics, Mathematics.

Engineering: Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Biological and Chemical Engineering, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, Materials Science.

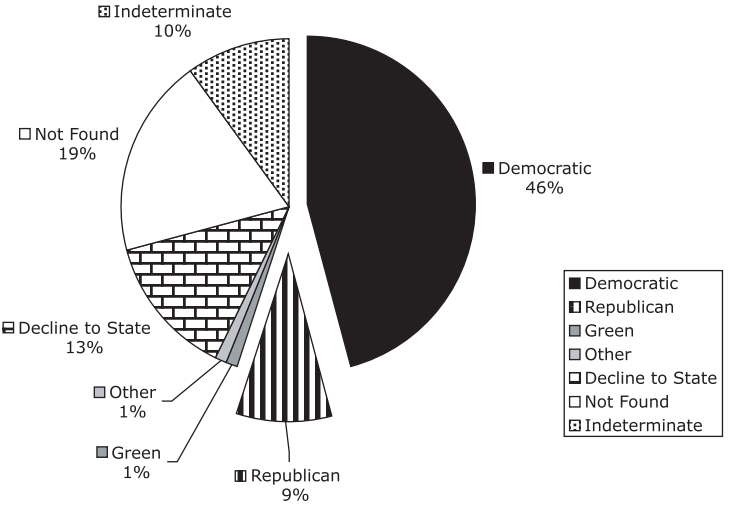
Business: Accounting, General Business, Finance, Information Systems, Management, Marketing.

Social-Professional: Education, Communication, Law, Social Welfare and Policy.

Medicine/Nursing/Health: Medicine, Nursing, Psychiatry, Health.

Military/Sports: Military Science, Physical Education.

Figure 2. Tenure-track faculty party affiliation for selected California universities.



No previous survey or voter-registration study is nearly as broad as our coverage here.

Overall Faculty Political Affiliation

We found 6,449 tenure-track faculty names at the eleven schools. We obtained political readings (including "nonpartisan" and "declined to state") for 4,563 of the names, or 70.8 percent. The pie chart in Figure 2 shows the overall breakdown of party registration for all schools surveyed.

In this paper we focus on ratios of registered Democrats to Republicans. This focus tends to obscure a fact that is shown clearly in the pie chart, namely that 45 percent were not identified as either Democrat or Republican. Some commentators might infer that Democrats can hardly be said to dominate academe—indeed, the chart suggests that registered Democrats constitute less than 50 percent of the faculty. However, *survey* research that reaches the affiliations of the large portion here unidentified confirms that the academy is dominated by people who vote and self-identify Democratic (Rothman et al. 2005; Klein

Table 2. California faculty political affiliation, by school.

	N	*Dem.*	*Rep.*	*Ds per R*
UC Berkeley (23 depts.)	909	445	45	*8.7 (adjusted)*
UCLA	1801	857	119	*7.2*
Stanford (23 depts.)	588	275	36	*6.7 (adjusted)*
UCSD	978	467	71	*6.6*
SCU	334	174	29	*6.0*
Caltech	287	131	31	*4.2*
SDSU	691	317	77	*4.1*
USD	303	141	39	*3.6*
CMC	134	45	25	*1.8*
PLNU	136	40	41	*1.0*
Pepperdine	288	68	77	*0.9*
Total	*6449*	*2960*	*590*	5.0

and Stern 2005b). And since we deliberately sought to include universities and departments where we thought Republicans might be located, Figure 2 probably understates the degree of the "one-party campus" by over-representing Republicans.

Table 2 lists the schools in order of their ratio of registered Democrats to Republicans. For Berkeley and Stanford, where a sample of only 23 departments was investigated, we have employed an adjustment factor to arrive at pseudo-comprehensive D:R ratios. The adjustment factor is calculated by examining how the D:R ratio for UCLA and UCSD changes when we confine the sample for each of those schools to the departments investigated at Berkeley and Stanford.[6]

The large, elite schools are clustered at the top, with the highest D:R ratios. In casting a wider net in search of D:R balance, we caught some Republicans, particularly in the Protestant schools. Pepperdine, for example, enjoys a reputation as a conservative school—the dean of its law school is Kenneth Starr—and its D:R ratio of 0.9:1 is the lowest in the study. It's a closely balanced faculty, politically—but not a conservative one, to the extent that party tracks ideology. It only appears "conservative" because at other schools, one would find four, six, or eight Democrats for every Republican, instead of just one. In contrast, the

Catholic-affiliated universities (SCU and USD) are solidly Democratic, although to a lesser degree than the large, elite schools.

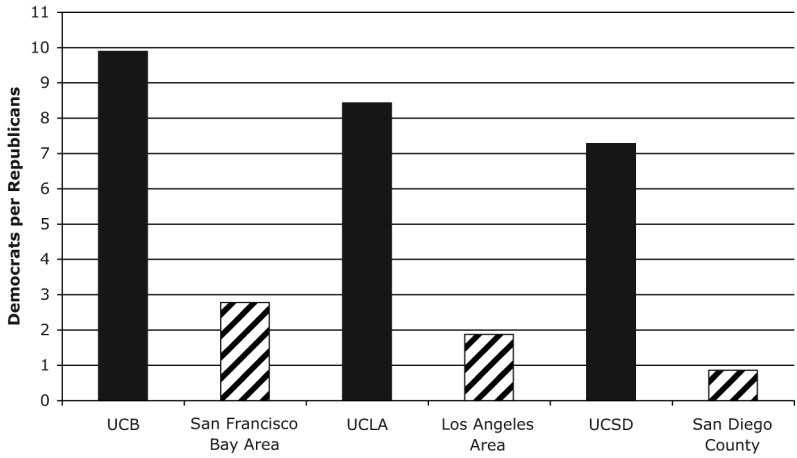
Is There a Regional Effect?

Some researchers suggest that the imbalance between Democrats and Republicans on university faculties reflects regional patterns (Ames et al. 2005, 3). It seems to us that there are a number of possible mechanisms linking campus and regional politics. The political tenor of the region may affect a would-be professor's decision to apply for or to accept a position. Also, some of the professors who are settled at a campus might be swayed by the region's political tenor. Moreover, a causal mechanism may run from the campus to the region. For example, UC-Berkeley and Stanford University are major cultural and even demographic factors in the San Francisco Bay area, and might be part of the explanation of why voting in the area is as Democratic as it is.

To explore the connection between region and campus, we examined the three University of California campuses. To make the data uniform, we calculated new overall D:R ratios for UCLA and UCSD based on data only from departments that matched those covered in the UC-Berkeley data. We also examined the D:R ratios for the pertinent counties, based on voter-registration records for the 2004 presidential elections.[7] In the case of UC-Berkeley and UCLA, this is a composite ratio based on the counties where professors from those universities are registered. For example, 76.2 percent of UC-Berkeley professors were registered in Alameda County, so when calculating the composite ratio for the Berkeley component of the San Francisco Bay region, we weighted voter registrations in Alameda at 76.2 percent (Contra Costa County was weighted 18.7 percent, San Francisco 3.7 percent, and others less than 1 percent). Our study found 98.3 percent of UCLA professors registered in Los Angeles County, and 100 percent of the UCSD professors whose records we located were in San Diego County. University and regional data are shown in Figure 3.

At first glance, Figure 3 would seem to show a connection between campus politics and region. UC-Berkeley, the campus with the highest D:R ratio, is in the region with the highest D:R ratio, and UC-San Diego, the campus with the lowest D:R ratio, is in the region with the lowest D:R ratio. It is possible, however, that other factors complicate this comparison. Berkeley is different from UCLA and UCSD in ways

Figure 3. 23-department D:R ratios for selected University of California campuses and for corresponding regions.



other than being situated in the San Francisco Bay area. Although UCLA and UCSD are both considered high-prestige institutions, Berkeley is the most prestigious school in the UC system. If there is, as seems evident elsewhere in our and others' findings, a tendency for those at the top of the academic pyramid to vote Democratic, it is not surprising that Berkeley leads the pack, followed by the next most-prestigious UC schools, UCLA and UCSD, in rank order.

In any case, the results suggest that any regional effect is not large. The San Diego region is slightly more Republican than Democratic. If the regional effect were a dominating factor, then the faculty of UCSD would be close to balanced. Instead, the 23-department faculty ratio is more than 7:1 (and the comprehensive faculty ratio is 6.6:1).

Results by Division

Table 3 lists the results by academic division. The data confirm earlier studies about the predominance of Democrats in the humanities and social sciences. Also noteworthy is the variation across divisions.

The humanities and social sciences are the ones most likely to influence students politically, since professorial politics presumably plays little role in learning chemistry or medicine. The high D:R ratios in the hu-

Table 3. Faculty political affiliation by type of academic division.

	N	*Dem.*	*Rep.*	*Ds per R*
Humanities	1153	600	60	*10.0*
Arts	313	151	20	*7.6*
Social Sciences	1039	529	78	*6.8*
Hard Sciences/Math	1635	792	126	*6.3*
Medicine/Nursing/Health	489	233	49	*4.8*
Social Professional	662	315	71	*4.4*
Engineering	700	213	85	*2.5*
Business	389	116	86	*1.3*
Military/Sports	69	11	15	*0.7*
Total	*6449*	*2960*	*590*	5.0

manities and social sciences therefore lend credence to concerns about the academy becoming an echo chamber for a dominant point of view.

The only division that favors Republicans is military/sports, which is the smallest division. As with the business category, the surprise is not that military/sports is less Democratic than other divisions, but that it is not more Republican than it is. In business education, the low ratio of 1.3 Democrats per Republicans indicates that the latter are not marginalized, but that they are not dominant, either.

Results by Department

Table 4 lists the results by (generic) department, with the most Democratic departments first. In departments near the top of the list, Republi-

Table 4. Faculty political affiliations by department.

Generic Department	*N*	*Dem.*	*Rep.*	*Ds per R*
Sociology	146	88	2	*44.0*
Ethnic Studies	90	49	3	*16.3*
Performing Arts	90	48	3	*16.0*
Neurosciences	180	105	8	*13.1*
Languages & Literature	511	262	22	*11.9*
Psychiatry	130	71	6	*11.8*
History	290	164	15	*10.9*

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

Generic Department	*N*	*Dem.*	*Rep.*	*Ds per R*
Biology	446	247	23	*10.7*
Anthropology	111	63	6	*10.5*
Art	98	44	5	*8.8*
Psychology	295	169	21	*8.0*
Religious Studies	75	40	5	*8.0*
Linguistics	67	30	4	*7.5*
Health	51	29	4	*7.3*
Political Science	225	124	19	*6.5*
Mathematics	342	136	24	*5.7*
Social Welfare & Policy	90	47	9	*5.2*
Earth Sciences	97	40	8	*5.0*
Education	220	105	21	*5.0*
Materials Science	14	5	1	*5.0*
Philosophy	120	55	11	*5.0*
Music	125	59	12	*4.9*
Physics	313	140	33	*4.2*
Chemistry	257	124	30	*4.1*
Communication	98	44	11	*4.0*
Medicine	247	108	27	*4.0*
Law	254	119	30	*4.0*
Economics	262	85	30	*2.8*
Civil Environmental Engineering	133	42	15	*2.8*
Bio. & Chemical Engineering	52	13	5	*2.6*
Electrical Engineering	269	83	33	*2.5*
Computer Science	114	35	15	*2.3*
Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering	118	35	16	*2.2*
Nursing	61	25	12	*2.1*
Management	173	61	34	*1.8*
Marketing	58	12	7	*1.7*
Accounting	51	15	13	*1.2*
Physical Education	45	11	10	*1.1*
Information Systems	59	16	15	*1.1*
General Business	20	7	7	*1.0*
Finance	28	5	10	*0.5*
Military Science	24	0	5	0.0

cans are almost as rare as third-party voters are in the general electorate. At the end of the list are smaller departments that are evenly balanced (general business, physical education) or actually more Republican than Democratic (military science, finance).

There are no surprises in Table 4, but it is worth noting some anomalies. In social science, two departments stand out. Sociology's 44:1 ratio is far above the 6.8:1 ratio among all of the social scientists, pooled. At the other end, economics, at 2.8:1, is far below the social sciences' overall ratio.

Selective Comparison of Departments at Different Schools

It is impractical to print a table that shows data by individual school for all 42 generic departments. In Table 5, we have culled departments of special interest to indicate the granularity of the data. (For other departments, consult the Excel file available at <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/economics/klein/Voter/FinalApril106Redacted.xls>.)

Pepperdine illustrates how aggregating the data across all departments can mislead. While the school is politically "balanced" overall, there are significant Democratic majorities (2.6:1 and 1.9:1) in the humanities and social-science departments that are presumably most influential on undergraduate political beliefs, even at Pepperdine.

The case of Claremont McKenna also shows the need to disaggregate the data by department. Some of its faculty members tout it as "one of the most politically balanced schools in the country" (ISI 2004,128), which may be technically correct: Democrats outnumber Republicans by only 1.8 to 1. The specialty of Claremont McKenna is its social-science division, which has an overall ratio of 0.8:1—more Republicans than Democrats. But when we look at the social-science departments individually, economics is exactly evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans (3:3); psychology has no Republicans (5:0); and only political science (called Government at CMC), the largest department, is overwhelmingly Republican (2:10).

Old Elephants

Those Republicans who can be found among the faculty are disproportionately full professors. As seen in Table 6, the younger ranks,

(tenure-track) assistant and (tenured) associate, mostly show the highest D:R ratios. This is especially true at Berkeley and Stanford. The implication is that in the future, unless young Democratic professors occasionally mature into Republicans, the D:R ratios are going to become more extreme. The most notable exception is Pepperdine University, where the trend is going the other way.

Gender Effects

Republicans have a gender gap on campus (in addition to many other gaps). Except at Caltech and the Protestant colleges (Pepperdine and PLNU), the D:R ratio among female faculty is much higher than among men. At relatively conservative Claremont McKenna, where the men are about evenly divided, the women are 18:1 Democratic. The female faculty also have D:R ratios above 12:1 at Berkeley, Stanford, Santa Clara, UCLA, and UCSD, compared to an overall ratio—at all schools and in all departments—of 8.4:1.

We did not control for the tendency of female professors to be younger, which might mean that in part, their partisan affiliations are part of the younger-faculty effect. (The latter, on the other hand, might itself be partly attributable to the relatively large number of female assistant and associate rather than full professors.)

What Does It All Mean?

Here we list some of the questions raised by these data, without trying to answer more than a few of them very tentatively:

- Why are the arts, humanities, and social sciences so dominated by Democrats?
- Do certain disciplines inherently support social-democratic ideology, so that they only attract Democrats (or conversely, repel Republicans)? Could this be the explanation for why sociology departments across all schools are almost completely Democratic?
- Why does economics stand out in the social sciences as a discipline where Republicans are not merely marginal?
- Is there something to the idea that voting Republican is less appealing to scholarly and scientific sensibilities?

Table 5. D:R ratios by school, division, and selected departments.

	SF Bay Area			Los Angeles Area				San Diego Area				
	UCB	Stan.	SCU	UCLA	Pepp.	Caltech	CMC	UCSD	SDSU	USD	PLNU	Total
Art	n.c.	n.c.	4*	13.0	0.5	n.a.	n.a.	11*	8.0	4*	3.0	8.8
Performing Arts	n.c.	n.c.	4.0	23.0	1*	n.a.	n.a.	15*	5.0	0.0	n.a.	16.0
Music	13.0	4*	1*	14*	0.3	n.a.	n.a.	17.0	2.3	0.0	0.5	4.9
Fine Arts total	*13.0*	*4**	*9.0*	*25.0*	*0.6*	*n.a.*	*n.a.*	*43.0*	*4.0*	*4**	*1.0*	*7.6*
Languages & Literature	41.0	23.0	5.3	10.5	4.0	5*	5.0	13.0	35*	7.0	2.5	11.9
History	31.0	22*	5.0	11.3	1.0	6*	5.0	27.0	11.0	1.3	2.0	10.9
Linguistics	7.0	6*	n.a.	7.0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	5.0	5.0	n.a.	n.a.	7.5
Philosophy	9.0	10.0	7*	3.0	0.0	1*	2.0	3.0	5*	2.0	0.0	5.0
Religious Studies	2.0	7*	13*	n.a.	4.0	n.a.	2.0	n.a.	1*	10.0	1.0	8.0
Ethnic Studies	n.c.	n.c.	3*	12.5	0!	n.a.	0.0	7*	14*	n.a.	n.a.	16.3
Humanities total	*18.0*	*34.0*	*9.8*	*9.8*	*2.6*	*12**	*3.5*	*10.6*	*35.5*	*3.8*	*2.0*	*10.0*
Anthropology	12*	6*	11*	4.5	n.a.	0.0	n.a.	10.0	3.0	3*	n.a.	10.5
Economics	11.0	2.3	7.0	2.8	6!	0.7	1.0	6.0	5*	4.0	1.0	2.8
Political Science	14.0	9.0	6*	13.5	1*	0.5	0.2	21.0	9*	9*	2*	6.5
Psychology	26.0	24*	14*	14.0	6.0	0.0	5*	4.2	2.7	8.0	0.3	8.0
Sociology	17*	10*	n.a.	31.0	2*	n.a.	n.a.	17*	4*	5*	2.0	44.0
Social Sciences total	*21.0*	*9.0*	*38.0*	*9.2*	*1.9*	*0.6*	*0.8*	*9.0*	*5.3*	*11.0*	*1.2*	*6.8*

Communication	4*	n.a.	8.0	0.0	2.5	n.a.	n.a.	7*	3.7	7.0	0.5	4.0
Education	n.c.	n.c.	5*	11.7	2.0	n.a.	n.a.	3*	5.4	5.3	0.4	5.0
Law	6.0	9.5	9.0	8.0	0.4	n.a.	0.0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	4.0
Social Welfare & Policy	n.c.	n.c.	n.a.	24.0	4!	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	5.3	n.a.	2*	5.2
Social-Professional total	*6.7*	*9.5*	*10.3*	*11.0*	*0.7*	*n.a.*	*0.0*	*n.a.*	*5.0*	*5.8*	*0.7*	*4.4*
Hard Sci./Math total	*9.9*	*5.2*	*3.7*	*8.3*	*0.5*	*6.5*	*3.8*	*7.7*	*4.5*	*4.8*	*1.7*	*6.3*
Engineering total	*3.3*	*3.1*	*3.0*	*3.8*	*n.a.*	*1.7*	*n.a.*	*1.8*	*2.8*	*1.0*	*1!*	*2.5*
Business total	*2.0*	*6**	*1.4*	*2.4*	*0.7*	*n.a.*	*1.0*	*6.0*	*1.1*	*0.9*	*0.4*	*1.3*
Medical/Health total	*n.c.*	*n.c.*	*n.a.*	*4.9*	*5!*	*n.a.*	*n.a.*	*9.3*	*5.2*	*4.0*	*0.5*	*4.8*
Military/Sports total	*n.c.*	*n.c.*	*n.a.*	*n.a.*	*1**	*n.a.*	*1.7*	*n.a.*	*n.a.*	*1**	*0.5*	*0.7*
Grand total	*9.9*	*7.6*	*6.0*	*7.2*	*0.9*	*4.2*	*1.8*	*6.6*	*4.1*	*3.6*	*1.0*	*5.0*

"N.c." means not collected; "n.a." means not applicable.
* indicates zero Republicans; ! indicates zero Democrats; 0.0 indicates no Democrats or Republicans

Table 6. Democrats per Republican, by professorial rank.

	SF Bay Area			Los Angeles Area				San Diego Area			
Rank	UCB	SU	SCU	UCLA	Pepp.	Caltech	CMC	UCSD	SDSU	USD	PLNU
Full	8.3	5.9	3.8	6.6	1.0	4.9	1.4	6.2	3.9	2.6	0.8
Assoc.	30.0	12.3	10.6	9.7	0.7	10.0	2.5	8.1	6.8	6.0	1.9
Asst.	64.0	40*	6.5	8.9	0.8	1.1	2.6	7.1	3.1	4.2	0.8

* indicates zero Republicans

Table 7. Faculty partisan identification by gender.

	SF Bay Area			Los Angeles Area				San Diego Area			
	UCB	SU	SCU	UCLA	Pepp.	Caltech	CMC	UCSD	SDSU	USD	PLNU
Male	8.3	6.3	4.6	6.2	0.8	4.2	1.1	5.6	2.7	2.5	1.0
Female	26.0	22.7	12.6	13.0	1.2	4.3	18.0	15.0	8.9	6.9	0.9

- If ideology plays no role at all in the hard and applied sciences, what are we to make of the 2.5:1 Democratic:Republican ratio in engineering, the 4.1:1 in chemistry, 4.2:1 ratio in physics, 10.7:1 in biology, or the 13.1:1 in neurosciences?
- To what extent does faculty ideology influence what students think?

Any attempt to answer the last two of these questions would have to flesh out the relationship between *partisan* and *ideological* proclivities. It seems clear that political ideology is intimately bound up, in some way, with the professional culture in many, if not most, academic disciplines. What other explanation than ideology could there be for the partisan variations between, say, sociologists and economists?

Survey research shows that party affiliation among academics does correspond to their ideology, although not in a completely straightforward way (Rothman et al. 2005; Klein and Stern 2005b). In general, academics who vote Democratic have more social-democratic and pacifist views. Republican academics have views that are generally more conservative, libertarian, or some combination thereof, relative to Democrats.

Given the consistency of our findings with the previous research, we believe that it can be stated emphatically that American faculty, especially in the social sciences and humanities, are overwhelmingly Democratic in affiliation and social-democratic in orientation. This news will still be controversial to some; to others, it will be stunningly obvious. In either event, however, it should now be possible to move on to addressing questions of the sort we have listed above.

NOTES

1. Another method of empirical investigation uses publicly reported campaign contributions (e.g., McEachern 2006), but since only small numbers of people contribute to either party, it is hard to draw inferences from such data.
2. The Berkeley and Stanford data were collected by Andrew Western during the first half of 2004. The Santa Clara data were collected by Patrick Peterson during the autumn of 2004. The data for all of the San Diego-area and Los Angeles-area schools were collected by Christopher Cardiff and Brianna Cardiff during August–December 2005.
3. Scripps Institute of Oceanography is the one exception to our comprehensive review of the nine universities. Although associated with UCSD, Scripps faculty were not included, due to time constraints and the fact that their uniqueness does not permit comparisons with departments or divisions at other schools.

4. A status of "cancel" was definitive when it was the only record that matched a faculty name. This occurred in 1.5 percent of the records. Birthdates before 1935 and after 1978 were used to eliminate ambiguous records; this occurred for 0.3 percent of the records.
5. Typically, professors were placed in the first department listed, or the first one where they were located in an alphabetic sort by department.
6. The adjustment factor is 0.88, arrived at by adding the average of UCLA's comprehensive ratio divided by UCLA's 23-department ratio, on the one hand, to UCSD's comprehensive ratio divided by UCSD's 23-department ratio, on the other. Thus, (0.5)(7.2/8.4) + (0.5)(6.6/7.3) = .88. For Berkeley, then, the ratio reported in Table 2, 8.7, is (0.88)(9.9). For Stanford, we have 6.7 = (0.88)(7.6).
7. California Secretary of State. 2004. "Report of Registration as of October 18, 2004." <http://www.ss.ca.gov/elections/sov/2004_general/sov_pref_pg5_6_ror.pdf>

REFERENCES

Ames, Barry, David C. Barker, Chris W. Bonneau, and Christopher J. Carman. 2005. "Hide the Republicans, the Christians, and the Women: A Response to 'Politics and Professional Advancement Among College Faculty.'" *The Forum* 3(2).

Brookings Institution. 2001. "National Survey on Government Endeavors," prepared by Princeton Survey Research Associates, November 9. Online at <http://www.brook.edu/comm/reformwatch/rw04_surveydata.pdf>.

Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI). 2004. *Choosing the Right College 2005*. Wilmington, Del.: Intercollegiate Studies Institute.

Horowitz, David, and Eli Lehrer. 2002. "Political Bias in the Administrations and Faculties of 32 Elite Colleges and Universities. A Report of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture." Online at <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Content/read.asp?ID=55>.

Klein, Daniel B. 2006. "Sense and Sensibilities: Myrdal's Plea for Self-Disclosure and Some Disclosures about AEA Members." *Econ Journal Watch* 3(1): 180–205.

Klein, Daniel B., and Charlotta Stern. 2005a. "Political Diversity in Six Disciplines." *Academic Questions* 18(1): 40–52.

Klein, Daniel B., and Charlotta Stern. 2005b. "Professors and Their Politics: The Policy Views of Social Scientists." *Critical Review* 17(3–4): 257–303.

Klein, Daniel B., and Andrew Western. 2005. "Voter Registration of Berkeley and Stanford Faculty." *Academic Questions* 18(1): 53–65.

Light, Paul C. 2001. "Government's Greatest Priorities of the Next Half Century." *Reform Watch*, No. 4, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, December. <http://www.brook.edu/comm/reformwatch/rw04.htm>

McEachern, William A. 2006. "AEA Ideology: Campaign Contributions of

American Economic Association Members, Committee Members, Officers, Editors, Referees, Authors, and Acknowledgees." *Econ Journal Watch* 3(1): 148–79.

Rothman, Stanley, S. Robert Lichter, and Neil Nevitte. 2005. "Politics and Professional Advancement Among College Faculty." *The Forum* 3(1).

Daniel B. Klein and Charlotta Stern

PROFESSORS AND THEIR POLITICS: THE POLICY VIEWS OF SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

ABSTRACT: *Academic social scientists overwhelmingly vote Democratic, and the Democratic hegemony has increased significantly since 1970. Moreover, the policy preferences of a large sample of the members of the scholarly associations in anthropology, economics, history, legal and political philosophy, political science, and sociology generally bear out conjectures about the correspondence of partisan identification with left/right ideal types; although across the board, both Democratic and Republican academics favor government action more than the ideal types might suggest. Variations in policy views among Democrats is smaller than among Republicans. Ideological diversity (as judged not only by voting behavior, but by policy views) is by far the greatest within economics. Social scientists who deviate from left-wing views are as likely to be libertarian as conservative.*

This paper presents results from a large survey of academic social scientists, including historians and legal and political philosophers. We look at the data from many different angles to see what they say about the ideological composition of contemporary social science.

Our approach to ideological classification is to build from the granu-

Critical Review 17 (2005), nos. 3–4. ISSN 0891-3811. www.criticalreview.com

Daniel B. Klein, Department of Economics, George Mason University, Fairfax VA 22030, and Ratio Institute, Stockholm, dklein@gmu.edu; and Charlotta Stern, Institute for Social Research, Stockholm University, S-106 91 Stockholm, lotta.stern@sofi.su.se, are grateful to the Leavey School of Business and the Robert Finocchio Fund at Santa Clara University for assistance in meeting the costs of the survey; to Niclas Berggren and Jeffrey Friedman for comments; and especially to Donna Perry, Assistant Dean, Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University, for acting as independent controller and certifying the results.

lar level of individual policy issues. The survey asked questions about 18 policy issues, selected so as to place the survey respondents on an interventionist/laissez-faire continuum. We also determined the voting tendencies of the respondents. We do not address what is taught in the classroom, which would require a much different research approach.

Our chief concern here is to establish the data in their fullness. Aside from some passing remarks, we do not discuss what the data mean. In particular, we do not address the following big questions:

Why are academics so preponderantly Democratic, and why has the preponderance increased since 1970? This is a huge, complex matter; we prefer to establish the dependent variable and let others speculate about its causes.

Do professors exert a left-wing influence on students? Again, this is complex and speculative, best left aside here.

In policy views (as opposed to voting behavior), how does the professoriate compare to the general public? Our survey questions were asked only of the members of six scholarly associations. Thus, we do not have a basis for direct comparison to public opinion.

The numbers are what they are, but the authors of this paper have developed the numbers in particular ways. The reader will want to know where we are coming from. Thus, we say openly that our sensibilities are classical liberal/libertarian.

Social Scientists under the Microscope

The early sociology literature fixed on the idea that while, in general, elites were "conservative," college professors tended to challenge the status quo (although some writers, such as Alvin Gouldner [1970], accused the professoriate, especially the academic elites, of being too tied into the system to be anything but conservative). A major figure in bringing survey data and other evidence to bear on these sociological conjectures was Seymour Martin Lipset, who, with Everett Carll Ladd, strove to integrate survey evidence and interpretation (Lipset and Ladd 1972; Ladd and Lipset 1975).

Lipset and Ladd found that most academics are "liberal" or left, and the more eminent ones especially so (Lipset and Ladd 1972; Lipset 1982). Lipset's take on the subject was somewhat blurry. In his early years he comes across as an earnest leftist sociologist interested in getting an empirical handle on the matter, but later he comes to despair

over the state of sociology (Lipset 1994), and his work sustains complaints about academia being too left-wing.[1] In *The Divided Academy*, Ladd and Lipset (1975, 14) wrote that the empirical record had borne out Richard Hofstadter's generalization that from the late nineteenth century on, "the political weight of American intellectuals, including leading academics, has been disproportionately on the progressive, liberal, and leftist side." Survey evidence starting as early as 1937 showed that social-science professors, in particular, were disproportionately Democratic, and increasingly so in the ensuing decades (ibid., 27ff; on Canadian professors cf. Nakhaie and Brym 1999).

These tendencies contradicted what Charles B. Spaulding and Henry A. Turner (1968, 247) called "a well established empirical finding": that "persons occupying the favored positions in American society tend on the whole to be Republicans and to exhibit conservative political attitudes." To explain this anomaly, Spaulding and Turner, following the main line of sociological theorizing, conjectured that because social science involves critical thinking and an interest in questioning established institutions, social scientists should naturally be "liberal" and, thus, Democratic. From 1959 to 1964, Spaulding and Turner conducted surveys of scholarly associations. They found that philosophers, sociologists, political scientists, historians, and psychologists split roughly 3:1 Democrat to Republican. Botanists, geologists, mathematicians, and engineers leaned Republican (Spaulding and Turner 1968, 253). These findings were "consistent with the idea that an important element in explaining the differences is the degree to which the perspectives of the members of each profession tend to be oriented toward social criticism" or alternatively, as with the botanists, et al., "toward the application of knowledge in the business world" (ibid., 247).

In economics, the practice of surveying the tribe emerged later, but when it did, it was much more attentive to specific policy questions. Kearl et al. 1979 initiated this tradition. Kearl and his colleagues asked economists public-policy questions, and many of these questions were reproduced by subsequent studies, which sought to track trends in economists' opinions (e.g., Alston et al. 1992; Fuller and Geide-Stevenson 2003; Blendon et al. 1997; Caplan 2001 and 2002; Fuchs 1996; Fuchs, Krueger, and Poterba 1998; Whaples 1995 and 1996; Moorhouse, Morriss, and Whaples 1999; on graduate students, Colander 2005). There have also been surveys of economists in other countries that used similar questions (Frey et al. 1984; Block and Walker 1988; Ricketts

and Shoesmith 1990 and 1992; Anderson and Blandy 1992; Anderson et al. 1993). One of the main reasons for the policy orientation of the economics-survey literature has been the question of whether economists display "consensus" in their views—a hallmark of science. The surveys have therefore generally shown little concern for economists' party support or ideological self-description.[2]

Disciplinary scrutiny has also begun in political science (Heckelman and Whaples 2003) and psychology (Ray 1989; Redding 2001). And Stanley Rothman, Robert Lichter, and Neil Nevitte (2005) have continued in the Lipset tradition of surveying social scientists' ideological self-description. Far from being dated, they show, Lipset's finding of left-wing ideological homogeneity has become even more pronounced in the past few decades. Other surveys that reinforce these conclusions include work by the Brookings Institution (2001) and the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles (Lindholm et al. 2003). Such findings are further bolstered by voter-registration investigations, such as Zinsmeister 2002, Horowitz and Lehrer 2002, Klein and Western 2005, and Cardiff and Klein 2005.

The politics of academe is now a major topic in public discourse and increasingly among scholars themselves; for example, a recent issue of this journal contained the proceedings of a conference at Boston University on the state of the social sciences, with a session specifically on the political leanings of social scientists (*Critical Review* 2004, 187–208). This paper is intended as an evidence-based contribution to that debate. It contains extensive analysis of the results of a survey of academic social scientists designed by one of the authors, Daniel Klein, but handled and certified by an independent controller. (We have previously published several articles that make narrower use of the survey data.)[3]

There is one way in which our investigation is quite unique. Most surveys that ask about ideology, whether through self-description or policy questions, employ the conventional "liberal versus conservative" framework. We find that formulation to be confining and often misleading. In our survey, we instead asked questions designed to get at academics' position on a continuum ranging from active government intervention to laissez faire. This formulation is more substantive and more flexible, in that the raw material it generates can also be used to construct and identify familiar ideological categories, as shown in the cluster analysis below.

Description of Data

The data come from a survey taken in the spring of 2003. It was designed (1) to elicit the respondents' support for or opposition to 18 types of government activism; (2) to make the response format uniform, so that an individual's responses could be combined into an index; and (3) to illuminate ideological divisions within disciplines, especially by voting behavior.[4]

We surveyed members of six nationwide scholarly associations: the American Anthropological Association, the American Economics Association (AEA), the American Historical Association, the American Political Science Association, the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy (ASPLP),[5] and the American Sociological Association. One might want to label historians and legal-political philosophers humanists rather than social scientists. For the most part, however, we will be calling our respondents "social scientists." (In Table 3, we provide comparison Humanities and Social Sciences figures, based on previous studies.)

We mailed surveys to lists of 1,000 members each that were randomly generated by five of the six scholarly organizations. In the sixth case, the ASPLP, we mailed surveys to all 486 members. Out of the grand total of 5,486 surveys mailed out, 1,678 (nonblank) surveys were returned, a response rate of 30.9 percent (correcting for post-office returns, etc.).[6] As shown in Table 1, the individual association response rates varied from 22.6 to 35.2 percent.

If our survey results are unrepresentative, it could be for two reasons:

Response bias. It could be that, for example, Democratic scholars are

Table 1. Response rate by association surveyed.

	Surveys returned non-blank	Response rate (%)
Anthropology	349	34.9
Economics	264	26.6
History	297	30.9
Political-Legal Phil.	108	22.6
Political Science	309	31.0
Sociology	351	36.2
Total	*1678*	*30.9*

more likely than others to complete and return the survey. No available evidence speaks to this possibility.[7] We are inclined to doubt that any such bias is significant.

Membership bias. There could be a bias in the membership of the scholarly associations as compared to the composition of the professoriate in the various fields. For example, maybe Democratic anthropologists are more likely than Republican anthropologists to be members of the American Anthropological Association. When we embarked on this investigation in 2003, we assumed that such bias would be negligible. But the more we have learned about the associations, the more we think that there may be a Democratic/left tilt in their memberships, although we still doubt that it is large (on the AEA, see McEachern 2006 and Klein 2006).

One reason to doubt that either form of bias is large is that the Democrat:Republican ratios that our survey produced generally agree with other D:R findings, notably the voter-registration studies mentioned earlier (which depend neither on response rates nor association membership) and the survey reported by Rothman et al. 2005. However, even if it were the case that the survey respondents or the scholarly associations themselves have a Democratic or leftward tilt, we are not sure that it would affect the general importance of the results, as long as the tilt were not too large. With the exception of the ASPLP (which is interdisciplinary), the associations whose members we surveyed are the leading organizational and publishing institutions in their respective disciplines, so their members can be expected to have more influence in these disciplines than non-members do. It seems reasonable to assume that the more clout someone's ideology has, the more likely it is that she is a member of her discipline's professional association.

Academic Voting Patterns

Since we were interested in surveying those social scientists whose careers were chiefly academic, one survey question asked about the respondents' primary employment: academic, public sector, private sector, independent research, or other. The percentages reporting[8] "academic" were anthropology 73.1, economics 48.5, history 71.4, philosophy 76.6, political science 86.4, and sociology 74.9. This allowed us to focus our analysis on the 1,208 academics, who constituted 72 percent of the entire sample.

Table 2. Frequency of highest degree held by academic respondents.

Highest degree	Frequency	%
Ph.D.	1151	95.28
Master's	47	3.89
Bachelor's	4	0.33
J.D.	3	0.25
Other	3	0.25

Another question asked the respondent to check off the highest degree held. The frequency of responses for the academic respondents is shown in Table 2.

We also asked: "To which political party have the candidates you've voted for in the past ten years mostly belonged?" The options we offered were Democratic, Green, Libertarian, Republican, and Other, listed in that order horizontally across the page, with checkoff boxes. Of the academic respondents, 962 (79.6 percent) reported voting Democratic, 112 (9.3 percent) reported Republican, 17 (1.4 percent) reported Green, and 13 (1.1 percent) reported Libertarian. Twenty-nine respondents (2.4 percent) checked two or more responses, 16 (1.3 percent) wrote in an "other" party, 17 (1.4 percent) said they cannot or do not vote, and 42 (3.5 percent) did not respond to the question.

The Democratic:Republican (D:R) ratios of the six groups are shown in Figure 1.[9] We combine anthropology and sociology, here and for most of the rest of our analysis, because in those groups, the number of Republicans was very low, and the response patterns to the policy questions were very similar (see Klein and Stern 2004).

Using these results and other evidence, in Klein and Stern 2005c we estimated that the Democratic:Republican ratio for active[10] social-science and humanities faculty nationwide is probably at least 8:1.[11] That estimate lines up with voter-registration results and Rothman et al. 2005 (6).

Drawing on the survey data provided in Ladd and Lipset 1975, Table 3 shows that the D:R ratio has changed significantly since 1970. The distribution of party affiliation in 2003 is, in fact, similar to the professoriate's vote in the 1964 election—the Johnson-versus-Goldwater Democratic landslide, in which LBJ drew 89 percent of the vote among social-science and humanities professors. The composite of Ladd and

Figure 1. D:R Ratios of the six academic associations.

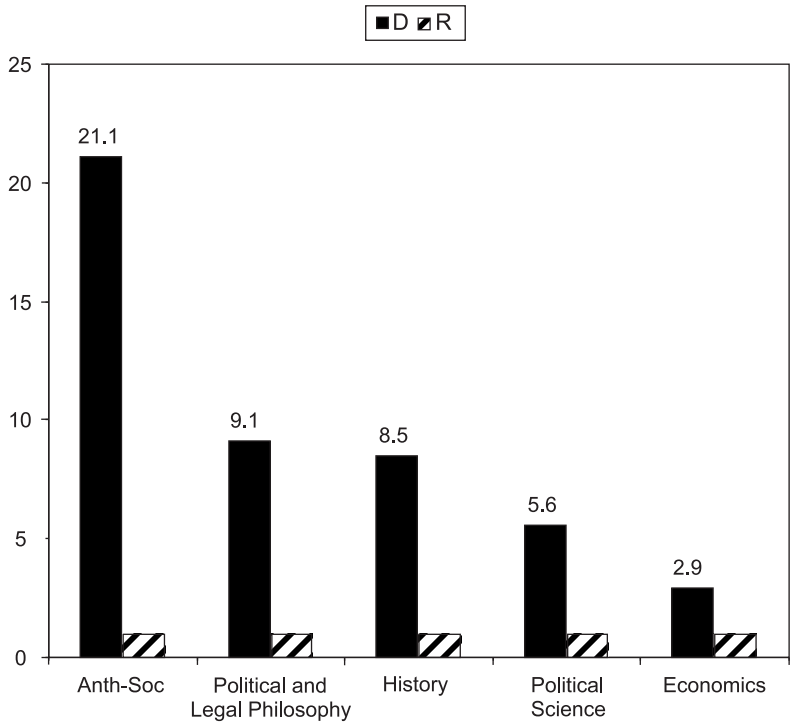
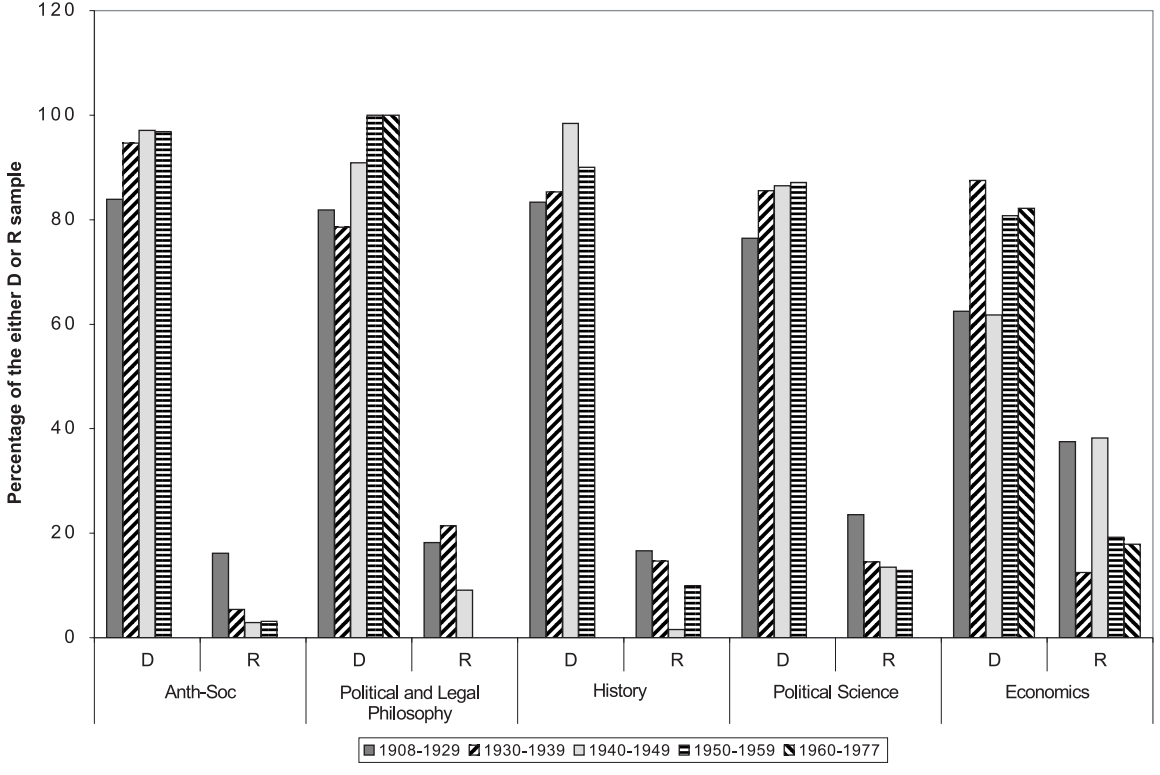


Table 3. Humanities and social-science professors' Democratic:Republican ratios over time.

	1964 Presidential Election	1968 Presidential Election	1972 Presidential Election	Composite 1964/1968/1972	Klein and Stern 2005c
Social Sciences	8.9:1	3.8:1	3.5:1	4:1	8:1
Humanities	6.6:1	3.1:1	2.4:1		

Sources: 1964, 1968, 1972, and composite: Ladd and Lipset 1975, 62–64. Klein and Stern 2005 aggregated humanities and social-science results on the basis of all available survey and voter-registration studies.

Figure 2. Democratic and Republican voting, by birth cohort and academic discipline.



Lipset's 1964, 1968, and 1972 findings indicates that since that era, the Democratic preponderance has roughly doubled.

Consistent with this trend, in our sample older professors are somewhat more often Republican. Figure 2 shows by generations the Democratic and Republican proportions in each discipline (limited to those who did not select one of the other parties). The D percentages generally trend upward as time passes, and the R percentages generally trend downward. There is no evidence here that the next generation will break the trend; however, only the economics mailing list contained very young members.

Policy Views of Academic Democrats and Republicans

Figure 3 consists of 18 small panels. Each panel shows the exact wording of the policy question, the response distribution for Democratic and Republican voters, and the mean values.

Our sample probably pretty well represents overall social-science faculty because, although the economists had a relatively low response rate (26.6 percent) and a low academic rate (48.5 percent), they are here part of a sample that does *not* include many of the social-science disciplines, such as psychology and women's studies, which, we are

Figure 3. Policy-issue response distributions of academic Democrats (solid) and Republicans (striped).

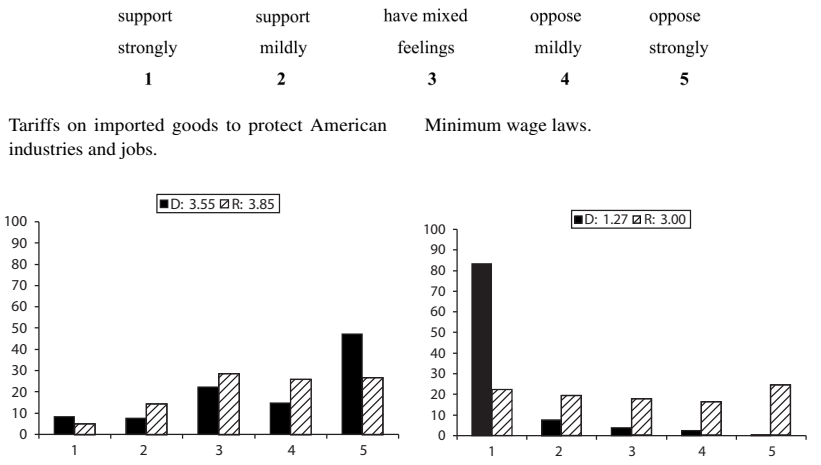
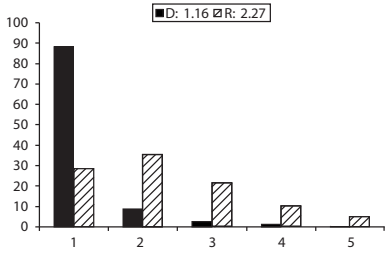
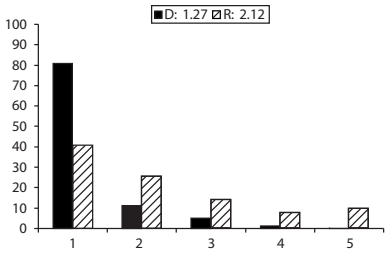


Figure 3. (continued)

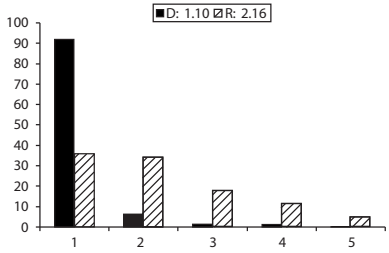
Workplace safety regulation by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).



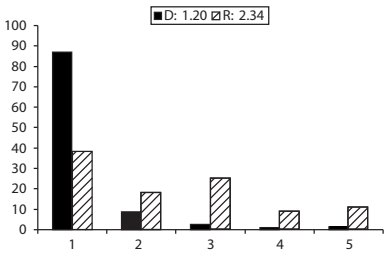
Pharmaceutical market regulation by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).



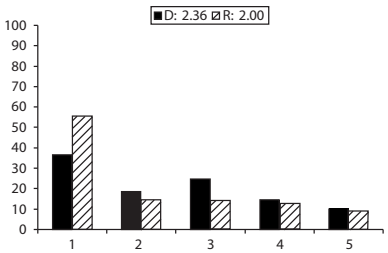
Air-quality and water-quality regulation by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



Laws making it illegal for private parties to discriminate (on the basis of race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation) against other private parties, in employment or accommodations.



Laws restricting the use and exchange of "hard" drugs such as cocaine and heroin.



Laws restricting prostitution.

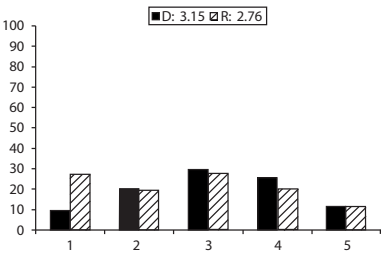
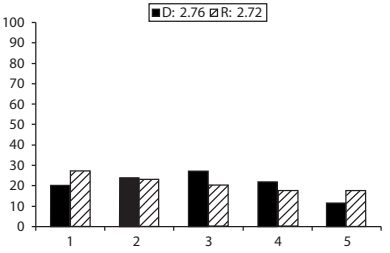
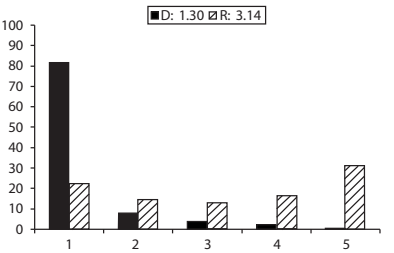


Figure 3. Policy-issue response distributions of academic Democrats (solid) and Republicans (striped). (continued)

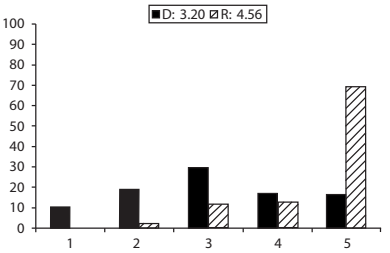
Laws restricting gambling.



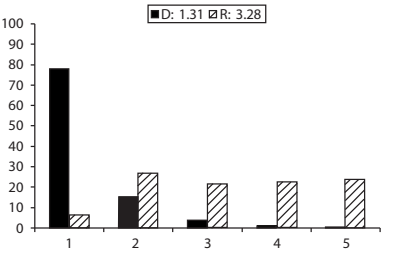
Laws restricting gun ownership.



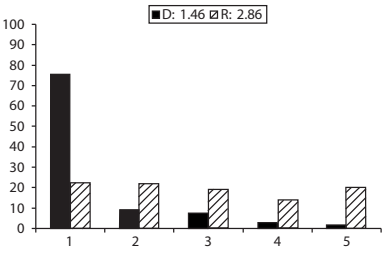
Government ownership of industrial enterprises.



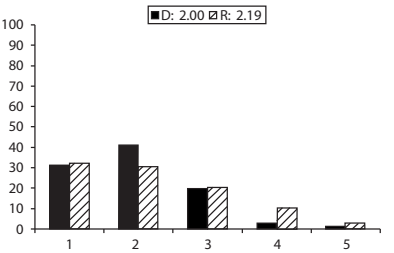
Redistribution policies (transfer and aid programs and tax progressivity).



Government production of schooling (K through 12).



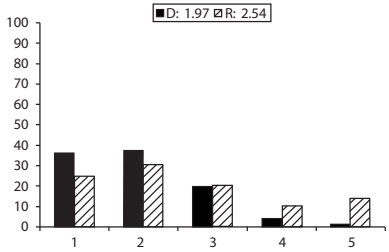
Using monetary policy to tune the economy.



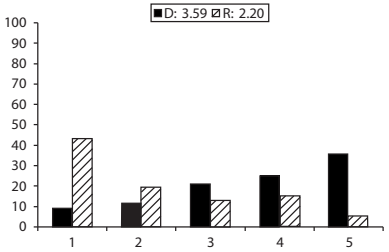
confident, are neither as Republican as economics tends to be, nor as skeptical of government action. We derive this judgment from voter-registration data spanning all disciplines (Cardiff and Klein 2006) and from many conversations with social scientists in various fields. Even though economics is whittled down in our sample by the response rate and the academic variable, those whittlings probably compensate

Figure 3. (continued)

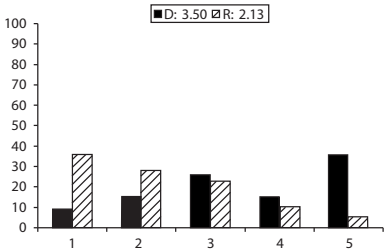
Using fiscal policy to tune the economy.



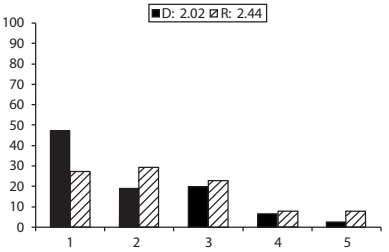
Tighter rather than looser controls on immigration.



American military aid or presence abroad to promote democracy and the rule of law.



Foreign aid and assistance by such organizations as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and US AID.



for the narrowness of the set of social-science disciplines that we sampled.

The eighteen panels of Figure 3 provide a good opportunity to make some basic points about the data.

1. Democrats and Republicans generally fit the ideal types of liberals and conservatives. The ideal-typical liberal is suspicious of private business and market forces ("capitalism"). She tends to be permissive about "deviant" lifestyles and choices (Ladd and Lipset 1975, 39; Redding 2001, 205). She is likely to support government policies to protect the poor and the excluded, and to believe in government regulation as a means to correct social problems such as racism. She tends toward pacifism and suspicion of American military intervention abroad. The ideal-typical conservative is friendlier to private business and market forces. He tends to be intolerant of "immoral" lifestyles and choices. He is suspicious of government economic intervention, and believes in self-reliance rather than government protection, even when it comes to policing (and thus

gun ownership) and education. He is a patriot and he believes that the government should protect the American people from external threats; thus, he is more favorable to military action and to immigration restrictions.

The policy differences between the social-scientist Democrats and Republicans generally match the way that the ideal types lead us to think liberals and conservatives would differ. *Relative to* the Democratic social scientists, the Republicans oppose government action in the economy (tariffs; the minimum wage; workplace-safety, pharmaceutical, and environmental regulation; government ownership of industry). In relative terms, the Republican professors also oppose gun control, anti-discrimination regulation, and public education. And relative to the Republicans, the Democrats are opposed to government intervention abroad, to restricting immigration, and to laws against hard drugs and prostitution, although they are not appreciably different from Republicans when it comes to laws against gambling.

2. Laissez faire is rare. Despite the differences in their relative views, the Democrats and Republicans whom we surveyed agree with each other enough to give us pause about the applicability of the ideological ideal types (at least when it comes to social-science professors). Both Republican and Democratic respondents in our sample are quite interventionist in absolute terms, even when the ideological type suggests that they should be somewhat laissez faire.

The political rhetoric of Republican politicians often favors "free markets" and "free enterprise." However, the Republican professors are not opponents of economic regulation and redistribution per se. And while Democrats often say that they favor tolerating diverse lifestyles, the Democratic professors do not, in absolute terms, oppose restrictions on hard drugs, prostitution, and gambling; nor are they very strong opponents of military action abroad (at least in the abstract). The eighteen panels show that the vast majority of social-science professors are quite interventionist in absolute rather than relative terms, regardless of party.

On 12 of the 18 policy issues, both the average Democratic response and the average Republican response is 3.00 or lower, indicating support for the government activity in question. The Democrats indicate *strong* support of government intervention (that is, a mean response lower than 1.5) on 8 of the 18 public policies: minimum-wage laws, workplace-safety regulation, food and drug regulation, environmental regulation, anti-discrimination laws, gun control, income redistribution, and public schools. The highest (most anti-interven-

Table 4. Both Democratic and Republican social scientists are quite interventionist.

	N scores	All 18 policies combined
Dem. voters	962	2.12
Rep. voters	112	2.69
Green voters	17	2.30
Libert. voters	13	4.24

tionist) mean response for the Democrats was 3.59, on immigration. Overall, the Democratic professors are supporters of status-quo levels of government activism (and possibly higher levels).

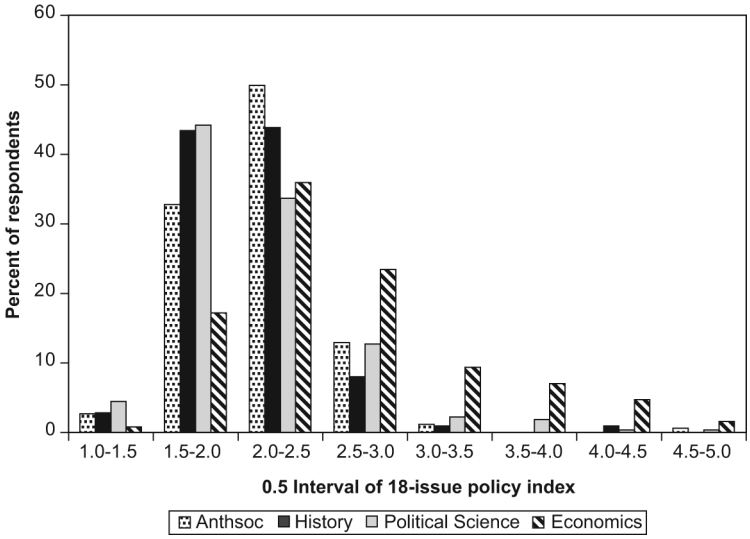
Their Republican peers tend to oppose tariffs and government ownership of industrial enterprises, as shown by their high mean scores on these questions; but they are significantly more interventionist than the Democrats on immigration and foreign policy. In absolute terms, however, most of the Republican mean responses are centrist. Table 4 shows the 18 combined issue scores for the four groups of voters, with Libertarians and Greens made available for comparison.

The point can be made in another way, as illustrated by Figure 4. For each respondent, we computed a combined score on the 18 policy issues: the strong interventionist would have had a score approaching 1, while the strong laissez-faire supporter would have a score closer to 5.[12] (Figure 4 and ensuing presentations omit the data from the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy, because doing so reduces clutter and because the ASPLP sample is small, had a low response rate, and does not clearly correspond to a particular academic department. Including the ASPLP data would not change the character of the results.)

Figure 4 shows that, in all the fields except economics, most respondents landed in the interval between 1.5 and 2.5, indicating that the vast majority of non-economist social scientists mostly support government activism on the 18 issues.[13]

3. The Democratic tent is relatively narrow. The academic social sciences are pretty much a one-party system. Were the Democratic tent broad, the one-party system might have intellectual diversity. But the data show almost no diversity of opinion among the Democratic

Figure 4. Most academics are highly interventionist.



professors when it comes to the regulatory, redistributive state: they like it. Especially when it comes to the minimum wage, workplace-safety regulation, pharmaceutical regulation, environmental regulation, discrimination regulation, gun control, income redistribution, and public schooling, the Democrats show much less diversity than the Republicans. Table 5 shows the sum of the standard deviations among Democrats and Republicans on the 18 policy questions.

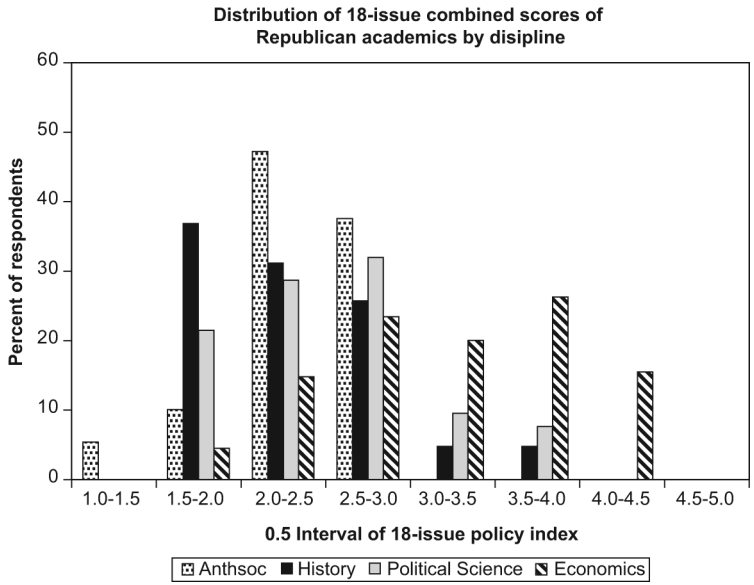
Another way to make the point is to compare the Republican respondents' overall scores, shown in Figure 5, to the Democrats', shown in Figure 6.

Figure 5 shows that most Republicans are in the 1.5–3.0 range, making them "pro-intervention," but that some are scattered farther in the ideal-typical libertarian direction, particularly among economists. Figure 6 shows that the Democrats are much more tightly packed. Almost

Table 5. The narrow Democratic tent.

	18 policy-response standard deviations
Democrats	17.1
Republicans	23.1

Figure 5. The Republican academic social-science tent.

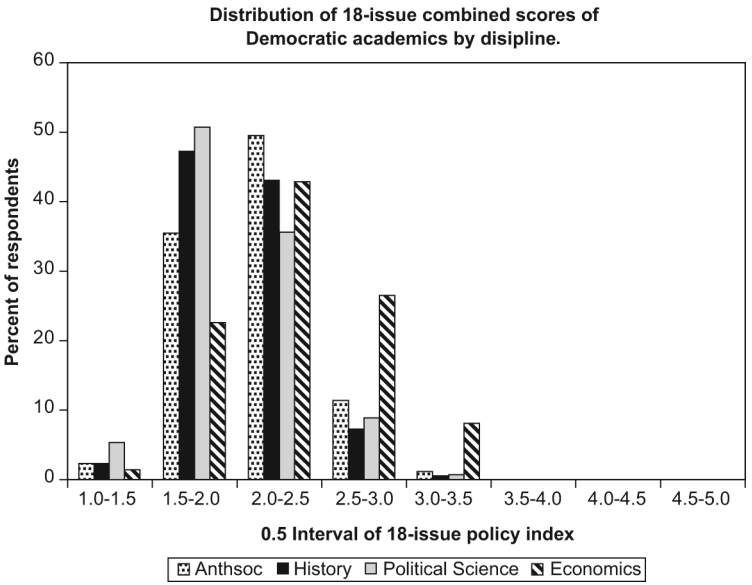


none of the Democratic respondents scored above the 3.0 level, and none above the 3.5 level. Campus diversity does not extend to the public-policy views that we measured.

4. Republican scholars are more likely to end up outside academe. As Table 6 shows, non-academic scholars are more likely to vote Republican than are academic scholars. The same information is used in Table 7 to compute social scientists' chances of ending up outside of academe. Across the board, Republicans are more likely to do so. These results are congruent with the finding, in Rothman et al. 2005, that conservative scholars hold less academically prestigious positions, controlling for research accomplishment.

We also investigated whether the data evince a tendency for scholars with higher (more laissez-faire) policy scores to land outside of the academy. When we examined low (1.0–2.5) versus high (3.5–5.0) scorers, we found that the high-scoring, more laissez-faire anthropologists and sociologists were disproportionately outside of academe (statistically significant at 0.01), as were the more libertarian historians (significant at 0.05). We also looked at mean scores, but did not find evidence there for the conjecture that those with more laissez-faire scores tend to be outside the academy—partly because scholars

Figure 6. The Democratic academic social-science tent.



working in non-academic government jobs tended to have somewhat lower (more interventionist) scores. As we further break down the intradisciplinary data into private-sector employment, independent research, etc., there are too few respondents in each cell to let us address whether laissez-faire-leaning scholars tend to get sorted out. Thus, our data might fail to show a tendency for more laissez-faire scholars to end up outside the academy, even if such a tendency exists. It may be that it is likelier for non-leftists to pay dues to scholarly associations when they are inside the academy, where there are professional reasons to do so, than it is for those who are outside the academy, where there aren't.

5. *Younger professors are slightly less interventionist.* The six panels of Figure 7 show the scatter of points for every academic respondent (not just the Ds and Rs), with year of birth on the horizontal axis and scores on the 18 issues shown vertically. Every trend line rises slightly over time. That is, younger professors tend to be slightly less interventionist than older ones.[14] Similar scatterplots (not presented here) show that Democrats in all six associations are trending upward in the policy index, and Republicans in four of the six. That is,

Table 6. Voting habits by academic ("Ac.") vs. non-academic ("Not") employment.

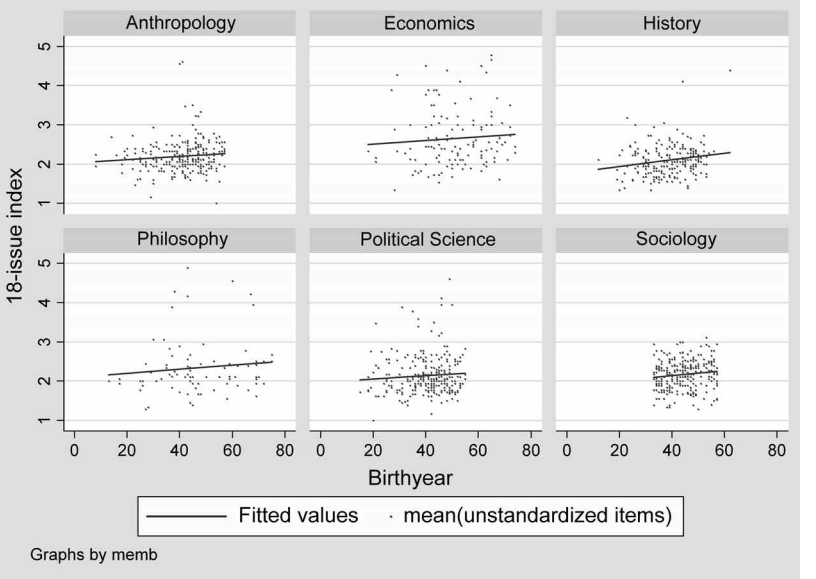
	Anthropology-Sociology		Economics		History		Philosophy		Political Science		All disciplines combined	
	Ac.	Not	Ac.	Not	Ac.	Not	Ac.	Not	Ac.	Not	Ac.	Not
Dem.	443	139	78	75	169	61	64	18	208	29	962	322
Rep.	21	16	27	34	20	18	7	4	37	6	112	78
D:R	21	8.7**	2.9	2.2	8.5	3.4**	9.1	4.5	5.6	5	8.6	4.1**

**A chi-square test yields 0.01 significance between Academic and Not Academic (differences in other disciplines are not significant at 0.10).

Table 7. Chance of landing outside the academy.

	Anthropology-Sociology	Economics	History	Philosophy	Political Science	All disciplines
Dem.	0.239	0.490	0.268	0.220	0.126	0.25
Rep.	0.432	0.557	0.474	0.364	0.140	0.41

Figure 7. Younger professors tend to be slightly less interventionist.



almost across the board, the younger academics tend to be slightly less interventionist than the older ones.

If we assume that there is no tendency for an individual professor's policy views to move over time in either direction (interventionist or laissez faire), then these data suggest that social scientists as a group are slightly more laissez faire than in, say, 1970. Pooling all the academic social scientists, regardless of party, the six issues with the largest correlation coefficients between birth years and policy positions—meaning the issues showing the greatest trends toward laissez faire—are fiscal policy (0.25), immigration (0.22), pharmaceutical regulation (0.16), foreign aid (0.13), the minimum wage (0.12), and laws against hard drugs (0.11). A negative coefficient, indicating more interventionism over time, is found for only two issues, income redistribution and public schooling, but the coefficient sizes are tiny (-0.04 and –0.01, respectively).

Possibly, however, the explanation for these findings is not generational but *longitudinal*—i.e., professors do indeed tend to migrate toward interventionism as they get older.[15] One explanation for such a tendency might be that long immersion in the academy tends to move

one's thinking in the interventionist direction. Such a longitudinal possibility would seem to run contrary to the widely discussed view that ideological migrants tend to go in the laissez-faire direction because their interventionist instincts and ideals get "mugged by reality," such that their hopeful notions about government and the political process disintegrate.

Another type of explanation might have to do with the respondents' interpretation of the questions. Older respondents, who perhaps more vividly remember the time when the rudiments of the regulatory and redistributive state were being established, may interpret the questions as they naturally would have been interpreted during the New Deal years experienced by their parents, or the New Frontier/Great Society days of their own youth: namely, as asking about whether there should be any government action in the areas in question at all. Younger respondents, however, may so take for granted the legitimacy of such action that they interpret the questions as being about whether there should be *more* regulatory and redistributive activity in these areas than there is already.

All we know for sure is that younger professors seem to answer the questions in a slightly less interventionist fashion than older ones.

Cross-Tabulation of Policy Scores: Statistical Remarks

In the tables below, we tabulate policy scores by discipline and political party. The policy issues (except for monetary policy)[16] are separated into five subgroups: economic intervention, government protection of the disadvantaged, gun control, international activism, and personal-choice regulation. The disciplines are ordered by their D:R ratios.

In Table 8, consider the first entry for the minimum wage. The number, 1.12, is the mean (average) of all the responses of Democratic-voting anthropology and sociology respondents. The survey format did not allow a respondent to give a response of 1.12, however. The actual response choices were categorical: 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. The categorical nature of the responses (i.e., the fact that they are "ordinal data") implies that any supposition of a normal distribution of responses is clearly wrong: all the data are in fact located at five points. Therefore, strictly speaking, the assumptions presupposed by t-testing—which is based on the mean—do not hold, and the "proper" statistical approach is either chi-square or Mann-Whitney testing, both of which are based on the median.

We have done testing on the median (in both chi-square and Mann-Whitney varieties). However, we also did t-testing, based on the mean. In the following tables we report the latter, not the former, for two reasons. First, although a respondent cannot respond "1.12" to the minimum-wage question, the fact that the mean of all the responses was 1.12 tells us much more than the fact that the median response was 1; we therefore show the statistical test (the t-test) that is based on the more meaningful statistic. Second, it turns out that the two types of tests for the median (at the 0.01 level) yield very similar results to the t-tests.

Issue by Issue, and by Discipline

The intradisciplinary t-tests show that many of the differences between Democrats and Republicans are significant at the 0.01 level (see Table 8, footnote a). The intraparty, interdiscipline tests use anthropology-sociology as the reference group (see footnotes b and c). For instance, Democrats in political science are less supportive of the minimum wage than Democrats in anthropology and sociology.

In nearly every case, academic economists of both parties are less supportive of economic intervention than their counterparts in the other disciplines. This does not translate into an economists' consensus, however. Adding up the differences between the Democrats and the Republicans (the last row of Table 8) suggests that the difference between the two parties is actually the largest in economics. The standard deviations among the Democrats (the larger of the two groups of economists) also indicate that on most economic-policy issues, the Democrats in economics show more variation than do those in the other disciplines.

Table 9 treats the role of government as a protector of the disadvantaged. On three of the four issues, there are significant (0.01-percent level) differences between the Democrats and Republicans in all the surveyed disciplines (indicated by footnote a). The differences among the disciplines include the following: Democrats in political science and economics are more supportive of foreign aid than are those in anthropology-sociology; and the Republicans in history and economics are less supportive of anti-discrimination laws than are those in anthropology-sociology.

Table 10 shows that the Democratic social scientists, overall, are

Table 8. Democratic and Republican social scientists' views about economic intervention.

	Means (SD)							
	Anthropology-Sociology		History		Political Science		Economics	
	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
Minimum-wage laws	1.12	2.33[a]	1.11	2.30[a]	1.26[b]	2.65[a]	2.35[b]	4.37[ac]
	(0.46)	(1.35)	(0.45)	(1.34)	(0.61)	(1.35)	(1.30)	(0.19)
Workplace-safety regulations (OSHA)	1.11	1.62[a]	1.09	1.95[a]	1.15	2.31[a]	1.58[b]	2.85[ac]
	(0.41)	(0.86)	(0.31)	(1.05)	(0.47)	(1.11)	(0.83)	(1.06)
Pharmaceutical-market regulations (FDA)	1.29	1.71	1.16	1.65[a]	1.20	1.91[a]	1.63[b]	2.89[ac]
	(0.65)	(0.90)	(0.47)	(0.93)	(0.55)	(1.24)	(0.93)	(1.40)
Air- and water-pollution regulations (EPA)	1.05	1.62[a]	1.04	1.80[a]	1.13	2.11[a]	1.40[b]	2.81[ac]
	(0.28)	(0.86)	(0.19)	(0.83)	(0.43)	(1.05)	(0.78)	(1.18)
Government ownership of industrial enterprises	3.06	4.47[a]	3.03	4.40[a]	3.33[b]	4.68[a]	4.03[b]	4.67[a]
	(1.18)	(0.84)	(1.20)	(0.94)	(1.28)	(0.71)	(1.16)	(0.78)
Tuning the economy by fiscal policy	2.08	2.05	1.87[b]	2.30	1.69[b]	2.16[a]	2.42[b]	3.69[ac]
	(0.91)	(0.76)	(0.86)	(1.08)	(0.87)	(1.07)	(1.22)	(1.52)
Mean of the means	1.62		1.55		1.63		2.24	
Σ (SD)	3.89	2.30	3.48	2.4	4.21	2.64	6.22	3.55
		5.57		6.17		6.53		6.13
Difference: Σ(D − R)	-4.09		-5.11		-6.06		-7.87	

[a] T-test (unequal SD) of within-discipline difference between mean D and mean R responses, significant at the 0.01 level.

[b] 0.01-level significant difference by discipline in a within-Democrats regression, with dummy indicators for discipline, using anthropology-sociology as the reference group.

[c] 0.01-level significant difference by discipline in a within-Republicans regression, with dummy indicators for discipline, using anthropology-sociology as the reference group.

Table 9. Democratic and Republican social scientists' views about government action to protect the disadvantaged.

	Means (SD)							
	Anthropology-Sociology		History		Political Science		Economics	
	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
Government production of schooling (K-12)	1.48 (0.95)	2.94[a] (1.39)	1.56 (1.03)	3.11[a] (1.49)	1.29 (0.73)	2.48[a] (1.28)	1.54 (0.96)	3.27[a] (1.46)
Anti-discrimination laws	1.17 (0.58)	1.71[a] (0.90)	1.21 (0.69)	2.50[ac] (1.43)	1.18 (0.56)	2.14[a] (1.35)	1.33 (0.78)	2.70[ac] (1.46)
Redistribution	1.32 (0.68)	3.33[a] (0.91)	1.35 (0.76)	3.60[a] (1.43)	1.23 (0.55)	3.08[a] (1.36)	1.47 (0.75)	3.30[a] (1.27)
Foreign aid (World Bank, IMF, US AID)	2.22 (1.24)	2.00 (1.17)	1.99 (1.24)	2.20 (1.20)	1.75[b] (1.02)	2.33[a] (1.26)	1.79[b] (1.04)	2.93 [ac] (1.21)
Mean of the means	1.55	2.50	1.53	2.86	1.36	2.51	1.53	3.05
Σ (SD)	3.45	4.37	3.72	5.55	2.86	5.25	3.53	5.4
Difference: Σ(D – R)	-3.79		-5.30		-4.58		-6.06	

[abc]Explained at the foot of Table 8.

Table 10. Academic Democrats' and Republicans' views about gun control.

	Means (SD)							
	Anthropology-Sociology		History		Political Science		Economics	
	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
Gun control	1.34 (0.82)	3.24[a] (1.61)	1.12[b] (0.42)	2.50[a] (1.32)	1.29 (0.78)	2.86[a] (1.48)	1.45 (0.85)	3.70[a] (1.56)
Difference: Σ(D – R)	-1.90		-1.38		-1.57		-2.25	

[abc]Explained at the foot of Table 8.

Table 11. Academic Democrats' and Republicans' views about government international activism.

	Means (SD)							
	Anthropology-Sociology		History		Political Science		Economics	
	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
Tariffs to protect industries and jobs	3.31 (1.12)	3.65 (1.39)	3.46 (1.19)	2.75[ac] (1.21)	3.69[b] (1.16)	3.94 (1.23)	4.47[b] (0.99)	4.81[ac] (0.48)
Tighter controls on immigration	3.70 (1.31)	1.81[a] (1.08)	3.56 (1.32)	1.90[a] (1.12)	3.29[b] (1.35)	1.86[a] (1.06)	3.68 (1.17)	3.26[c] (1.43)
Military aid/presence abroad	3.81 (1.29)	1.95[a] (0.97)	3.54 (1.24)	2.05[a] (1.05)	3.00[b] (1.32)	2.16[a] (1.19)	3.17[b] (1.28)	2.19[a] (1.04)
Mean of the means	3.61	2.47	3.52	2.23	3.33	2.66	3.77	3.42
Σ (SD)	3.72	3.44	3.75	3.38	3.83	3.48	3.44	2.95
Difference: Σ(D – R)	3.41		3.86		2.02		1.07	

[abc]Explained at the foot of Table 8.

supportive of gun control. Those in history are more supportive than those in anthropology and sociology.

Table 11 shows that the Republican social scientists are more supportive of immigration controls and military action abroad. (The survey was conducted during the U.S. government's invasion of Iraq, which may have affected responses to this question.) While the Republicans in economics are the most strongly opposed to protective tariffs, those in history are the group most favorable to protection. It seems that there are a few nativistic Republican historians out there (note also their immigration score).

When it comes to public policies that regulate personal conduct (Table 12), the Democrats seem to be more permissive overall, but the differences are often not significant at the 0.01 level. Historian and political-scientist Democrats are less supportive of drug prohibition than Republicans in those fields. Among anthropologists and sociologists, the Democrats are less favorable to prostitution controls than are the Republicans, and historian Democrats are less likely to support restrictions on gambling than are historian Republicans. Across the disciplines, the Democrats in history and political science are more supportive of drug prohibition than are those in anthropology and sociology.

Many items in the tables tell us that economist Republicans are more laissez faire than the other Republican academics. In fact, regarding sex, drugs, and gambling, economist Republicans are more laissez faire than economist Democrats, contradicting one of the ideal-typical differences between "conservative Republicans" and "liberal Democrats."

Observations about Economics

Table 13 provides the means and standard deviations on all 18 policy issues. Economics stands out in several ways.

First of all, the economists' mean score of 2.65 is significantly higher (more laissez faire) than the others. However, it is fairly interventionist in absolute terms. The rumor that economists tend to be strong supporters of unfettered capitalism is unfounded. By the metrics of the survey, economists as a group are much closer to the rest of the social scientists than to the 13 Libertarian-voting academics in the sample, who had a mean score of 4.24. The economists' average score exceeds 4.0 on only two issues: tariffs and government ownership of industry.

Second, economics is sometimes said to be the most scientific of the

Table 12. Academic Democrats' and Republicans' views about personal-morals legislation.

	Means (SD)							
	Anthropology-Sociology		History		Political Science		Economics	
	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
Controls on "hard" drugs	2.52 (1.33)	2.09 (1.37)	2.10[b] (1.17)	1.35[a] (0.81)	2.18[b] (1.31)	1.64[a] (1.05)	2.28 (1.36)	2.70 (1.51)
Prostitution controls	3.24 (1.20)	2.45 [a] (1.28)	2.99 (1.17)	2.40 (1.19)	3.00 (1.22)	2.58 (1.34)	3.06 (1.30)	3.30 (1.59)
Gambling restrictions	2.82 (1.23)	2.63 (1.34)	2.46[b] (1.21)	1.90[a] (0.97)	2.76 (1.29)	2.69 (1.43)	3.09 (1.36)	3.22 (1.65)
Mean of the means	2.86	2.39	2.52	1.88	2.65	2.30	2.81	3.07
Σ (SD)	3.76	3.99	3.55	2.97	3.82	3.82	4.02	4.75
Difference: Σ(D – R)	1.41		1.90		1.03		–0.79	

[abc]Explained at the foot of Table 8.

Table 13. Social scientists' mean 18-issue scores by party and discipline.

	Anthropology-Sociology			History			Political Science			Economics		
	D	R	All	D	R	All	D	R	All	D	R	All
Mean	2.15	2.39	*2.18*	2.04	2.38	*2.09*	2.02	2.53	*2.14*	2.36	3.29	*2.65*
(SD)	(0.34)	(0.43)	(0.40)	(0.32)	(0.67)	(0.41)	(0.33)	(0.58)	(0.49)	(0.46)	(0.71)	(0.73)
[N]	[443]	[21]	[519]	[169]	[20]	[212]	[208]	[37]	[267]	[78]	[27]	[128]

[a]For the academic legal-philosophy respondents (ASPLP), the means, SDs and Ns are as follows: D: 2.15 (0.46) 64; R: 2.94 (1.15) 7; All: 2.33 (0.71) 82.

social sciences, and as we have noted, many have alleged that one of the hallmarks of science is consensus. If so, then one would think that the most scientific discipline would exhibit the strongest consensus. We find, however, that economics demonstrates the least consensus. Within each party and over all, the 18-issue-score standard deviations are largest within economics.[17] Indeed, of the five scholarly groups,[18] economists exhibit the least consensus on 13 of the 18 issues: minimum wages, occupational safety and health regulation, FDA regulation, environmental regulation, anti-discrimination laws, drug laws, the restriction of prostitution, the restriction of gambling, gun laws, wealth redistribution, public schooling, monetary policy, and fiscal policy. (Polarity among economists is evidenced in the patterns of responses both in our survey and, even more so, in Whaples 2006.) It is frequently on their own scientific turf that economists' collective judgment least satisfies the supposed hallmark of science.

However, on the four issues *where Democrats have a relatively high score*, especially tariffs and government ownership of industry, but also immigration and military intervention, the economists display the *most* consensus. A crude way of reading these findings is that economics goes with higher (more laissez faire) policy scores. On issues where general academic opinion is, over all, very interventionist, there is less consensus among economists; on issues where general academic opinion is moderate or leaning toward laissez faire, there is more consensus among economists.

Statistical Investigation of Voting Patterns

Here we report multivariate regressions to determine voting/policy correlations. The analysis includes the data from the ASPLP. We drop respondents with missing data for one or more of the variables (however, the policy-index variable is computed so long as the respondent answered at least one of the 18 policy questions).

The first two statistical models make the dependent variable voting Democratic as opposed to voting Republican; that is, Models 1 and 2 are confined to respondents who vote either D or R. Model 3 makes the dependent variable voting Democratic and/or Green[19] ("left"), as opposed to voting Republican and/or Libertarian ("right"), and hence is confined to that slightly enlarged set of respondents. The Ns for each model are reported in Table 14.

We use several independent variables. To see whether voting Democratic correlates with generally being interventionist on the issues, we include the 18-issue policy index as an independent variable.

Another possible independent variable is political socialization, which has been studied mostly in terms of the parent-to-child transfer of partisan identification (e.g., Tedin 1974; Glass et al. 1986; Niemi and Jennings 1991; Beck and Jennings 1975 and 1991; Sears and Funk 1999; Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 1999). Our survey asked: "How would you describe the overall political-party affiliation of the family you grew up in," and offered the options "Mostly Democratic," "Mostly Republican," "A mixture," and "Non-political." In the statistical model, we include two indicators of parental influence: respondents who reported their parents as being mostly Democratic, and those who reported them as being mostly Republican. The reference category is respondents who record their parents as being either a mixture of the two or non-political.

We also tested to see whether non-academic scholars are less likely to vote Democratic than academic scholars. A positive correlation between voting D and being an academic would suggest sorting effects.

Respondents in anthropology and sociology had the highest D:R ratios, while respondents in economics had both the lowest D:R ratio and the lowest academic frequency. To control for such extremities by discipline, we include as independent variables both anthropology-sociology and economics.

In Model 1 we include a generational variable. According to a popular theory, the universities, having been radicalized during the late 1960s and 1970s, began either producing or attracting scholars more inclined than before the late 60s to vote Democratic, making for a cohort or generational effect (Sears 1983). This would suggest that those who got their degrees in the "radical era" would be more likely to be Democrats than those who preceded (or, perhaps, followed) them. We include two indicators: whether the respondent received her highest degree before 1968 or after 1980. The reference category is respondents who received their degree between 1968 and 1980.

In Model 2 we omit the generational variable, inserting instead a different variable that is also based on degree year. Perhaps by having its tenets taught to those in the next generation, whether pedagogically or by example, a particular ideology "reproduces itself" as it comes to dominate a discipline. Thus, the likelihood of voting Democratic would increase over time, to the extent that voting behavior reflects ideology.

We test to see whether those with more recent degrees are more likely to vote Democratic. The time-trend variable is produced by subtracting, from 2003 (the date of the survey), the year the respondent earned her highest degree.

In Model 3, we replicate the composition of Model 2, but test for Democratic and/or Green versus Republican and/or Libertarian, to

Table 14. Odds of voting Democratic (vs. Republican) (with z-values in parentheses).

	Model 1 D v. R	Model 2 D v. R	Model 3 D/G v. R/L
Parents Democrats	1.96**	1.99**	1.92**
	(2.70)	(2.77)	(2.66)
Parents Republicans	0.61*	0.62*	0.63*
	(2.05)	(2.02)	(1.95)
Academics	2.24**	2.29**	2.27**
	(4.05)	(4.15)	(4.15)
Anthropology-Sociology	3.34**	3.18**	3.34**
	(5.19)	(5.00)	(5.24)
Economics	1.47	1.33	1.33
	(1.45)	(1.05)	(1.09)
Policy index	0.11**	0.11**	0.10**
	(10.35)	(10.43)	(11.39)
Degree pre-1968	0.72		
	(1.46)		
Degree post-1980	1.25		
	(0.95)		
Trend (Yr of deg.)		1.03**	1.03**
		(2.96)	(2.93)
N	1365	1365	1414
Log likelihood	-399.36	-397.29	-406.80
Likelihood ratio $^{-2}$	254.40***	258.54***	317.17***
Pseudo R^2	0.24	0.25	0.28

** 0.01 level, *0.05 level, † 0.10 level

check whether third-party voting is significant enough to affect the results.

Consider one cell in Table 14 by way of illustration. In the column labeled "Model 1," the coefficient for "Parents Democratic" is 1.96 and has a double asterisk, indicating that the variable is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The coefficient "Parents Republican" has a single asterisk, indicating statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Thus, the results support the socialization hypothesis: social scientists with Democratic parents are *more* likely (because 1.96 is greater than 1.00), and those with Republican parents *less* likely (because 0.61 is smaller than 1.00), to vote Democratic compared to the neutral-parent group. Also, we find again (with 0.01 statistical significance) that social scientists in academe are more likely to vote Democratic than those outside the academy.

Earlier we saw that, by far, anthropology and sociology had the highest D:R ratios and economics the lowest. With the other variables present, the economics effect does not hold up as significant. That is, a high policy score, not economics training per se, correlates inversely with voting D. (Of course, it may be economics training that raises the policy score.)[20] However, the anthropology-sociology variable continues to be significant, suggesting that there is something especially left-wing about the disciplines of anthropology and sociology.

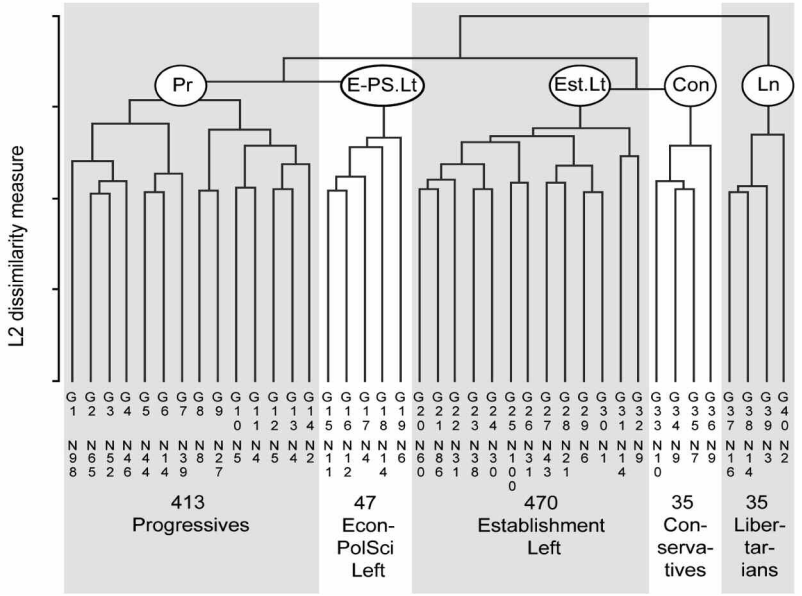
Model 1 does not find a "radical-era" effect. Respondents with pre-1968 and post-1980 degrees do not differ significantly from the "radical-era" respondents. Model 2, however, introduces the trend effect (year of degree), and it is significant. The longer ago the respondent got her degree, the less likely she is to vote D. One interpretation is self-reinforcing Democratic domination, making the Democratic party hegemonic over time. Model 3 separates by "left" and "right," and the results are unchanged.

A summary of our findings here is that voting Democratic is significantly (0.01 level) correlated with each of the following: having Democratic parents, being employed in academe, being an anthropologist or sociologist, having interventionist policy views, and having a more recent degree.

Exploring Ideological Groupings Using Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis is a mathematical way to identify groupings of observations (Everitt 1993, 10). Here, an "observation" is a respondent's total set

Figure 8. Dendrogram of the complete linkage cluster analysis.



of policy views. In our cluster analysis, we are grouping individual respondents based on how alike their sets of policy views are. There are many cluster-analysis techniques; what we present here is the result of one particular cluster analysis that we found to be intuitive and interesting. However, the results presented here were typical of the many variations we investigated.[21]

Using the software package STATA 8, we performed a clustering technique in which N persons start out as N separate groups, each of size 1. The two closest groups are merged into one group, and so on, until all of the observations are merged into one universal group. To define the closest two groups to be merged, we use "complete linkage" clustering, a technique that determines the farthest observations between two groups and merges groups accordingly.[22] This technique drops any observations with missing values. To reduce the loss of data, we excluded three policy issues: monetary and fiscal policy (because many respondents indicated that they "have no opinion"), and "government production of schooling" (because a substantial number of respondents did not answer the question).[23]

The dendrogram (or cluster tree) shows how observations are

grouped. Not shown in the dendrogram is the actual bottom of the tree, where each person's set of policy views constitutes a single group. The dendrogram picks up where the 1,000 individuals have been collected into 40 groups (labeled G1 through G40). The "N" labels show the size of each of the 40 groups (G1 contains 98 individuals). Above the "tops" of the 40 groups, the dissimilarity measure is represented on the vertical axis. Longer vertical lines indicate that the data contain clusters that are farther apart; shorter lines indicate that groups are not as distinct from each other. These dissimilarity measures form the basis of "stopping rules" to decide how many groups to identify.

At the very top of Figure 8, all the respondents are included in one universal group. Moving down to the first break, the small group to the right is strikingly different from the great mass. (Left or right placement in this figure does not indicate position on any political spectrum.) Continuing down, the great mass gets broken into two large groups. Continuing farther, each large group gets divided, producing five groups in all. Identifying five clusters is supported by recognized procedures.[24] The result of this purely mathematically technique, however, is five groups that correspond quite well to familiar ideological categories.

We chose the names of the five groups to describe their policy views. Four correspond to intuitive ideological categories, which we label as "progressive," "establishment left," "conservative," and "libertarian." The fifth group, which we call the "econ-polsci left," is basically leftist but a bit more market-oriented; much more permissive on personal issues; and much more interventionist on immigration and military action. Twenty-two of the 47 members of this group are either economists or political scientists.

The establishment left and progressive groups are principally Democratic (81.7 percent and 92 percent, respectively). The econ-polsci left also mainly votes Democratic, although it also has its share of Republican voters. The conservative group mainly consists of Republicans. The libertarian group mainly votes Republican and Libertarian.

When it comes to economic regulation, the two huge groups, establishment left and progressives, are not much different. The conservatives are more skeptical about economic regulation, but, when compared to the libertarians, the conservatives are rather interventionist.

In Table 18, the differences between the establishment left and the progressives are larger. Progressives are much more opposed to laws restricting drugs, prostitution, and gambling, and they are slightly more

Table 16. Voting patterns in the five ideological groups of academics.

	Estab. Left	Pro-gressive	Econ-PolSci Left	Con-serv.	Liber-tarian	Sum
Number in group	*470*	*413*	*47*	*35*	*35*	*1000*
Democratic voters	*384*	*380*	*26*	*8*	*4*[a]	*802*
% of Ds	47.9	47.4	3.2	1	0.5	100
% of the group	81.7	92.0	55.3	22.8	11.4	
Green voters	*3*	*11*	*1*	*0*	*0*	*15*
% of Gs	20.0	73.3	6.7	0	0	100
% of the group	0.6	2.7	2.1	0	0	
Libertarian voters	*0*	*2*	*1*	*0*	*12*	*15*
% of Ls	0	13.3	6.7	0	80	100
% of the group	0	0.5	2.1	0	34.3	
Republican voters	*42*	*1*	*13*	*23*	*14*	*93*
% of Rs	45.2	1.1	14.0	24.7	15.1	100
% of the group	8.9	0.2	27.7	65.7	40.0	
Miscellaneous voters	*41*	*19*	*6*	*4*	*5*	*75*
% of Misc. voters	54.7	25.3	8.0	5.3	6.7	100
% of the group	8.7	4.6	12.8	11.4	14.3	
Total voters	*470*	*413*	*47*	*35*	*35*	*1000*
% of the group	100	100	100	100	100	

[a] Figure 5 showed no academic Democratic voter with a policy index above 3.5, so it may seem odd to find that four of the libertarians vote Democratic. One has a policy index of 4.22 but is in the ASPLP group, which is not included in Figure 5; the others have indices of 3.5, 3.5, and 3.39. They end up in the libertarian group because of the pattern of their responses over the 18 questions.

supportive of gun control and anti-discrimination laws. The conservatives are highly interventionist about drugs, prostitution, and gambling.

Table 19 shows that the progressives are the most supportive of redistribution and public schooling, and even lean toward government ownership of industrial enterprises. They are also the most opposed to tightening immigration controls and to military action abroad. On those four issues, the progressives and conservatives are at opposite poles. The conservatives tend to be supportive of tighter immigration

Table 17. Ideological group averages on economic regulation.

	Estab. Left	Progressive	Econ-PolSci Left	Conserv.	Libertarian
N	*470*	*413*	*47*	*35*	*35*
% Econ or Pol Sci	33.4	27.1	46.8	68.6	68.6
% Anth or Soc	38.5	50.8	31.9	17.1	8.6
Tariffs to protect industries and jobs	3.45	3.66	3.57	4.14	4.91
Minimum-wage laws	1.29	1.25	2.32	3.69	4.66
Workplace-safety regulation (OSHA)	1.21	1.15	1.40	2.40	4.09
Pharmaceutical safety controls (FDA)	1.18	1.34	1.51	2.46	4.26
Pollution regulation (EPA)	1.13	1.09	1.30	2.34	3.80

Table 18. Ideological group averages on personal-conduct/morals legislation.

	Estab. Left	Progressive	Econ-PolSci Left	Conserv.	Libertarian
Anti-discrimination laws	1.31	1.15	1.49	2.54	3.54
Laws restricting "hard" drug use	1.59	2.97	3.91	1.46	4.06
Laws restricting prostitution	2.38	3.77	4.34	2.11	4.46
Laws restricting gambling	2.13	3.21	4.06	2.40	4.54
Gun control	1.40	1.29	2.89	2.86	4.51

Table 19. Ideological group averages on various forms of government activism.

	Estab. Left	Progressive	Econ-PolSci Left	Conserv.	Libertarian
Monetary policy	1.95	2.09	1.98	2.29	3.32
Fiscal policy	1.95	1.98	2.22	2.88	4.30
Redistribution	1.55	1.16	2.02	3.77	4.14
Public schooling	1.70	1.36	1.76	2.67	4.11
Government ownership of industrial enterprises	3.51	2.88	3.72	4.69	4.94
Tighter controls on immigration	3.14	4.05	2.17	2.31	3.54
Military aid/ presence abroad	3.08	3.92	2.55	2.03	3.09
Foreign aid (World Bank, IMF, US AID)	1.95	2.21	2.30	2.49	3.91
Policy index on all 18 issues	*1.99*	*2.26*	*2.53*	*2.75*	*4.12*

controls and military action. Those in the group we called "libertarian" are ambivalent about military action.

As an overall indication, the bottom row of Table 19 presents the policy-index scores for each group. The establishment left is the most interventionist, followed by the progressives, the econ-polsci left, the conservatives, and the libertarians. It is clear that the libertarian group is the outlier, a fact that was highlighted at the top of the dendrogram by its being the last group to join the whole.

We constructed a simple measure of dyadic cluster dissimilarity. For the progressives and members of the establishment left, for example, we look at the absolute value of the difference between their mean score on tariffs, and likewise for each of the other 17 issues, and add up the 18 differences. Table 20 reports these dissimilarity measures. It shows

Table 20. Dyadic dissimilarity between ideological groups.

	Progressive	Econ-PolSci Left	Conservative	Libertarian
Estab. Left	8.17	12.61	18.19	38.28
Progressive		11.88	24.22	36.33
Econ-PolSci Left			17.80	28.67
Conservative				24.65

that the progressives and the establishment left are very much alike, with a dissimilarity of only 8.17. The dissimilarity between conservatives and progressives is 24.22. The dissimilarity between conservatives and the establishment left is 18.19. But most notable is how dissimilar the libertarians are from any of the others. The minimum of dissimilarities between them and any other group is greater than the maximum of the dissimilarities between any pair of other groups. That is, libertarians and conservatives, commonly grouped together as being on "the right," are less alike than are progressives and conservatives, representing the far left and far right of our sample.

* * *

Our main findings may be summarized as follows:

- Democrats dominate the social sciences and humanities. Of the fields we sampled, anthropology and sociology are the most lopsided, with Democratic:Republican ratios upwards of 20:1, and economics is the least lopsided, about 3:1. Among social-science and humanities professors up through age 70, the overall Democrat:Republican ratio is probably about 8:1.
- The Democratic domination has increased significantly since 1970. Republicans are disappearing from the social sciences.
- On most of the 18 policy issues, the Democrats are more interventionist than the Republicans. But Republicans are more interventionist on immigration, military action, drug prohibition, and prostitution restrictions.
- On the whole, the Democrats and Republicans are quite interventionist.
- Economists are measurably less interventionist, but most of them are still quite interventionist.
- Generally, the Democrats and Republicans fit the ideal types of

"liberals" and "conservatives." Perhaps the greatest departure from the ideal types is that neither group is very pro-laissez faire in absolute terms, rather than relative ones, when it comes to personal conduct (where "liberals" are supposed to be more laissez faire) and economic affairs (where "conservatives" are supposed to be more laissez faire).

- Whereas the Republicans usually display diverse policy views, the Democrats very often hew to a party line.
- Economists show the least consensus on policy issues. The differences between Democrats and Republicans are largest in economics, as are the differences among Democrats and among Republicans.
- Younger professors tend to be slightly less interventionist than older professors.
- Republican scholars are more likely to end up outside of the academy.
- Voting D correlates significantly with having Democratic parents, being employed in academe, being an anthropologist or sociologist, having interventionist policy views, and having a more recent degree.
- On three issues (the restriction of hard drugs and of prostitution, and military intervention), the conservatives are the most interventionist of the five ideological groups established by cluster analysis. On five issues—restrictions on drugs, gambling, prostitution, and immigration, and military action—the distance between the average conservative score and the average libertarian score is greater than that between progressives and libertarians.
- Libertarians are as exceptional in their views as they are rare in the social sciences. The minimum of the dissimilarities between them and any other group is greater than the maximum of dissimilarity between any pair of other groups.
- The "liberal versus conservative" formulation of American politics omits the libertarians from the landscape, yet the libertarian and conservative groups appear to be equal in size in the social sciences.

Spaulding and Turner (1968) suggested that the social sciences and humanities were dominated by the left by virtue of their courageous willingness to criticize the status quo. This "critical thinking" explanation constantly resurfaces in debates over academic bias. Four decades after Spaulding and Turner's research, however, it seems that

there is now a "status quo left" on campus. The establishment left and the progressives differ little and dominate the social sciences and humanities. Even the tiny contingent of conservatives differs only moderately from the establishment left. We close by asking whether the libertarians, whose views are very different and in an intelligible way, are not today's social-science "critical thinkers."

For generations, the leftist vanguard scoffed at "laissez faire" and derided the heirs of Adam Smith, Herbert Spencer, and William Graham Sumner as anachronistic dinosaurs. Academe was taken over by a redefined, pro-government liberalism. Now, we believe, the laissez-faire liberals form the vanguard against those who seek to conserve and expand the social-democratic establishment.

NOTES

1. For criticism of Ladd and Lipset, see Hamilton and Hargens 1993. In our view, much of the controversy (and opacity) stems from problems with the liberal versus conservative framework.
2. A recent survey of economists conducted by Robert Whaples (2006) has a style more like our survey (and with congruent results).
3. Our 2005 paper focuses on the Democrat:Republican ratio throughout the social sciences and humanities; our 2004 paper focuses on the policy views of anthropologists and sociologists; our 2006a and 2006b papers focus on the policy views of economists; 2006c focuses on the policy views of political scientists; 2006d draws on the survey results for sociologists in order to propose a place for classical liberalism in sociology.
4. In all three respects, sections of both of the two specialized surveys (one of labor economists, one of public economists) in Fuchs et al. 1998 are very much like our survey in design and spirit (see ibid., 1416, 1420).
5. The American Philosophical Association declined to sell us an address list, based on a general policy of not giving out addresses except for matters of special interest to philosophers. We surveyed all 486 members of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy. Its membership is smaller and more specialized, so we have chosen to exclude their members' responses in some of what follows.
6. At the survey home page, one can view the survey instrument and documents explaining the methods, independent control, and certification of the survey results: <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/economics/klein/survey.htm>.
7. For what it is worth, the Fuller et al. (1995) survey of delegates to the 1992 national conventions had a 21-percent response rate from Democrats and 26 percent from Republicans.

8. 42 respondents marked either "public sector," "private sector," or "independent research," but we included them as "academic" based on their comments about and answers to the two immediately ensuing questions, which are predicated on academic employment.
9. These ratios differ from those determined by Klein and Stern 2005c, which includes academic respondents only up through the age of 70.
10. By "active" we mean those up through age 70 at the time of the survey.
11. When we made those estimates we were less concerned about membership bias. Our concerns about this issue have increased somewhat since then, such that we think that ratcheting the "at least" estimate down to 7:1 has something to be said for it. But on balance, we stand by the 8:1 estimate, as it used the rather "conservative" estimate of a 10:1 ratio for the entire non-economics social-science/humanities faculty.
12. We say "close to" (rather than "equal to") because some of the policy issues admit of disagreement over what the more or less interventionist (or laissez-faire) answer would be. Notably, some would say that toppling an exceptionally oppressive government abroad, despite being activist on the part of the U.S. government, is not anti-laissez faire, because *worldwide* it reduces government coercion on net. Reasonable disagreement over what is more or less laissez faire would also be found for the questions on monetary policy and perhaps immigration (because of how immigrants supposedly alter the political culture and hence future policy).
13. Fuller et al. (1995) provide survey data comparing American Economics Association members with Republican delegates and Democratic delegates at the 1992 national conventions. The survey contains many policy questions, though not any concerning immigration or military action. The Republican delegates appear to be significantly more pro-laissez faire than the economists, while the Democratic delegates do not appear to be either more laissez faire or more interventionist than the economists.
14. Regressions using birth year to predict policy scores turn out to be statistically significant in history (0.01 percent level), sociology (0.03), and anthropology (0.10).
15. The survey asked the respondent what she thought about each issue when she was 25 years old. We have not yet completed the "ideological migration" analysis of the data.
16. Here we omit monetary policy because the "intervention versus laissez-faire" interpretation fits the question much less well than it fits the other economic questions, and because the question is of less interest to an interdisciplinary audience.
17. The tables here do not show the individual-issue standard deviations for the entire group. The sum of the 18 standard deviations is highest for economics at 22.90, and lowest for anth-soc at 17.84.
18. That is, continuing to treat anth-soc as one group, and including also the political/legal philosophers as a separate group.

19. We say Democratic and/or Green, rather than Democratic or Green, because 16 respondents checked both Democratic and Green (and similarly, 3 checked Republican and Libertarian). Double-checking respondents (some of whom are non-academics) are included in Model 3.
20. We also ran Model 1 without the policy index. In that case, being an economist has a negative effect on voting D and is significant at the 0.01 level.
21. We have created a large unpublished PDF appendix displaying results from alternative methods of performing the analysis. The appendix shows that all the methods generate results either very much like, or compatible with, the results of the single analysis presented here. The appendix is available online at <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/economics/klein/survey/Alternative_cluster_analyses_appendix.doc>.
22. The cluster analysis uses the default L2 Euclidean distance.
23. In the online appendix, we also use an alternative strategy that treats "have no opinion" as "have mixed feelings" answers (hence coding them as 3 rather than as missing), and that keeps fiscal and monetary policy items in the analyses. The results are similar to those presented here.
24. In Table 16, we show the results of two "stopping rule" criteria, the Calinski and Harabasz pseudo-F index and the Duda and Hart Je(2)/Je(1) index. For both rules, larger index values indicate more distinct clustering. According to the Calinski and Harabasz stopping rule, our data contain two to five distinct groups, on which see Table 15:

Table 15. Determining the number of clusters in the data.

Number of clusters	Calinski/ Harabasz pseudo-F	Duda/Hart	
		Je(2)/Je(1)	Pseudo T^2
1		0.8771	139.86
2	139.86	0.8905	118.36
3	137.44	0.9261	36.54
4	106.78	0.9031	53.97
5	97.28	0.9225	34.52
6	86.78	0.8744	51.12
7	82.31	0.9454	27.03
8	76.21	0.8694	7.96

In deciding the number of groups based on the Duda and Hart stopping-rule, the rule of thumb is to find Je(2)/Je(1) values that correspond to low pseudo T^2 values that have much larger pseudo T^2 values next to them (STATA Cluster Analysis Reference Manual 2003, 97). Thus, according to the Duda-Hart rule, it is reasonable to identify five distinct groups.

REFERENCES

Alston, Richard M., James R. Kearl, and Michael B. Vaughan. 1992. "Is There a Consensus among Economists in the 1990s?" *American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings* 82 (May): 203–9.

Anderson, M., and R. Blandy. 1992. "What Australian Economics Professors Think." *Australian Economic Review*, October–December: 17–40.

Anderson, M., R. Blandy, and S. Carne. 1993. "Academic Economic Opinion in East Asia." *Australian Economic Review*, July–September: 5–19.

Beck, Paul A., and M. Kent Jennings. 1975. "Parents as 'Middlepersons' in Political Socialization." *Journal of Politics* 37: 83–107.

Beck, Paul A., and M. Kent Jennings. 1991. "Family Traditions, Political Periods, and the Development of Partisan Organizations." *Journal of Politics* 53: 742–63.

Blendon, Robert J., et al. 1997. "Bridging the Gap Between the Public's and Economists' Views of the Economy." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 11(3): 105–118.

Block, W., and M. Walker. 1988. "Entropy in the Canadian Economics Profession: Sampling Consensus on the Major Issues." *Canadian Public Policy*, April: 137–50.

Brookings Institution. 2001. "National Survey on Government Endeavors," prepared by Princeton Survey Research Associates, November 9. Online at <http://www.brook.edu/comm/reformwatch/rw04_surveydata.pdf >.

Caplan, Bryan. 2001. "What Makes People Think Like Economists? Evidence on Economic Cognition from the 'Survey of Americans and Economists on the Economy.'" *Journal of Law and Economics* 44: 395–426.

Caplan, Bryan. 2002. "Systematically Biased Beliefs about Economics: Robust Evidence of Judgmental Anomalies from the Survey of Americans and Economists on the Economy." *Economic Journal* 112: 1–26.

Cardiff, Christopher, and Daniel B. Klein. 2005. Faculty Partisan Affiliations in All Disciplines: A Voter-Registration Study." *Critical Review* 17(3–4): 237–55.

Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education. 1978. "Carnegie Council National Surveys, 1975–1976: Faculty Marginals." Vol. 2. September. Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. 1989. *The Condition of the Professoriate: Attitudes and Trends*. Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Colander, David. 2005. "The Making of an Economist Redux." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19(1): 175–98.

Critical Review. 2004. "The State of the Social Sciences." Conference proceedings. *Critical Review* 16(2–3): 147–322.

Everitt, B. S. 1993. *Cluster Analysis*, 3d ed. London: Edward Arnold.

Frey, Bruno. S., Werner W. Pommerehne, Friedrich Schneider, and Guy Gilbert. 1984. "Consensus and Dissension among Economists: An Empirical Inquiry." *American Economic Review* 74(5): 986–93.

Fuchs, Victor R. 1996. "Economics, Values, and Health Care Reform." *American Economic Review* 86(1): 1–24.

Fuchs, Victor R., Alan B. Krueger, and James M. Poterba. 1998. "Economists' Views about Parameters, Values, and Policies: Survey Results in Labor and Public Economics." *Journal of Economic Literature* 36(3): 1387–1425.

Fuller, D. A., R. M. Alston, and M. B. Vaughan. 1995. "The Split between Political Parties on Economic Issues: A Survey of Republicans, Democrats, and Economists." *Eastern Economic Journal* 21(2): 227–37.

Fuller, D. A., and D. Geide-Stevenson. 2003. "Consensus among Economists: Revisited." *Journal of Economic Education* 34(4): 369–87.

Glass, Jennifer, Vern L. Bengtson, and Charlotte Chorn Dunham. 1986. "Attitude Similarity in Three-Generation Families: Socialization, Status Inheritance, or Reciprocal Influence?" *American Sociological Review* 51(5): 685–98.

Hamilton, Richard F., and Lowell L. Hargens. 1993. "The Politics of the Professors: Self-Identifications, 1969–1984." *Social Forces* 71(3): 603–627.

Heckelman, Jack C., and Robert Whaples. 2003. "Are Public Choice Scholars Different?" *PS* (October): 797–99.

Horowitz, David, and Eli Lehrer. 2002. "Political Bias in the Administrations and Faculties of 32 Elite Colleges and Universities." A Report of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture: <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Content/read.asp?ID=55>. Accessed May 3, 2004.

Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker, and and Jake Bowers. 2001. "Politics Across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined." Institute of Governmental Studies, UC-Berkeley Working Paper 2001–15.

Kearl, J. R., Clayne L. Pope, Gordon C. Whiting, and Larry T. Wimmer. 1979. "A Confusion of Economists?" *American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings* 69 (May): 28–37.

Klein, Daniel B. 2006. "Sense and Sensibilities: Myrdal's Plea for Self-Disclosure and Some Disclosures About AEA Members." *Econ Journal Watch* 3(1), January: 180–205.

Klein, Daniel B., and Charlotta Stern. 2004. "Democrats and Republicans in Anthropology and Sociology: How Do They Differ on Public Policy Issues?" *The American Sociologist* 35(4): 79–86.

Klein, Daniel B., and Charlotta Stern. 2005. "Political Diversity in Six Disciplines." *Academic Questions* 18(1), Winter: 40–52.

Klein, Daniel B., and Charlotta Stern. 2006a. "Economists' Policy Views and Voting." *Public Choice*, forthcoming.

Klein, Daniel B., and Charlotta Stern. 2006b. "Is There a Free-Market Economist in the House? The Policy Views of American Economics Association Members." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, forthcoming.

Klein, Daniel B., and Charlotta Stern. 2006c. "Political Scientists' Policy Views and Voting." *The Political Science Reviewer*, forthcoming.

Klein, Daniel B., and Charlotta Stern. 2006d. "Sociology and Classical Liberalism." *The Independent Review: A Journal of Political Economy,* forthcoming.

Klein, Daniel B., and Andrew Western. 2005. "Voter Registration of Berkeley and Stanford Faculty." *Academic Questions* 18(1): 53–65.

Ladd, Everett Carll, Jr., and Seymour Martin Lipset. 1975. *The Divided Academy: Professors & Politics*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Light, Paul C. 2001. "Government's Greatest Priorities of the Next Half Century." *Reform Watch*, No. 4. Brookings Institution (December), online at <http://www.brookings.edu/dybdocroot/comm/reformwatch/rw04/rw4.pdf>.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1982. "The Academic Mind at the Top: The Political Behavior and Values of Faculty Elites." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 46(2): 143–68.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1994. "The State of American Sociology." *Sociological Forum* 9(2): 199–220.

Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Everett Carll Ladd, Jr. 1972. "The Politics of American Sociologists." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(1): 67–104.

Lindholm, Jennifer A., Alexander W. Astin, Linda J. Sax, and William S. Korn. 2003. "The American College Teacher: National Norms for 2001–2002 HERI Faculty Survey." Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles.

McEachern, William A. 2006. "AEA Ideology: Campaign Contributions of American Economic Association Members, Committee Members, Officers, Editors, Referees, Authors, and Acknowledgees." *Econ Journal Watch* 3(1): 148–79.

Moorhouse, J., A. Morris, and R. Whaples. 1999. "Economics and the Law: Where Is There Consensus?" *The American Economist* 43(2): 81–88.

Nakhaie, M. Reza, and Robert J. Brym. 1999. "The Political Attitudes of Canadian Professors." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 24(3): 329–53.

Niemi, Richard G., and M. Kent Jennings. 1991. "Issues and Inheritance in the Formation of Party Identification." *American Journal of Political Science* 35(4): 970–88.

Ray, J. J. 1989. "The Scientific Study of Ideology Is Too Often More Ideological than Scientific." *Personality and Individual Differences* 10(3): 331–36.

Redding, Richard E. 2001. "Sociopolitical Diversity in Psychology: The Case for Pluralism." *American Psychologist* 56(3): 205–215.

Ricketts, Martin, and Edward Shoesmith. 1990. *British Economic Opinion: A Survey of a Thousand Economists*. London: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Ricketts, Martin, and Edward Shoesmith. 1992. "British Economic Opinion: Positive Science or Normative Judgment?" *American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings* 82: 210–215.

Rothman, Stanley, S. Robert Lichter, and Neil Nevitte. 2005. "Politics and Professional Advancement Among College Faculty." *The Forum* 3(1), article 2.

Sears, David O., and Carolyn L. Funk. 1999. "Evidence of the Long-Term Persistence of Adults' Political Predispositions." *Journal of Politics* 61(1): 1–28.

Spaulding, Charles B., and Henry A. Turner. 1968. "Political Orientation and Field of Specialization among College Professors." *Sociology of Education* 41(3): 247–62.

STATA Cluster Analysis. *Reference Manual*. 2003. College Station, Tex.: STATA Press.

Tedin, Kent L. 1974. "The Influence of Parents on the Political Attitudes of Adolescents." *American Political Science Review* 68(4): 1579–92.

Vedder, Richard. 2004. *Going Broke by Degree: Why College Costs Too Much*. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute.

Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University Economics Polls. 1996. "Survey of Americans and Economists on the Economy." Storrs, Conn.: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

Whaples, R. 1995. "Where Is There Consensus among American Economic Historians? The Results of a Survey on Forty Propositions." *Journal of Economic History* 55(1): 139–54.

Whaples, R. 1996. "Is There Consensus among American Labor Economists? Survey Results on Forty Propositions." *Journal of Labor Research* 17(4): 725–34.

Whaples, Robert. 2006. "Economists' Voices: Where Is There Consensus on Policy Debates?" Manuscript, Department of Economics, Wake Forest University.

Zinsmeister, Karl. 2002. "The Shame of America's One-Party Campuses." *The American Enterprise*, September: 18–25.

Tim Groseclose and Jeffrey Milyo

A SOCIAL-SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE ON MEDIA BIAS

ABSTRACT: *The questions of whether the news media are biased, and if so, in what direction, typically generate more heat than light. Here, we review some of the most recent and meritorious empirical studies on media bias. This evidence suggests that several prominent national news outlets have a distinct slant to the left or right, and that exposure to these sources influences both public opinion and voting behavior.*

The debate over media bias is a fever swamp of partisanship that social scientists have, for the most part, avoided, leaving the field to polemicists left and right. Our aim here is to highlight what we regard as "the gold in the garbage": the more reliable data on media bias. We will therefore dispense with the usual practices followed in discussions of media bias, retaining only three of the features of the highly charged public debate.

First, as do most commentators on the issue, we focus on the news media rather than the entertainment media, despite the possibility of

Critical Review 17 (2005), nos. 3–4. ISSN 0891-3811. www.criticalreview.com

Tim Groseclose, Department of Political Science, University of California at Los Angeles, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90024, and Jeffrey Milyo, Department of Economics and Truman School of Public Affairs, University of Missouri, 909 University Avenue, Columbia, Missouri 65211, the co-authors of "A Measure of Media Bias" (*Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2005), thank Jeffrey Friedman for his extraordinary efforts and advice in connection with this article.

bias in the latter, because it is so much harder to infer either the direction or the impact of such bias. Second, we define bias as an ideological slant that may take a number of forms: Democratic or Republican partisanship; liberal or conservative positions on public-policy issues; or broader assumptions about, say, business corporations or the causes of social, economic, and foreign-policy problems. Third, we assume that such a slant, if it exists, is either to the "left" or to the "right." This is not to deny the substantive importance of other kinds of bias, whether nationalism, anti-Americanism, negativism, or celebrity worship. But we adopt the working assumption that the widely used practice of *categorizing* ideologies as "left versus right" will, itself, probably be reflected in whatever ideologies actually stand behind most media bias.

Indeed, one of the starting points of any serious analysis of the subject must be the fact that journalists are extremely likely to self-identify as being ideologically on the left. A Pew Research Center poll (2004) recently found that only 7 percent of the journalists employed at national news organizations self-identify as "conservatives," compared to 34 percent who call themselves "liberals."

But what to make of such data, and the many studies showing that elite journalists vote overwhelmingly Democratic (Groseclose and Milyo 2005)? It could simply be that liberal opinions are essentially better-informed opinions, so that objective journalists are led by natural intellectual processes toward liberal conclusions. By definition, however, it is impossible to separate this theory from substantive political judgments, thereby re-entering the ideologically self-confirming tendencies of media-bias discussions; so we bracket the theory.

Much the same can be said of the standard practice, by critics of *conservative* media bias, of inferring from the ownership of the news media the political views that must necessarily be broadcast by the news media. In the words of Eric Alterman (2003), "You're only as liberal as the man who owns you"; that is, even the most liberal journalists are reined in by conservative media owners. This is another ideologically self-confirming theory, one that is part of the standard viewpoint of the left: namely, that class interests determine political behavior. Thus, such analysts as Alterman, Ben Bagdikian (1990), and Robert W. McChesney (1999) think that the bias question is settled by establishing that the media are "corporate owned," rarely attempting to establish what the political views of news-media corporate executives actually are, or whether these executives would be willing to sacrifice corporate profits in order to propagate conservative views, in competition with other

news media that retained their objectivity. Lacking empirical data on these questions, or on the actual newsroom and hiring practices that might follow from the hypothesized "corporate bias," we bracket this theory, too.

The key issue that is never directly confronted by these approaches to the question of media bias, or by so much of the public debate over the issue, is the extent to which journalists' *work product* exhibits an ideological slant. The place to hunt for gold is, therefore, not in speculative theories about the "obvious" validity of liberal ideas, the "obvious" effects of corporate ownership, or the "obvious" bias evident in differences between journalists and the general public; rather, a non-ideological, scientifically respectable approach to the question should dig through content analyses—even though these, too, have their problems.

What Do Journalists Actually Say?

Perhaps the simplest form of content analysis is to count instances of the use of partisan labels or ideological terms by journalists. At least in the American context, where partisanship and ideology are widely considered undesirable, labeling somebody in this way can subtly denigrate their opinions. Another merit of this method is that the subtlety is on both the audience's and the journalist's side of the transaction: a journalist's *failure* to label someone or something in partisan or ideological terms may successfully convey to the audience a biased version of (what the journalist considers to be) the non-partisan, non-ideological objective truth.

However, we know of no labeling study that controls for audience familiarity with the subjects being labeled (or not labeled). This is an important oversight, since no label may be necessary to remind people that Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) is liberal, while the opposite is true for a less well-known, but no less important conservative, such as Senator Bill Frist (R-Tenn.). A more fundamental objection to the extant labeling studies is that—perhaps because they are so easy to conduct—they are too often done in an incredibly sloppy manner. By either cherry-picking cases or using imprecise language in relating a study's findings, it is quite easy to skew the appearance of bias in one direction or another, and these practices are quite common.

A weakness of other forms of content analysis is that they require re-

searchers to make subjective calls about what constitutes "bias," whether regarding the coverage or non-coverage of issues (gatekeeping bias), the attention given to one side in a political debate versus the other within a news story (statement bias), or the tone and balance of a story (coverage bias). The inherently subjective nature of these judgments is problematic enough, but the scholars who undertake these studies rarely employ any sophisticated statistical methods to try to control for determinants of content that avoid the taint of their own possible bias.

However, in a recent working paper on gatekeeping bias, Riccardo Puglisi (2004) analyzes a random sample of about 36,000 news articles from *The New York Times* between 1946 and 1994. Puglisi tests whether the frequency of stories on issues that are "owned" by Democrats (e.g., civil rights, health care, labor, and social welfare) is a function of presidential electoral cycles. Puglisi defines issue ownership by means of public-opinion surveys about which party is considered more capable of handling a particular issue, avoiding the need to impose his own subjective criteria. After controlling for ownership effects and secular temporal trends, he finds a significant shift in the types of news stories that are covered during presidential election years, with the direction being toward topics that are more favorable to Democrats. This result is even more pronounced when the incumbent is a Democrat.

In another working paper, John R. Lott and Kevin Hassett (2004) examine the tone of major newspaper-headline coverage of specific economic reports from 1991 to 2004 (389 news stories from the top-ten-circulation newspapers). This work improves on traditional coverage-bias studies in several ways. First, the authors focus only on the tone of headlines associated with economic news on gross domestic product, durable goods, retail sales, and unemployment; these types of news are reported with some regularity, and so are easily comparable across presidential administrations. Second, while rating headlines as favorable, neutral, or unfavorable does require making judgment calls, the limited focus on headlines mitigates concerns about the inherently subjective nature of such characterizations (at least when compared to more traditional studies of news content)—although it has the disadvantage that journalists do not write their own headlines, so what may be being measured is the bias of other news-media employees. (Since editors have the final call on headlines, however, there may be a silver lining here: headline analysis indirectly addresses the corporate-bias hypothesis, since conservative corporate bias would presumably have to be transmitted down the corporate hierarchy through editors reining in

self-identified liberal journalists.) Third, the headlines being analyzed lend themselves quite readily to econometric analysis. This allows the authors to estimate the propensity of newspapers to place a favorable headline on economic news reports (e.g., the official announcement of a 5-percent unemployment rate for a given month), controlling for both the size and direction of the economic event. This last feature of the study is crucial, since a 5-percent unemployment rate is, objectively speaking, good news when it represents a drop from a higher level, but bad news when it represents an increase.

Lott and Hassett find that comparable economic reports were 20 percent more likely to be assigned positive headlines during the Clinton administration than during the non-Clinton years examined. Among national newspapers, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal,* and *The Washington Post* appeared to be particularly positive about economic news during the Clinton presidency.

Lott and Hassett have, we believe, provided an important model for future analyses of the tone of news coverage. And their findings dovetail with Puglisi's conclusion that the news media are biased leftward.

What Do Citizens Actually Hear?

Rather than try to rate the possible content bias of news directly, several authors infer news-media content from the current-events knowledge of people who are exposed to different media outlets.

A nice example of such a study is Hetherington 1996, which demonstrates that people with greater exposure to news during the 1992 presidential election campaign were more likely to hold incorrectly pessimistic views of the U.S. economy, and were more likely to vote for Bill Clinton over George H. W. Bush. However, such studies typically do not confront the fact that people choose how much news to consume. Consequently, in this case, it is unclear whether it was exposure to biased news that misinformed people, or rather that misinformed people also happened to consume more news. Such difficulties are not intractable, but it is fair to say that much of the existing literature has not incorporated appropriate statistical methods for overcoming them.

There are two recent exceptions, however. First, a working paper by Stefano Della Vigna and Ethan Kaplan (2006) estimates the changes in Republican vote share that are attributable to the entry of Fox News

Channel into different cable markets (from 1996 to 2000, Fox News was available in only 20 percent of the United States). The authors also control for a number of other determinants of Republican vote share, including location-specific trends. Overall, when Fox entered a market, it had a large effect. Della Vigna and Kaplan estimate that it persuaded up to 3–8 percent of non-Republicans to vote Republican. This confirms that Fox is conservative relative to the media that liberal media-bias writers contend are, themselves, conservative. But the larger point is that there does appear to be a quantifiable and substantively important treatment effect from increased exposure to one news source relative to others, suggesting both that if content bias can be established in some other way, it matters; and that studies like Hetherington's do establish liberal media bias, not the pre-existing biases of the media consumer.

A very similar conclusion is reached by Alan Gerber, Dean Karlan, and Daniel Bergan (2006), who, in advance of the 2005 Virginia gubernatorial election, provided subjects in northern Virginia with free subscriptions to either *The Washington Post* or *The Washington Times*. Few who have read it (or who write for it) would contend that *Times* is more liberal than the *Post*. And true to this characterization, those who received the *Post* were significantly more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate for governor, and (less robustly) to hold more liberal views on national issues. Intriguingly, a control group that did not receive any newspaper was more likely to vote Republican. However, this may be an artifact of the time period examined in the study. As the authors point out, late 2005 was a time of particularly bad national news from a Republican perspective.

The studies we have been discussing fly in the face of other scholarly literature on the topic, and since many readers may have come across such research, it will be useful to point out what we view as some of the typical defects of much extant work on media bias.

For instance, a widely publicized study by Steven Kull, Clay Ramsay, and Evan Lewis (2003) examined whether exposure to different news sources was associated with misperceptions about the Iraq War. They reported that people who get their news from Fox News Channel were much more likely to hold misperceptions; listeners of National Public Radio were least likely to hold misperceptions. The implication is not only that FNC is more conservative than NPR, but that NPR is to the left of FNC only in the sense that NPR is unbiased, rather than in the sense that it is biased to the left.

Like most previous efforts in this literature, this study suffers from a

failure to identify the treatment effect of exposure to one media source or another, but what is more noteworthy in this instance is the definition of what constitutes a "misperception." Kull et al. define misperception as agreement with any of following statements: (1) "Clear evidence that Saddam Hussein was working closely with Al Qaeda has been found"; (2) "Weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq"; and (3) "World public opinion favored the United States going to war with Iraq." These questions are well tailored to catch errors that are likely to be made by supporters of the war—such as those who, presumably, tend to watch FNC. But what about questions that might catch errors likely to be made by opponents of the war—such as the listeners of NPR, if NPR is indeed biased to the left? The study did not ask whether there was evidence that Iraq had any contact with Al Qaeda prior to the war (as opposed to whether Iraq "worked closely" with Al Qaeda); whether there was evidence *before* the war that Iraq harbored WMD ambitions and even stockpiles; or whether the United Nations had demanded that Iraq prove that it had destroyed its previously demonstrated WMD programs and stockpiles, lest it be met with even more "serious consequences" than the sanctions it already endured (as the UN Security Council demanded, in Resolution 1441).

It may seem that in posing these alternative questions we have fallen into the trap of taking substantive positions on them, making our objections to Kull et al. ideological. However, it was Kull and his colleagues who decided to use the mistaken opinions of FNC viewers as evidence of FNC bias to the right by establishing NPR as the benchmark of unbiased objectivity. We are merely pointing out that it did not occur to these authors that NPR listeners might harbor erroneous views that might just as plausibly be attributed to NPR (or other mainstream media) bias to the left. The Kull study is tendentious, and that is all too characteristic even of the scholarly literature on media bias.

A New Way to Measure Media Bias

As we have noted, most of the traditional attempts at testing for the presence of media bias have some serious shortcomings. But not all of these shortcomings are methodological; sometimes, as with Kull et al., the research is just poorly executed, predetermining results that serve a particular conclusion. However, even the handful of more meritorious studies cannot really tell us much about the *extent* of ideological bias at

a particular media outlet, compared to some meaningful baseline. For example, the observed treatment effect of *The Washington Post* on voting patterns is fascinating, but leads only to the conclusions that exposure to different news sources has important consequences, and that *The Washington Post* is *relatively* more liberal than *The Washington Times*. As with the Kull study, this does not tell us whether the *Post* is more objective than the *Times*, or whether the *Post* is liberal in an absolute sense. Therefore, in "A Measure of Media Bias" (Groseclose and Milyo 2005), we explicitly sought to measure the ideological slant of major news outlets on a known scale.

First, we exploited the fact that there are reliable measures of the ideological orientation of members of Congress. Well-known measures include interest-group ratings, such as those produced by the (liberal) Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) and the American Conservative Union (ACU). However, because these interest-group ratings are not comparable over time, Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder 1999 develops a method of adjusting such ratings to permit intertemporal comparisons. In Groseclose and Milyo 2005, we employed intertemporally adjusted ADA scores as our measure of political ideology.

Second, we made use of the fact that both members of Congress and journalists cite putative "experts" in support of their narratives. For example, in Congressional speeches, members of Congress will frequently cite the findings of think tanks and advocacy groups as buttressing their positions. Journalists seek out commentary from the same types of sources. When journalists do so, however, they often don't feel the need to "balance" the opinions of those they cite, as they do when quoting explicitly partisan figures—because they take the objectivity of the so-called experts for granted. Further, even when journalists seek to balance such opinions, their own perceptions about which groups are on the left or right or are "moderate" will influence their choices of whom to consult for countervailing opinions.

By comparing news-media citation patterns to ADA ratings, we were able not only to characterize media outlets as biased to the left or right, but to state with some precision just how far to the left or right. Unfortunately, the actual statistical procedure we employ is somewhat complicated, so we must refer the interested reader to the original study. However, it is worth emphasizing that we analyzed only news reporters' references to think tanks and advocacy groups as objective sources of expertise: we omitted cases in which such groups are labeled

or criticized, and we did not include citations from opinion pieces, editorials, or letters to the editor.

We found that most of the nationally prominent outlets meet the ADA definition of "liberal." More specifically, the most prominent news media cluster around the same ideological range as conservative Democrats in Congress. That is, news outlets such as *The New York Times* and the even *The Wall Street Journal* cite as sources of objective expertise the types of sources thus cited by Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.).

Perhaps even more surprising, we found that while the most conservative national media outlets are *The Washington Times* and Fox News Channel's "Special Report with Brit Hume," both fall into the ideological range occupied by liberal northeastern Republicans, such as Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Me.). In fact, Fox News "Special Report" is actually closer to the political center, by ADA measures, than most other evening news broadcasts.

* * *

Our findings, when considered along with other recent and relatively high-quality studies of media content and media exposure, constitute fairly convincing evidence that those who scoff at the notion of liberal media bias are wrong. In judging the work-product of the mainstream media, the answer is relatively clear: there is bias, and it is roughly as far (or farther) to the left than Fox News "Special Report" is biased to the right.

REFERENCES

Alterman, Eric. 2003. *What Liberal Media? The Truth about Bias and the News*. New York: Basic Books.

Bagdikian, Ben H. 1990. *The Media Monopoly*. Boston: Beacon.

Della Vigna, Stefano, and Ethan Kaplan. 2006. "The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting." Unpublished manuscript, University of California, Berkeley.

Gerber, Alan, Dean Karlan, and Daniel Bergan. 2006. "Does Media Matter? A Field Experiment Measuring the Effect of Newspapers on Voting Behavior and Political Opinion." Unpublished manuscript, Yale University.

Groseclose, Tim, Steven Levitt, and James Snyder. 1999. "Comparing Interest Group Scores across Time and Chambers: Adjusted ADA Scores for the U.S. Congress." *American Political Science Review* 93: 33–50.

Groseclose, Tim, and Jeffrey Milyo. 2005. "A Measure of Media Bias." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120(4): 1191–1237.

Hetherington, Mark. 1996. "The Media's Effect on Voters' National Retrospective Economic Evaluations in 1992." *American Journal of Political Science* 40: 372–95.

Kull, Steven, Clay Ramsay, and Evan Lewis. 2003. "Misperceptions, the Media and the Iraq War." *Political Science Quarterly* 118(4): 569–98.

Lott, John R., and Kevin Hassett. 2004. "Is Newspaper Coverage of Economic Events Politically Biased?" Unpublished manuscript, American Enterprise Institute.

McChesney, Robert W. 1999. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communications Politics in Dubious Times.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Pew Center for Research on the People and the Press. 2004. "Bottom-Line Pressures Now Hurting Coverage, Say Journalists." Report No. 829. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.

Puglisi, Riccardo. 2004. "Being the *New York Times*: The Political Behavior of a Newspaper." Unpublished manuscript, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

William G. Mayer

WHAT CONSERVATIVE MEDIA? THE UNPROVEN CASE FOR CONSERVATIVE MEDIA BIAS

ABSTRACT: *A great deal of recent academic writing claims—but, more often, assumes—that the American news media have a predominantly conservative bias, slanting and shaping their coverage in ways that favor right-wing foreign, economic, cultural, and social policies. Two major books pioneered this position and have gone largely uncriticized, despite their immense influence. A detailed examination of Herbert Gans's* Deciding What's News *and Ben Bagdikian's* The Media Monopoly *shows, however, that they fall far short of proving their claims about media bias. The logic of many of their arguments is highly problematic, but especially glaring is the almost complete lack of solid evidence in either book as to the purportedly conservative nature of media content.*

If you ask a random sample of ordinary Americans about the subject of media bias, a plurality (though generally not a majority) will say that the media tend to be biased in a liberal direction.[1] But among those political scientists, sociologists, and communications scholars who have addressed this issue, a very different view apparently prevails. I say "apparently" because, so far as I can determine, no one has ever conducted a formal survey of social scientists who study the media, inquiring into their views about media bias. But as the notes and citations below suggest, there is a great deal of academic work asserting that the media are

Critical Review 17 (2005), nos. 3–4. ISSN 0891-3811. www.criticalreview.com

William G. Mayer, Department of Political Science, Northeastern University, Boston MA 02115, is the author, *inter alia*, of *The Changing American Mind: How and Why American Public Opinion Changed between 1960 and 1988* (Michigan, 1992).

biased in a conservative direction; substantially fewer scholars appear to believe that media biases work to liberals' advantage.

This paper is part of a larger attempt to examine the issue of media bias, and is perhaps best characterized as an intensive literature review of some of the earliest and most important of the modern scholarship. Rather than developing a new method or new data for testing the media-bias question, I am interested in assessing the work that has already been published on this topic. To that end, I will examine two influential old standards—classic demonstrations, it is thought, of the conservative-media-bias thesis: Herbert Gans's *Deciding What's News* and Ben Bagdikian's *The Media Monopoly*. The question I pose about these books is simple: Do they prove their point? Do they actually provide convincing evidence of conservative media bias?

My answer to both questions is negative: their assertions notwithstanding, neither book provides solid data or even a clear theoretical reason to believe that the American media have a right-wing bias. (Preliminary analysis of influential books in the genre by Todd Gitlin [1980], Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky [1988], Michael Parenti [1993], and Eric Alterman [2003] suggests that the same conclusion applies to them.)

Conservative Media Values?

When I queried a small sample of political scientists about which books had been most successful in convincing them that the news media have a conservative bias, the single most often-cited work was Herbert Gans's *Deciding What's News* (1980).[2] Gans's book is a multilayered study of how stories are selected and, to a lesser extent, produced at two major television networks (CBS and NBC) and two national magazines (*Newsweek* and *Time*). Its greatest effect on the debate about media bias may, however, have been its discussion, in chapter 2, of the "enduring values" in the news.[3]

Gans claims that eight major clusters of values play a major role in determining what gets reported and how: ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, social order, and national leadership. These values, as Gans argues at the end of the chapter, are by no means uniformly conservative. "Responsible capitalism," for example, includes acknowledging "the necessity for the welfare state" (Gans 1980, 47). Small-town

pastoralism means, among other things, that the media have a pro-environmental bias.

> The news dealt with the conflict between the preservation of nature and the activities of developers long before the environment and ecology became political issues; and more often than not, the news took at least an implicit stand against the developers. The post-war developers of suburbia were seen as despoiling the land in their rapacious search for profits; that they were concurrently providing houses for people was rarely noted. (Ibid., 49.)

Yet other "enduring values" clearly have more conservative implications. The news as reported in major American media, Gans argues, tends to:

- "value its own nation above all" and "judge other countries by the extent to which they live up to or imitate American practices and values" (ibid., 42);
- treat business, in a variety of ways, more favorably than government (ibid., 46–47);
- be "consistently critical of Communist and democratic-socialist economies" (ibid., 47);
- keep close scrutiny on "welfare cheaters" and the "welfare mess" while largely overlooking similar waste in the Defense Department (ibid., 47);
- have "an underlying respect for tradition of any kind, save perhaps discrimination against racial, sexual, and other minorities" (ibid., 50);
- celebrate "rugged individualists" and "self-made men and women" (ibid., 50–51);
- endorse moderation, and show suspicion of "political ideologists" of both the right and the left (ibid., 51–52); and
- take a critical view of any person or group that threatens to cause "social disorder" (ibid., 52–62).

The American media, writes Gans (1980, 68) in summary, are best described as "reformist": they support those who want the country to live up to its professed ideals, but they have no interest in challenging those ideals or making any other fundamental criticisms of the economy or polity.

On closer inspection, however, most of the enduring values are defined in a sufficiently elastic way that it is often difficult to say what would qualify as a counterexample. Take "responsible capitalism." "The

underlying posture of the news toward the economy," Gans (1980, 46) initially declares, rests on "an optimistic faith that . . . businessmen and women will compete with each other in order to create prosperity for all." Yet, as Gans develops this idea over the next two pages, it quickly becomes clear that "responsible capitalism," at least as it is envisioned by the media, is nothing like the classical liberalism of Milton Friedman or, even less, the libertarian credo of Ayn Rand. Business must, according to media coverage, "refrain from unreasonable profits and gross exploitation of workers or customers"; bigness is a vice and monopoly is "clearly evil"; "unions and consumer organizations are accepted"—though strikes are "frequently judged negatively"; economic growth is a positive phenomenon—unless it brings about inflation or pollution; the welfare state is necessary (ibid., 46–47). It is not clear what kind of story would *not* fit within the responsible-capitalist rubric, except one that explicitly endorsed socialism or one that argued, à la Friedman, that businesses exist to make as much money as they can, and have no other responsibilities to serve the public interest. A relentless succession of stories about corporate corruption and misbehavior could be fit under the all-inclusive rubric of "responsible capitalism."

Labeling issues aside, the biggest problem with Gans's "enduring values" is that he offers little empirical evidence to prove that they really are an important characteristic of news coverage. The enduring values are, in the end, nothing more than one sociologist's opinion about which values he thinks undergird the news. As Gans (1980, 41) says just before presenting his list, "The methods by which I identified the values were impressionistic; the values really emerged from continual scrutiny of the news over a long time." He did not, he notes, undertake any kind of "quantitative analysis." Nor does he produce much anecdotal evidence. His discussion of the media's respect for individualism, for example, includes a number of broad generalizations about how the media value "freedom of the individual against the encroachments of nation and society." But he mentions only two specific stories: a passing reference to Charles Kuralt's "On the Road" series on CBS; and an article written by a *Newsweek* reporter in which she expressed her preference for "New York's chaos" over the "ennui" of California (ibid., 50–51).

For all its influence on other media scholars, Gans's discussion of the enduring values occupies only about 25 pages in a 335-page book. Most of the book (chapters 3–9) is a detailed analysis of how the news is put together at four major national news organizations, an analysis that is

based largely on a substantial amount of "participant-observation" fieldwork that Gans carried out (intermittently) between 1965 and 1975. This central part of the book includes a great deal of additional discussion about the role of values in story selection—but in the end, nothing in these chapters comes close to demonstrating that the media have a right-wing bias.

To begin with, Gans provides no systematic data on the political values, beliefs, or assumptions of the journalists he studied. Gans spent a substantial amount of time hanging around the newsrooms of CBS, NBC, *Time*, and *Newsweek*, watching how the journalists did their work and talking to them when the work-pace permitted. But he did not conduct structured interviews, and his conclusions about the journalists' ideologies are therefore, again, "impressionistic" (1980, 211). And Gans provides a number of reasons for wondering how well-supported his impressions are. For a variety of reasons, the journalists he studied apparently didn't spend a lot of time talking about their own political opinions. To do so would have undermined the carefully nurtured claim of objectivity and, thus, their own "journalistic credibility" (ibid., 186). The national news magazines and television networks, Gans says at another point, "seem to attract people who keep their values to themselves" (ibid., 184).

Moreover, such information as Gans was able to gather hardly bears out a portrait of media personnel who are traditionalist, conservative, or pro-capitalist. "Journalists," he writes, "generally describe themselves as liberals," though, he immediately adds, "liberalism is a synonym for being independent, open-minded, or both" (1980, 211). Yet, he concedes one page later, "on 'social' issues"—"ecology, consumerism, marijuana use, and abortion"—"many of the journalists were clearly liberal" in the political sense of the term (ibid., 212).

Are Liberal Journalists Merely Open-Minded?

At just about the time Gans was researching and writing his book, a number of rigorous empirical studies of media attitudes and opinions were being carried out, and they paint a portrait that partly corroborates but also substantially challenges Gans's conclusions. In 1971, John Johnstone, Edward Slawski, and William Bowman conducted a national survey of American journalists that included a smaller sub-sample of respondents who worked for "nationally prominent" news organiza-

tions such as the ones Gans studied. Of the "rank-and-file" journalists at these organizations, 12 percent described themselves as "pretty far to the left," 40 percent as "a little to the left," 30 percent as "middle of the road," and just 17 percent as "a little to the right" or "pretty far to the right." Liberals outnumbered conservatives, in short, by a 3-to-1 margin. And contrary to what Gans (1980, 212) asserts, the news executives at these nationally prominent media were even further to the left: 63 percent of executives said they were a little or pretty far to the left, versus just 10 percent who said they were a little or pretty far to the right (Johnstone et al. 1976, 226).

Gans (1980, 211) claims that his own "impressionistic data support the findings" of the Johnstone study. For to Gans, as we have seen, the journalists' self-described liberalism is just a synonym for being "independent" or "open-minded." But again, Gans has, so far as I can determine, very little hard data supporting the claim that that is *all* that their self-assessed "liberalism" means to journalists. On the contrary. In 1979 and 1980, S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter conducted hour-long interviews with 238 journalists who worked for "American's most influential media outlets"—including *Time*, *Newsweek*, and all three television networks. Their data about the same group about which Gans writes show that their liberalism was also manifest in attitudes about many specific policy issues. Ninety percent of the elite journalists sampled were pro-choice on abortion, 80 percent supported affirmative action, and 50 percent said that "the main goal of U.S. foreign policy has been to protect U.S. business interests." On economic issues, media elites were, as Gans's "responsible-capitalism" label implies, hardly socialists. But the journalists did endorse a number of positions prominent in liberal criticism of free markets: 68 percent, for example, felt that "government should work to reduce substantially the income gap between the rich and the poor." Finally, in every presidential election between 1964 and 1976, at least 80 percent of the journalists said they had voted for the Democratic candidate (Lichter, Rothman, and Lichter 1986, 29–30). There is, I think, no obvious way to square these data with the claim that media liberalism is simply a matter of being independent and open-minded—even if that is how liberal journalists define their own liberalism.

If journalists are indeed *political* liberals, Gans provides a very compelling case for concluding that their beliefs and values are very likely to affect their reporting—despite journalists' protestations that they leave their politics at the office door. Values, Gans (1980, 182, 190, 199)

argues at a number of points, do enter into news judgments, primarily in unconscious ways. Values also affect what Gans (1980, 201) calls "reality judgments": the untested assumptions that journalists make (and report) about external reality. This subtle form of bias is borne out in Lichter et al.'s (1986, 63–71) study of what journalists remembered when asked to summarize fictional news reports. Facts that were consistent with liberal ideology generally got noticed by the journalists; facts that were not tended to be ignored.

For a variety of reasons, moreover, there seem to be few effective checks on journalists' biases. Journalists, according to Gans (1980, 230), have "little knowledge about the actual audience" and largely "rejected feedback from it." They don't pay much attention to audience mail and tend to dismiss critical letters as coming from "nuts" and "cranks" (ibid., 231). They also pay little attention to formal audience research. The informal feedback of which they do make some use tends to come from "family members, friends, neighbors, and people journalists meet at parties" (ibid., 235–36)—people whom, one suspects, also share the journalists' basic values and beliefs.

Reliance on Official Sources

There is one other argument in *Deciding What's News* that is frequently made to buttress the claim that the media have a conservative bias.[4] The argument has two major steps. First, most media stories are based on the statements and actions of leading elected and governmental officials: the president, members of Congress, cabinet officers, and top officials at the state and local level. Second, because reporters get most of their stories from these "official sources," they are subservient to these sources. Reporters "must concentrate on stories that please their sources, since angering them may endanger their closeness or rapport, thus ending the reporter's usefulness on the beat" (Gans 1980, 133). Hence, they tend to produce stories that accept government pronouncements at face value and show top officials in a positive light.

At one level, there is little doubt about the descriptive accuracy of this argument's first step: as Gans shows in chapter 1, and as numerous other studies have also documented, leading public officials, particularly the president, get far more coverage than other would-be newsmakers.[5] There is, however, an enormous difference between saying that news derives from official sources and saying that news derives from conserv-

ative sources. In actuality, the public officials who supply most of the news are, in ideological terms, a highly variegated group, including liberals as well as conservatives, Democrats as well as Republicans—regardless of which party is in power. Ronald Reagan, Jesse Helms, and George W. Bush are or were oft-quoted public officials, but so are Ted Kennedy, John Kerry, and Bill and Hilary Clinton. If the modern media's obsession with the presidency helped Reagan advance his conservative policies (and the evidence that it actually did so is quite mixed; see Mayer 1992), it also helped Bill Clinton promote his more left-of-center agenda. A focus on those who already hold major positions of governmental power does, it is true, inhibit coverage of more extreme opinions, but this effect, too, applies to both ends of the ideological spectrum: socialism and radical feminism don't get much attention in the news, but neither do libertarianism or Christian fundamentalism.

The second step in Gans's argument about official sources is equally problematic. More than Gans and other media critics recognize, the reporter-source relationship is a two-way street. Sources have control over certain kinds of information that reporters need, but reporters also control resources that sources plainly value. In particular, the White House correspondents are the gatekeepers who regulate the president's access to the larger American public. Though presidents sometimes speak about trying to go "over the heads of the media" by taking their case "directly to the people," their capacity to do this is actually quite limited. Most of what the public learns about the president will be based on media coverage. The media do pay attention to official sources in general and the presidency in particular, but this doesn't mean that officials or the president decide the slant of media coverage.

The presidency, it is worth adding, is not a single, unified actor. Whatever the president and/or his press secretary may say about a particular issue, there may be high government officials who will, on or off the record, tell a somewhat different story. If the Defense Department claims that fighting is going well in a particular foreign conflict, the State Department and even some officials within Defense may express a contrary view. Congress, of course, speaks with an even more fragmented voice. Thus, if the president refuses to cooperate with, say, the White House correspondent of the *New York Times*, this doesn't mean that the *Times* will not carry a story from the White House. More likely, it means that a story will be written that simply doesn't include the president's own message and perspective.

Who finally has the dominant position in the reporter-source relationship? In my view, there is no way to settle this question on a theoretical or abstract level. Both sides have important resources but also substantial needs. To borrow some terminology from negotiation analysis, these needs and resources probably define a broad "zone of agreement."[6] The final "contract" that is, in effect, negotiated between "the media" and "the president" will vary from day to day and from one administration to the next. The proper way to settle the question, therefore, is to look at the actual content of media news reports. And as any one of the last eight presidents would surely testify, obsessive coverage of the president doesn't necessarily mean favorable coverage. The White House bureaus that every major news organization diligently maintains produce a great number of very negative stories.[7] People like Andrea Mitchell, Leslie Stahl, David Gregory, and Dana Milbank don't just report whatever the president says each day, without comment or criticism, still less with the positive "spin" that the president's press secretary puts on it. They also run stories about how the president's economic policies aren't working, how his foreign policy is in disarray, or about the latest scandals surrounding him, the vice president, or the president's appointees.

In the end, then, Gans does not come close to demonstrating that the major American news media have a conservative bias. His analysis probably does go some way toward showing that the media are not *radical*, particularly on economic issues. Unfortunately, Gans sometimes seems to view the world through the lenses of the New Left. It is as if everyone, including journalists, can be divided into two groups: radicals and the Establishment (a word that Gans actually uses, suitably capitalized, at several points; e.g., Gans 1980, xiv). The Establishment is invariably unified, change-resistant, and conservative. Hence, if the media aren't radical, they must be conservative. There are some senses in which one can meaningfully label Al Gore or John Kerry conservative: they don't, for example, advocate violent revolution. But such labeling distorts what most contemporary observers mean when they complain about "liberal media bias."

The Media Are Corporate Owned. So What?

The first edition of Ben Bagdikian's *The Media Monopoly* was published in 1983.[8] It is some measure of its influence that it is favorably cited by

almost every subsequent book that argues that the media have a conservative bias.[9]

The most famous single argument in this book concerns the growing concentration of ownership in the mass media. Bagdikian looked at five major types of media: newspapers, magazines, television, book publishing, and movies. He asked: How many corporations control half of the total market share of each type of media? In television, for example, just three firms—ABC, NBC, and CBS—accounted for a substantial majority of all programs viewed in 1983 (although this percentage has declined substantially since then). Similarly, twenty companies accounted for more than half of the daily papers purchased in the United States. In 1983, Bagdikian concluded, 46 corporations controlled more than half of the business in the five types of media put together. By 1990, just 23 corporations controlled half the business in these five media.[10]

Media-concentration data aside, *The Media Monopoly* is a compendium of arguments about the effects of money on media. At one point or another, Bagdikian argues that:

1. Large media firms provide news and entertainment that is highly sympathetic toward corporations in general and toward pro-corporate public policies.
2. Large media firms run stories that promote their own corporate interests, and kill or downplay stories that are unfavorable to the firm.
3. Corporations run a considerable amount of advertising that is designed to improve their own image and/or the image of business generally, rather than to sell products.
4. When an independent newspaper is purchased by a chain, the quality and quantity of its news coverage is likely to decline.
5. Large media corporations often seek special favors from government and, because of their perceived influence on public opinion, frequently get them.
6. Media corporations cater not to all consumers, but only to those demographic groups coveted by advertisers.
7. Mass advertising has been primarily responsible for the increasing prevalence of monopoly newspapers.
8. Competitive newspapers are journalistically superior to monopoly newspapers.
9. A remarkably large proportion of the typical newspaper—and

thus of the raw materials that make up the newspaper—consists of advertising.

10. Mass advertising inflates the prices of the products advertised.
11. Some articles and programs are killed because they offend the interests of major advertisers, while other articles and programs are run just because they are pleasing to potential sponsors.
12. In the pursuit of profits, the television networks put on programs that have too much sex and violence.
13. Newspapers' pursuit of short-term profits has actually resulted in a long-term decline in newspaper readership.

The first point worth noting about this list is that many of the arguments Bagdikian makes are ones with which conservatives could easily agree, since they have no obvious implications for the issue of media bias. No major conservative writer on media of whom I am aware has ever written a defense of chain newspapers, nor would a conservative have any special reason to deny the possibility that advertisers value some viewers and readers more than others, or that this preference gets translated into advertising rates and program choices. Conservative pro-family groups have been at least as vigorous as those on the left in arguing for less sex and violence on television. And some of the most stinging denunciations of monopoly newspapers today come from conservatives who live in cities like Los Angeles and Minneapolis, in which the only daily newspaper has, they believe, a very severe liberal bias.[11]

Bagdikian's Dubious Evidence

I will focus on the few arguments Bagdikian presents that do have implications for the conservative-bias issue—particularly point 1 on the list. Bagdikian's book is filled with sweeping declarations about how favorable the media are toward business. For example:

> No sacred cow has been so protected and has left more generous residues in the news than the American corporation. . . . Since World War I hardly a mainstream American news medium has failed to grant its most favored treatment to corporate life. . . . There have also been ugliness and injustice [reported] in corporate wielding of power. . . .

> But through it all, most of the mass media depicted corporate life as benevolent and patriotic. (Bagdikian 2000, 47–48.)

Does Bagdikian make his case? Do the American media have a pro-corporate bias?

Like Gans, Bagdikian provides no rigorous or systematic evidence to back up his charges. In a 252-page book (not including end notes), he cites not a single content study showing that media stories about business or corporations are actually favorable. His evidence is, instead, entirely anecdotal—and most of the anecdotes are not about stories that *were* run, but about stories that were *not*: books and articles about corporate wrongdoing that were killed, or at least were not given as much attention as Bagdikian feels they deserved. The number of such incidents cited in Bagdikian's book is not particularly large, with an exception to be noted later; nevertheless, they provide almost all the evidence Bagdikian produces to support his conclusion that the media are highly protective of corporate interests.

The plain problem with this method is that it is most unclear what sorts of general conclusions can be drawn from anecdotal evidence. Granting that some books and stories have been killed because they affected powerful economic interests, is this something that occurs regularly or rarely? And what, if anything, do these cases tell us about the stories on business and corporate behavior that *do* get reported? For every anti-corporate story that is suppressed, a business defender might argue, there are dozens more that do get published or broadcast. "Haliburton," "Enron," and "Wal-Mart" did not become one-word epithets due to lack of media coverage.

At times, Bagdikian's unwillingness to evaluate his anecdotal material against the larger totality of what is printed or broadcast seems almost painfully obvious. In chapter 2 of his book, for example, he relates a story about how in 1973, Warner Modular Publications killed a book called *Counter-Revolutionary Violence*, co-authored by Noam Chomsky, the thesis of which was that "the United States, in attempting to suppress revolutionary movements in underdeveloped countries, had become the leading source of violence against native people" (Bagdikian 2000, 33). Just as the book was about to be published, Bagdikian says, it was suddenly cancelled on the grounds that it would "embarrass the parent firm." The books that had been printed were destroyed, and all references to it in the publishing house's catalogue were deleted.

Assuming that this story is true (Warner Communications denies it),

it surely reflects very poorly on both Warner and William Sarnoff, the Warner executive most responsible for the decision. But does Bagdikian really believe that Noam Chomsky is having trouble getting his work published? According to the Harvard University library catalogue (which I consult because it is likely to be nearly exhaustive), Chomsky published 49 books on various political topics between 1973 and 2003, with twenty different publishing houses.[12] Whatever Warner Communications may have decided to do, other firms were there to fill the gap. Chomsky's work is most definitely getting published.

Bagdikian's anecdotal method can be undercut in a second way. For every instance he can cite of an anti-corporate story that wasn't published, one can find an anecdote that cuts in the opposite direction: an anti-corporate story that was published or broadcast even though it probably shouldn't have been, because it was based on insubstantial or trumped-up evidence. Consider two examples that are favorites among critics of liberal media bias:

1. On November 17, 1992, "Dateline NBC," a prime-time newsmagazine program, ran a story called "Waiting to Explode?", which claimed that certain kinds of General Motors trucks were unsafe because their gas tanks were mounted outside the vehicles' frames. The visual highlight of the story was a crash test in which a car slammed into the side of a truck and the truck immediately burst into flames.

There was only one problem: the test was rigged. As NBC admitted on a later "Dateline" program in February, 1993, the consultants who performed the test had put "incendiary devices under the trucks to insure that there would be a fire if gasoline were released from the truck's tank." And to insure that gasoline was released, the gas tank was filled beyond capacity, and the original gas cap was replaced by an "ill-fitting" cap salvaged from another truck. None of this was, of course, was mentioned in the original report.[13]

2. In late 1978, "60 Minutes" asked to interview executives from the Illinois Power Company (IP), in connection with a nuclear power plant the company was building in central Illinois. IP agreed, with the stipulation that, every time "60 Minutes" was filming on company property, IP could film the same scenes and interviews. In November 1979, "60 Minutes" broadcast a typically hard-hitting story on IP, claiming that the plant's construction was being delayed and costs increased because of gross mismanagement on the company's part. IP, however, issued its own "response video," which showed the entire "60 Minutes" story, but periodically interrupted it to provide additional information, most of

which "60 Minutes" had been told about but left out, and interview material that was edited out of the broadcast.

The IP "response video" is a devastating critique of the "60 Minutes" report. The person identified in the story as IP's "sharpest critic" had serious credibility problems: he had plainly falsified a substantial number of items on his résumé and had uncertain expertise in the area of nuclear power. "60 Minutes" knew about these problems, but never mentioned them. Many other assertions about IP made in the story were either unsupported or technically true but highly misleading. And "60 Minutes" completely misinterpreted a major planning document examined in the story, in a way that made the company's construction schedule look ridiculously optimistic. As one commentator noted:

> In virtually every case, the Illinois Power film shows "60 Minutes" omitting portions of interviews that offer evidence challenging its contentions against the power company. Certainly, Illinois Power tries to put its best face on things. But "60 Minutes" follows a pattern of believing the worst and artfully neutralizing elements that might disturb that pattern.[14]

If the "corporate media" are even half so protective of corporate interests as Bagdikian claims, it is difficult to explain how incidents like these could occur. Far from looking for reasons to kill them, NBC and CBS ran stories that were far more critical of the corporations in question than a fair reading of the evidence would have justified. So why should we take Bagdikian's handful of anecdotes as representative?

A final problem with Bagdikian's anecdotes is their accuracy. In a fair number of cases, he leaves out important information or overstates the evidence provided by the sources he cites. For example, Bagdikian (2000, 39) offers the following instance of corporate influence over the media:

> The quick empathy that power centers have for each other seemed to be demonstrated when Kermit Roosevelt, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officer, wrote a book called *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran*. It was the author's inside version of how intelligence agencies overthrew a left-leaning Iranian premier, Mohammed Mossadegh, in 1953 and reinstated the Shah. The issue was control of oil. The plot was called "Ajax," of which Roosevelt wrote: "The original proposal for Ajax came from the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) after its expulsion from Iran nine months earlier." The book was pub-

> lished by McGraw-Hill in early 1979. Books were on sale in bookstores and reviewer copies were already in the mails when British Petroleum, successor corporation to AIOC, persuaded McGraw-Hill to recall all the books—from the stores and from reviewers.

But the source Bagdikian cites for this anecdote, a 1979 article in the *Wall Street Journal*, tells a story that is importantly different. In the original manuscript, according to the *Journal*, Roosevelt claimed that the CIA engineered the 1953 coup by working with a British intelligence unit called MI6 "that doesn't even like to acknowledge its existence, let alone its role in planning Mideast coups." As a former CIA operative, Roosevelt had to submit his manuscript to the CIA for prepublication review; when he did so, the CIA "insisted that any direct references to British intelligence would have to go." So Roosevelt changed the offending passages "so that they referred instead to Anglo-Iranian Oil Co" instead of British intelligence. British Petroleum understandably objected to this change, since it was now being blamed for a coup in whose planning or execution it had no role. When the issue was raised with McGraw-Hill, the publisher decided, to its credit, that the "misstatements" were significant enough to require correction (McGraw-Hill was also threatened with a libel suit), and thus it recalled the copies that had already been printed (Ignatius 1979; Dong 1979). The revised version was published in early 1980—another point Bagdikian neglects to mention—with all references to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company changed to "British intelligence."[15] Even the reviewer for the *Nation* said that the role of British intelligence in the revised edition is "correctly ascribed" (Powers 1980, 437).

Similarly, Bagdikian (2000, 167, ellipses in original) quotes a senior vice-president of MGM as telling a group of newspaper executives that $500 million worth of movie ads

> cannot be taken for granted and you've got to get this word to your editorial counterparts. . . . Today the daily newspaper does not always create a climate that is supportive and favorable to the motion picture industry. . . . Gratuitous and hateful reviews threaten to cause the romance between newspapers and the motion picture industry to wither on the vine.

Once again, however, the article Bagdikian cites paints a somewhat different picture of what this MGM executive, Richard Kahn, actually said. He did complain about the way newspapers treated the motion-

picture industry, but negative reviews were actually far down his list of complaints. The full sentence from his speech, as quoted in the source of which Bagdikian relies, reads:

> Such things as wall-to-wall amusement sections with little or no editorial coverage, elimination of movie logs, chaotic and discriminatory rate structures, bad reproduction, inconsistency of column widths, unreasonably long deadlines and unqualified reviewers and *gratuitous and hateful reviews threaten to cause the "romance" between newspapers and the motion picture industry to "wither on the vine."* (Gloede 1981, emphasis added.)

In later portions of the speech, Kahn urged the newspaper executives to revise their rate structures, give as much news coverage to movies as they do to television, "improve the quality of your reproduction [and] page layout," and continue to provide "free movie time clock log[s]." Kahn also complained about "misanthropic headline writers" who turned "a negative review" into a "poisonous polemic," but that criticism seems much milder, and like a less heavy-handed attempt to intrude into newspaper editorial functions, when placed in the full context of the speech.

Are the Corporate Media Pro-Business?

It is precisely because anecdotes can be found to substantiate almost any view of the media that communication scholars in almost all social-science disciplines agree that the best way to study media content is by using content analysis, which aspires to measure communication content in ways that are relatively objective and generalizable. Content analyses of business-news coverage have almost invariably found that business gets considerably more negative than positive coverage. Ted J. Smith III, for example, examined the major themes in network news coverage of business and industry during three one-year periods in the 1980s. In all three periods studied, critical coverage overwhelmed positive coverage by a ratio of 11:1 or greater. As Smith (1988, 66) notes, in 1984–85 and 1986–87,

> almost one out of every five economic stories—and perhaps 5–7 percent of *all* television news stories—included an explicit attack on a business or businessman. . . . Businessmen were more often portrayed as criminals on network television news than as benefactors of any kind.

Similarly, Lichter, Rothman, and Lichter (1986, 270–92) showed that the oil industry received a great deal of highly negative coverage during the 1970s. The *New York Times*, *Time* magazine, and the national television networks portrayed oil companies as monopolistic, as having manipulated supplies in order to increase their own profits, and as primarily responsible for the decade's major energy shortages.

In short, business received a great deal of critical coverage in the American media, and comparatively little positive coverage, contrary to Bagdikian's assertion.

Bagdikian's argument that the major American media are pro-corporate extends to entertainment programming, not just news. In order to provide a favorable atmosphere for corporate money-making and to attract advertisers, television in particular is supposedly replete with programs that are designed to sell the "corporate ideology" (Bagdikian 2000, 155–61). But here, too, serious content studies provide a very different picture.

The most comprehensive study of the social and political content of entertainment television is another product of the indefatigable Lichter, Lichter, and Rothman, who analyzed 620 randomly selected programs (31 per year) broadcast between 1955 and 1986, roughly contemporaneous with the period Bagdikian studied. One of their most striking conclusions was about how negatively business and business people were portrayed on television. "Across the entire three decades of our study," Lichter et al. (1994, 210–11) found, "business characters were consistently depicted more negatively than those in other occupations." Forty-five percent of all the businessmen on TV were coded as playing negative roles, versus 37 percent who were portrayed positively (the rest were neutral). By contrast, all other characters whose occupations were identifiable (lawyers, doctors, blue-collar workers, etc.) were depicted positively by a two-to-one margin (46 percent positive, 23 percent negative). "The proportion of bad guy businessmen," in short, "is almost double that of all other occupations."

Moreover, businesspeople depicted on television were

> over three times more likely to be criminals than are members of other occupations. One in seven business characters commits a crime, compared to one in twenty-three characters in all occupations. . . . Even this underestimates the venality of TV's businessmen, since their crimes tend to be either violent or sleazy. They commit 40 percent of the murders

> and 44 percent of vice crimes like drug trafficking and pimping. (Ibid., 211.)

The institution of business was also treated badly. The theme of "corruption versus honesty" in business was raised in 68 different programs; 81 percent of them found honesty to be lacking in business. Twenty-one programs dealt with the "relationship of business to government." In all but one case, the theme was that "business wields excessive power over the public arena in order to obtain preferential treatment" (Lichter, Lichter, and Rothman 1994, 229, 232).

Another study, conducted by the Media Institute, analyzed 200 entertainment programs (4 episodes from each of 50 programs) that aired in 1979 and 1980. Of 118 business characters in these programs, 67 percent were portrayed negatively, while just 25 percent were shown in a positive light. Moreover, the study found, "American business is slapped with an even worse image than are individual businessmen" (Theberge 1981, 29). When business characters were shown acting positively, the positive acts almost never arose from their business activities. In one program, a businessman had adopted two orphaned black children, but the focus of this series was on the businessman's home life; his business received only passing mention. By contrast, when characters were actually shown performing business activities, 86 percent were portrayed negatively; only 7 percent were portrayed positively.

Bagdikian's argument that news and entertainment programming adopts a pro-corporate stance to attract or retain advertising is no better supported. Again, his evidence is entirely anecdotal—and in this case, most of the anecdotes are rather dated, even when first published in the 1983 edition of his book, let alone when repeated in the subsequent editions. The NBC "Camel News Caravan" would not air film showing a "No Smoking" sign—in the early 1950s (Bagdikian 2000, 156). *Esquire* magazine apologized to piano manufacturers for an article claiming that guitars were better than pianos—in 1941 (ibid., 161). Bagdikian quotes a series of memos and statements in which executives at major corporations discuss the kinds of television programs on which they wish to advertise; all are taken from hearings conducted by the Federal Communications Commission in 1961 (ibid., 156–59). The *New York Times* gave insufficient coverage to the link between cancer and cigarettes—in 1953 and 1954. The president of the Grocery Manufacturers Association claimed that he had been able to persuade a number of major magazines to run "favorable food articles"—in 1962 (ibid., 162).

The Logic of the Corporate Media

It is worth noting, in this connection, that Gans (1980, 253)—who can hardly be accused of being a right-wing or pro-business zealot—was quite insistent that, at least at the news organizations he studied, the news was not altered in response to pressure from advertisers. As he put it:

> While [journalists] occasionally suspect their superiors of using commercial considerations, there is never any suspicion that they had surrendered to advertisers. In our discussions about successful advertiser censorship, the journalists could think of only a few, well-publicized cases, many dating back to the 1950s. In any case, top producers and editors would not consider killing a story or story suggestion because it might antagonize advertisers; nor do chilling effects lead to unconscious self-censorship.[16]

Gans observed an invisible but very real wall between advertising and news decisions that, arguably, has a business motive behind it, even though it has become enshrined in an ethical code. Journalism makes money for "corporate media conglomerates" by selling advertising, which depends on maintaining a large audience. Members of the audience who suspect that they're getting pro-advertiser propaganda dressed up as objective journalism will stop viewing or reading. The bottom-line considerations that are paramount to corporate media conglomerates demand the protection of the most valuable commodity possessed by their news operations—their credibility—against commercialist taint. Thus, the logic dictated by the very thing that Bagdikian decries, the profit motive, is inconsistent with his claim that the news media shill for their advertisers.

Another problem with this part of Bagdikian's analysis is his failure to distinguish between what advertisers say they want and what they actually get. Bagdikian quotes a succession of memos and statements from major advertisers saying they want programs in which a businessman isn't "cast in the role of a villain" (2000, 157) and that "reinforce our corporate messages" (ibid., 160). But it is by no means obvious that the advertisers were successful in this effort, any more than politicians are successful when they ask for more favorable media treatment. To judge from the Lichter, Lichter, and Rothman data, advertisers were, in fact, strikingly unsuccessful.

Moreover, advertisers can be accommodated in other ways than by changing program content. To quote Gans (1980, 254) again:

> [Elite-media producers and editors] know their most regular advertisers but think about them only in cases of possible conflict. If a top producer chooses a story on smoking and lung cancer, he checks whether a cigarette company is listed as one of the day's sponsors; and after first proposing, tongue in cheek, to place the story immediately before or after the cigarette commercial, he informs the business department of the story, which in turn allows the sponsor (or the advertising agency) to postpone the commercial for another day. If the agency decides to run the commercial nevertheless, it will be placed as far away as possible from the cancer story.

This type of accommodation also seems to have occurred in another case cited—and, I believe, misinterpreted—by Bagdikian (2000, 167). "In 1978," he claims, Air Canada "notified newspaper advertising managers that its ads would be canceled as long as any news story of an Air Canada crash or hijacking ran in the paper and if its ads were carried within two pages of a news story of any crash or hijacking on any airline." Actually, the article Bagdikian cites says that Air Canada had asked newspapers to "remove the airline's ads if there is news of an Air Canada accident or hijacking, and to keep the ads out of the paper *until the story is no longer being carried*" (*Editor & Publisher* 1978, emphasis added). In other words, Air Canada was not threatening to withdraw its ads from any paper that covered an Air Canada accident. (Given the contemporary media's fondness for disaster stories, particularly high-profile tragedies like airplane crashes, did Bagdikian really believe that newspapers would have responded favorably to such an ultimatum?) It merely asked that the ads not be run in the same issue with such stories.

The only charge made by Bagdikian that seems to be reasonably well-supported by the evidence in his book is the second on my list above: namely, that media firms sometimes kill or downplay stories that are unfavorable to the parent company. Here, too, the evidence is anecdotal, but there are enough anecdotes to convince me, at least, that the problem is real, though far from inevitable or universal.[17]

It is important to be clear about what this charge amounts to. It may be true, as Bagdikian claims, that the *Los Angeles Times* once provided very sympathetic coverage of proposed California water projects partly because its own real-estate holdings would have become considerably more valuable if those projects were built (2000, 39–40).[18] But this does

not imply that the *Times* took a pro-business stance on other issues, where its own corporate interests were not immediately at stake.

Thus, while Bagdikian provocatively discusses the effects of the profit motive on media *structure*, his most fundamental assertions about media *content* are simply not proven. There is little evidence in *The Media Monopoly* that the mainstream media really do grant their "most favored treatment to corporate life," and much evidence elsewhere against this claim.

Assumptions vs. Evidence

For reasons of space, this article has featured an analysis of just two books on the topic of media bias, albeit two books that have been highly influential among academic media critics. Both books seem to assume that the conservative bias of the media is so self-evident that it requires little more than a few anecdotes to illustrate a general pattern that "everybody knows" is out there.

In Gans's case, one can at least say that his book was published at a time when serious studies of the media-bias question were still in their infancy. But the later editions of Bagdikian's book appeared at a time when a significant number of studies contesting his central thesis were already in print. But Bagdikian never seems to take the opposite point of view very seriously. Conservative criticisms of the media are dismissed as though they were figments of the imaginations of self-interested corporate executives and corporate-funded think tanks.

At a minimum, I hope that this article cautions scholars who, having perhaps read the likes of Gans and Bagdikian too uncritically, or having seen glowing references to them frequently repeated, believe that the media's right-wing bias has been conclusively established. In these two books (and in the many similar books I have examined to date), the claim that the American media have a conservative bias is unproven, at best.

NOTES

1. For a brief review of the survey evidence, see Mayer 2004. In September 2003, for example, the Gallup Poll asked a national sample, "In general, do you think the news media is too liberal, just about right, or too conservative?" Forty-five percent said too liberal, 14 percent too conservative.

2. Though the book was first published in 1979, all references in this article are based on the 1980 edition.
3. For two good examples of political scientists who endorse Gans's approach, see Page and Shapiro 1992, 376–81; and Iyengar and Kinder 1987, 132.
4. For other presentations of the same argument, see Page and Shapiro 1992, 380; and Hertsgaard 1988, ch. 4.
5. For particularly good data on this point, see Sigal 1973, ch. 6.
6. For a good explanation of the basic concepts used here, see Raiffa 1982, ch. 4.
7. See, for example, Smoller 1990; Robinson, Clancy, and Grand 1983; and Smith 1988.
8. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, my discussion is based on the sixth edition (Bagdikian 2000).
9. Michael Parenti (1993), for example, cites him six times in chapter 2 and six more times in chapter 3. See also Herman and Chomsky 1988, 4–5; and McChesney 1999, 19.
10. Actually, in the 1983 edition of his book, Bagdikian looked at *six* major types of media — the five listed in the text above, plus radio—and concluded that 50 corporations controlled more than half of the business in all six types combined. See Bagdikian 1983, 7–20. By 1987, however, he had dropped radio from the list, for no apparent reason except that it was an "exception" to the general pattern. "Had radio been excluded" from the 1983 list, he noted in 1987 (19–20), "the fifty dominant corporations would have been forty-six." The number of dominant media corporations then declined, according to Bagdikian's figures, to 29 in 1987 and 23 in 1990. For whatever reason, the 1990 count has not been updated in subsequent editions: the list of corporations in the sixth edition, published in 2000 (21–24), is identical with that published ten years earlier.
11. Conservatives might disagree with Bagdikian about the proper remedies for these problems, but that is a different matter.
12. The count excludes Chomsky's purely linguistic works, pamphlets, books published in foreign languages, and a considerable number of videotapes and sound recordings based on interviews with or lectures by Chomsky. It does include second and all other subsequent editions, where these included revisions or new material, and a number of books that consisted of extended interviews with Chomsky edited by someone else.
13. This account draws on Kolbert 1993; Kurtz 1993a, 1993b; Byron 1993; and Mashberg 1993.
14. Paul Good, as quoted in Lichter, Rothman, and Lichter 1986, 151.
15. For example, the sentence quoted in Bagdikian's paragraph now reads, "The original proposal for AJAX came from British intelligence after all efforts to get the Mossadegh to reverse his nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) had failed." See Roosevelt 1979, 3. According to Thomas Powers, this arrangement was worked out between the CIA and the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) as "the best way out of the mess." See Powers 1980, 437.
16. By "commercial considerations," Gans means that stories were occasionally

chosen because they would attract or hold an audience, or that stories were not covered because it was too expensive to do so—*not* that stories were chosen on the basis of their compatibility with commercials. For a more detailed explanation, see Gans 1980, 214–20.

17. On this issue as well, Gans (1980, 257) has a more nuanced discussion.
18. In this case, Bagdikian does interpret his source correctly (see Joseph 1981), though the alleged misdeeds occurred in the 1960s and 1970s.

REFERENCES

Alterman, Eric. 2003. *What Liberal Media? The Truth about Bias and the News*. New York: Basic Books.

Bagdikian, Ben J. 1983. *The Media Monopoly*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bagdikian, Ben J. 1987. *The Media Monopoly*, 2nd ed. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bagdikian, Ben J. 1990. *The Media Monopoly*, 3rd ed. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bagdikian, Ben J. 2000. *The Media Monopoly*, 6th ed. Boston: Beacon Press.

Byron, Christopher. 1993. "Crash and Burn: NBC Takes the Heat." *New York*, February 22: 19–20.

Dong, Stella. 1979. "Petroleum Firm's Protest over Name-Spill Fuels Recall of 'Countercoup.'" *Publishers Weekly*, November 19: 14–17.

Editor & Publisher. 1978. "Airline Issues Ad Disaster Rules." November 11: 4.

Gans, Herbert J. 1980. *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. New York: Random House.

Gitlin, Todd. 1980. *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gloede, Bill. 1981. "MGM Exec Voices Concerns over Newspaper Policies." *Editor & Publisher*, January 31: 7.

Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. 1988. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon.

Hertsgaard, Mark. 1988. *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency*. New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux.

Ignatius, David. 1979. "The Coup Against 'Countercoup': How a Book Disappeared." *Wall Street Journal*, November 6: 1979.

Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald R. Kinder. 1987. *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Johnstone, John W. C., Edward J. Slawski, and William W. Bowman. 1976. *The News People: A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Joseph, Nadine. 1981. *Columbia Journalism Review* 19 (January/February): 8–9.

Kolbert, Elizabeth. 1993. "NBC Settles Truck Crash Lawsuit, Saying Test Was 'Inappropriate.'" *New York Times*, February 10: A1.

Kurtz, Howard. 1993a. "NBC Apologizes for Staged Crash, Settles with GM." *Washington Post*, February 10: A1.

Kurtz, Howard. 1993b. "Crash Test Report Slams NBC; Internal Probe Finds Staging 'Amateurish.'" *Washington Post*, March 23: B1.

Lichter, S. Robert, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter. 1986. *The Media Elite: America's New Powerbrokers*. New York: Hastings House.

Lichter, S. Robert, Linda S. Lichter, and Stanley Rothman. 1994. *Prime Time: How TV Portrays American Culture*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery.

Mashberg, Tom. 1993. "A Detective Story: How GM Solved Case of Naughty Network's Contrived Crash Test." *Boston Glove*, February 11: 45.

Mayer, William G. 1992. *The Changing American Mind: How and Why American Public Opinion Changed between 1960 and 1988*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Mayer, William G. 2004. "Why Talk Radio Is Conservative." *The Public Interest,* no. 156 (Summer): 86–103.

McChesney, Robert W. 1999. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Problems in Dubious Times*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Parenti, Michael. 1993. *Inventing Reality: The Politics of News Media*, 2nd ed. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Powers, Thomas. 1980. "A Book Held Hostage." Review of Roosevelt 1979." *The Nation*, April 12: 437–40.

Raiffa, Howard. 1982. *The Art and Science of Negotiation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Robinson, Michael, Maura Clancy, and Lisa Grand. 1983. "With Friends Like These. . . ." *Public Opinion* 6 (June/July): 1–4.

Roosevelt, Kermit. 1979. *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Sigal, Leon V. 1973. *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking*. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath.

Smith, Ted J., III. 1988. *The Vanishing Economy: Television Coverage of Economic Affairs, 1982–1987*. Washington, D.C.: Media Institute.

Smoller, Fredric T. 1990. *The Six O'Clock Presidency: A Theory of Presidential Press Relations in the Age of Television*. New York: Praeger.

Theberge, Leonard J., ed. 1981. *Crooks, Conmen and Clowns: Businessmen in TV Entertainment*. Washington, D.C.: Media Institute.

Samuel DeCanio

MURRAY EDELMAN ON SYMBOLS AND IDEOLOGY IN DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

ABSTRACT: *For Murray Edelman, political realities are largely inaccessible to the public, save by the mediation of symbols generated by elites. Such symbols often create the illusion of political solutions to complex problems—solutions devised by experts, implemented by effective leaders, and undemonstrably successful in their results.*

Reading the work of Murray Edelman can be both rewarding and irritating. In a series of books and essays, Edelman examined such important issues as elite manipulation of public opinion, the role of ideology in mass politics, and media bias. Edelman asked big questions and reached unsettling answers. However, Edelman's writings are marred by an ideological bias of his own that tends to obscure the real insights in his work. This should give pause both to those who agree with Edelman's New Left political commitments, but demand more than the unscholarly reiteration of them (e.g., Fenster 2005), and those who do not share those commitments (or who are unsure if they should). Edelman has acquired a small cult following among political scientists with an ideological bent similar to his own, but the very politics that may account for this following keeps his analysis of

Critical Review 17 (2005), nos. 3–4. ISSN 0891-3811. www.criticalreview.com

Samuel DeCanio, a lecturer in the Department of Politics, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064, samueldecanio@hotmail.com, is completing a doctoral dissertation entitled "On the Autonomy of the Democratic State: How Mass Democracy Promotes State Power."

mass opinion from fulfilling its potential as a source of new perspectives on the nature of political power in modern democracies.

This essay examines Edelman's principal contributions regarding elite governance in contemporary democracies. I begin by discussing two of Edelman's most important books, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (1964) and *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (1988), which focus on information diffusion in mass societies and its ramifications for elite rule. Along the way, I will point to several glaring examples of intellectual complacency in Edelman's work, which indicate that he never grasped the full implications of his own ideas. The paper concludes with a general discussion of governance in modern democracies. First, though, I suggest that Edelman indirectly explained why the inhabitants of Western societies are so prone to retreat into the "private" realm, instead of engaging with democratic politics.

Edelman's Incipient Defense of the Private Sphere

Among the recurrent themes of Edelman's work is the manipulation of politics by elites—whether policy experts, the media, or the legislators and bureaucrats who staff the modern state. He was deeply concerned that mass ignorance created unique opportunities for the elite manipulation of both the public's comprehension of, and opinions about, politics in modern societies. Edelman (1988, 33) bluntly recognized that "the obliviousness of 'the masses' to a high proportion of the issues that seize the attention of those with an avid interest in public affairs is a potent political weapon for most of the people of the world though it remains largely unrecognized in academic writing."

Citing numerous studies of public opinion and electoral behavior, Edelman (1964, 172) recognized that instead of closely monitoring elected officials and carefully examining political issues, "the mass public does not study and analyze detailed data about [issues such as] secondary boycotts, provisions for stock ownership, and control of a proposed space communications corporation." Instead, voter attention is drawn to political issues only after "political actions and speeches make them symbolically threatening or reassuring, and then it responds to the cues furnished by the actions and the speeches, not to direct knowledge of the facts" (ibid.).

Edelman provided a bold explanation of why voters are so ignorant

of politics. Contrary to the rational-ignorance hypothesis, which portrays voters as choosing to be politically ignorant because they recognize the small probability that their vote will influence any large election (e.g., Downs 1957 and Somin 1998), Edelman argues that voter ignorance is caused by voters' inherent cognitive limitations and the complexity of modern societies. Echoing Walter Lippmann (1922) and Joseph Schumpeter (1950), Edelman recognized that the issues consuming the attention of political elites lead to consequences that are not directly perceivable by ordinary citizens in their day-to-day lives. Edelman (1964, 5) thus characterizes the *private* sphere as "the immediate world in which people make and do things that have directly observable consequences." In this sphere, unlike in the public sphere, "men can check their acts and assumptions against the consequences and correct errors. There is feedback" (ibid). Consumers may experiment with goods and services, and the effects of these experiments are tangible. Goods and services either bring utility or they do not, even if the ultimate reasons for why they do or do not aren't apparent to the consumer.

In contrast to deliberative democratic theorists who deplore the private realm and attempt to extend democratic politics to all spheres of life (e.g., Pateman 1970), Edelman (1988, 35) recognizes that for most modern citizens, the aspects of life that are meaningful are specifically those that do not extend into the public sphere. Indeed, "most experiences that make life joyful, poignant, boring, or worrisome are not part of the news: the grounds for personal concern, frustration, encouragement and hope; the conditions that matter at work, at home, and with friends; the events people touch, as distinct from those that are 'reported'; the experience of financial distress or of opulence; children in trouble; lovers; alienating or gratifying jobs."

However, the public realm has no similar meaning to the citizen-observer, nor can the citizen test the important consequences of public policies, as they can in the private realm. Instead of experiencing feedback from political decisions, "for most men most of the time politics is a series of pictures in the mind, placed there by television news, newspapers, magazines, and discussions. The pictures create a moving panorama taking place in a world the mass public never quite touches, yet one its members come to fear or cheer, often with passion and sometimes with action" (Edelman 1964, 5). In politics "there is no such check on fantasies and conceptualizing" as is produced by the feedback people get from their private decisions, because

> the link between dramatic political announcements and their impact on people is so long and so tangled. These people may be right or they may be wrong. The point is that there is no necessity, and often no possibility, of continuously checking their convictions against real conditions. (Ibid., 7.)

Edelman's musings regarding the differential informational burdens facing the public and private realms may offer an alternative to standard explanations for the bifurcation of modern societies, and for the corresponding fetishization of private existence. It is possible that the allure of consumer society is derived, not from some grand conspiracy among dominant economic groups, but rather from humans' fundamental cognitive limitations. Specifically, we may find the private sphere fascinating in comparison to the public sphere simply because, as Edelman recognized, it is susceptible to direct perception, seemingly avoiding the need for rigorous abstract thinking. In this sense, Western democracies' tendency to collapse into the ostentatious frivolity of the private sphere may be a direct consequence of the epistemological problems that Edelman discovered in his analysis of mass societies.

Edelman on Ignorance-Based Elite Rule

In place of evaluating direct feedback from public policies, Edelman's citizenry relies on elites to make statements and symbolic gestures that create in the citizens' imagination a "real world" of politics. The public's reliance upon opinion-making elites has dramatic ramifications for democratic theory. For if the electorate relies on elites to isolate, explain, and frame the issues that come to be considered political problems, the voters, who are supposed to use politics to direct democratic governments, may actually be directed by the elites they are supposed to control.

If the electorate relies upon elites to "filter" knowledge regarding social problems and their causes, "the common assumption that what democratic government does is somehow always a response to the moral codes, desires, and knowledge embedded inside people is as inverted as it is reassuring" (Edelman 1964, 172). Indeed, what actually happens in "democratic" polities may have less to do with translating popular sentiment into public policy than with *shaping* popular sentiment.

Public policies spring, to that extent, not from a welling-up of popu-

lar sentiment, but from a top-down process of symbol generation and manipulation that presumably begins with the socialization and acculturation of the leaders of mass opinion. The movies and TV watched, the books and magazines encountered, the professors admired, the assignments read, and the peer conversations engaged in by future journalists, celebrities, novelists, filmmakers, and politicians—especially while they are children and young adults—may dictate the politics of the democracy in which they are soon to be at the apex of symbolic generation (cf. Friedman 2007). If politics is too complex to understand directly, what alternative is there than for the mass public to rely on cues from such political elites (cf. Zaller 1996) who, in turn, are themselves primed by socialization through political symbols?

This is not to say that there will necessarily be one monolithic opinion elite. Perhaps competing elites will exert conflicting influences on the mass public. And perhaps different elites (academic, news-media, entertainment-media) will have different perspectives. However this may be, Edelman (1964, 185-86) is deeply pessimistic about the rationality of this process, however competitive it is. Far from the process resulting in a measured analysis of political events,

> we are constantly aware of the strong effort, often conscious but more significantly subconscious, of supporters and of opponents of a political figure to see what they want to see: to make the world conform to the pattern that fits their conceptual framework and values. Observation of politics is not simply an effort to learn what is happening but rather a process of making observations conform to assumptions.

Edelman focuses, as is the convention in "bias" studies, on the news (rather than entertainment or high-culture) media, often suggesting that news coverage that highlights the scandalous and stories of "human interest" "divorce[s]" the public from the realm of public-policy making. When the news media do cover public affairs,

> everyone is taught that influence should be exerted in the public realm even though the news reports from that world also imbue the public with the view that stronger and more fundamental forces than their own wishes are critical: economic conditions, military imbalances, majority votes, psychological needs and impulses, and other constructs that teach people how impotent they are against complex, remote, and untouchable developments. . . . In this sense the news helps everyone to accept their experienced lives by creating another world of symbols

> and fetishes. In doing so it encourages acceptance of the stable social structures and the inequalities that shape their experiences. (Edelman 1988, 98–99.)

So despite what "everyone is taught" officially, as it were, about their efficacy as citizens, Edelman concludes that the effect of the news media is to "call attention to the long odds against success in changing social conditions and to the irrelevance of personal sensibility . . . discourag[ing] resistance to immanent conditions and," therefore, "rationaliz[ing] acceptance of the world as it is" (ibid).

This is quite a series of claims. However, even if we grant Edelman that the media draw attention to the pointlessness of individual efforts in politics (although one might imagine, on the contrary, that the media lionize the lone individual who stands up to the powers that be—the corporate or CIA whistleblower, the dogged journalist, the straight-talking politician), wouldn't the media be right to do so? Are economic conditions, military imbalances, and election outcomes actually under individual voters' personal control? Non-elite individuals aren't meaningful actors in such processes, and if the media did report this fact, as Edelman claims that they subtly do, they would be doing their jobs competently.

Take news coverage of military conflict. Do not the media pay obsessive attention to individual soldiers who are "making a difference" in Iraq? Or who are killed there? Or who tortured an Iraqi prisoner? Or who are now running for Congress to "change the mindset" in Washington? Do the media not lavish coverage on individual acts of terrorism that kill a few people on a given day, rather than on who is training and funding the terrorists and on what motivates them—let alone on aggregate troop movements and the structure and strategy of counterinsurgency efforts? Obviously such examples post-date Edelman's death, but parallel questions surely could have been asked about media coverage of the Vietnam war. The idea that the news media focus on abstract, intractable forces rather than individual actions and personalities is, at the very least, something Edelman should have done more than assert.

Edelman (1988, 97) claims that "the reiteration in patriotic oratory and grade school civics lessons that the people control the government comes to be recognized as a way of insuring support for government actions people dislike and over which they exercise no effective control." But he provides no convincing evidence that the people's help-

lessness "comes to be recognized" *by them,* as opposed to by Edelman, and certainly not that this helplessness flows from the news media's concentration on vast unstoppable forces rather than individuals, whether heroic or dastardly.

Edelman's Non-Elitist Analysis of Elites

Edelman concluded that the common voter now has a more difficult task when attempting to evaluate contemporary rulers than during prior periods of American history. Edelman (1964, 76) claimed that

> an incumbent and his constituents today are organizationally and psychologically separated from each other to a degree that is far more divisive than the . . . separation characteristic of the nineteenth century. . . . Those who cared could more easily reach an accurate opinion on the implications for their own interest of the Louisiana Purchase or strict construction of the Constitution than we can reach on the implications for our interest of a decision to test nuclear bombs in the atmosphere, raise the national debt limit, or sell a large bloc of stock in a point-to-point space communication corporation to the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

Thus, although modern democracies constantly celebrate their citizens' opportunities for personal agency, reflection on the complicated political realities that modern voters are trying to understand makes it difficult not to "despair of . . . a complex, cold, and bewildering world," a world that "can be neither understood nor influenced" by the individual. This situation ironically creates a demand for "attachment to reassuring abstract symbols rather than to one's own efforts" (Edelman 1964, 76).

Edelman clearly recognized that expanding levels of social complexity both magnify the power and diminish the actual, if not the perceived, legitimacy of political elites. Specifically, in a highly interconnected and specialized industrial economy, members of the electorate, or anyone else for that matter, are generally incapable of clearly perceiving the effects of political attempts at social-economic regulation (cf. Friedman 2005). Rather, what is observable to members of society is "the incumbent of a high position who knows what to do and is willing to act, especially when others are bewildered and alone . . . [and] whose actions can be interpreted as beneficent, whether it is because

they are demonstrably beneficent or because their consequences are unknowable" (Edelman 1964, 76). Political elites may be able to capitalize upon the fact that "it is apparently intolerable for men to admit the key role of accident, of ignorance, and of unplanned processes in their affairs": in that context, "the leader serves a vital function by personifying and reifying the process. . . . Incumbents of high public office therefore become objects of acclaim for the satisfied, scapegoats for the unsatisfied, and symbols of aspirations or of whatever is opposed."

Indeed, in contemporary societies,

> the term "leader" evokes an ideal type which high public officials try to construct themselves to fit. . . . Regardless of the consequences of officials' actions, *which contemporaries cannot know*, the ability to create oneself as the ideal type maintains followings. . . . The leader must be constructed as innovator, as accepting responsibility for governmental actions, as possessing qualities that followers lack. (Edelman 1988, 40, emph. added.)

Edelman thus maintains that the nature of knowledge in complex modern societies has led to the creation of a new type of leadership, whose power "depends . . . upon the *impossibility* of demonstrating success or failure. . . . The clue to what is politically effective is to be found not so much in verifiable good or bad effects flowing from political acts as in whether the incumbent can continue indefinitely to convey the impression of knowing *what* is to be done" (Edelman 1964, 76-77, emph. added). Such leaders, who are judged by their effectiveness at "getting things done" (bills passed, agencies created, appropriations increased) rather than by the effect of those "things" on the problems they are supposed to solve, gain power and popular approval for their visible personal qualities because voters find it so difficult to perceive the consequences, beneficial or deleterious, stemming from the actual decisions leaders make.

However, there is something too self-conscious about Edelman's account. It is not as if voters recognize that they don't know the consequences of the policies that their leaders support, but support them nonetheless, taking comfort from the reassuring symbols offered by their leaders. Rather, one of the most disturbing things about ignorance is that, almost by definition, it is difficult to recognize what we are ignorant of. It seems more plausible, then, that voters are not even aware that their judgments regarding the efficacy of public policies are de-

rived from the impressions of *personal* efficacy that political leaders cultivate, rather than from the true efficacy of the policies themselves. When voters cannot directly perceive the effects of policies, it may never occur to them that they are basing their evaluations on the things that they *do* see—whether inevitably selective media imagery that creates the impression of directly observing consequences, or symbolic problem solving by leaders whose "fights for the common man" are so visible—and that these simulacra may have nothing to do with "real conditions."

Perhaps none of this should be troubling, though, since it may mean that we are being governed by an expert elite rather than a mass of ignoramuses. Edelman, however, suggests that bureaucratic government is often used, not to harness impartial expertise, but to aid politicians' manipulation of mass impressions of the need for, and efficacy of, government action. Indeed, because of our inability to directly perceive the effects of public decisions, elites can use "impartial" social scientists to "construct tests that show success, just as their opponents construct other tests that show failure." Far from ensuring "better" public administration, such experts mask the inherently ambiguous effects of public policies behind their "studies." This needn't be a process by which true experts are deliberately overridden on the issues of their expertise by craven bureaucrats: the "experts'" own "judgments also hinge upon interpretation and upon ideological definitions of the issues" (Edelman 1988, 40-41; cf Tetlock 2005).

In the space of a few pages, Edelman has, in effect, provided here a plausible hypothesis about the trend toward executive centralization, a hypothesis based neither on Progressive ideology nor rational-choice theory (as in, e.g., Hofstadter 1960, Galambos 1970, Skowronek 1982, and Carpenter 2001). In his view, the expanding executive state's enlistment of social scientists during the Progressive era was not necessarily an attempt to draw on the newly created social sciences' "expertise" in the task of identifying and solving social problems. Rather, the enlistment of social scientists may have resulted from public officials' recognition that such "experts" could provide putative "proof" of the existence of social problems and the effectiveness of proposed or implemented solutions, placing a scientific veneer upon the newly created national regulatory state. An unintended consequence of the opaque effects of public policies may have been the desperate need to believe that there were learned specialists who could tell us as much about social and economic as about biological "pathologies."

Edelman's Ideological Blinders

The difficulty of knowing the true consequences of leaders' actions might have another unintended effect. It may undermine Edelman's objection to the centralization of political power, since we have no way of knowing a priori whether bad consequences follow from this trend. The "social scientists'" expertise may be largely spurious, but how do we know that their competence in producing sound public policy is inferior to that of the ignorant masses?

Edelman fails to consider the issue, diverted by his maddening political complacency. On the very page that follows his functionalist analysis of the grounding of "expertise" in the epistemic problems of regulating complicated societies, Edelman (1988, 42) launches into an indictment of the Reagan presidency as an example of how

> domestic policies that are ruinous to many can similarly be accepted as evidence of effective leadership. Economic policies in the 1980s that helped destroy a high proportion of America's manufacturing industries and farms and sharply increased unemployment, apparently permanently, became evidence of resolute and innovative economic change and helped reelect Reagan overwhelmingly in 1984 with the strong support of many of the farmers, workers, and managers who were displaced. Civil rights and affirmative action policies helped win popularity for Kennedy and Johnson in the sixties, and obstruction or repeal of the same policies helped win popularity for Reagan in the eighties. The explanation for these seemingly paradoxical reactions lies, again, in the inevitable ambiguities that pervade beliefs about the consequences of official actions.

Thus, just after he recognizes that it may often be simply impossible to determine the effects of many public policies, we have Edelman blaming the Reagan administration for a permanent increase in unemployment. Where is his famous skepticism, when it comes to the sources of information on which we (even he) all base our judgments of policy effects?

Those looking for rigor may find it difficult to justify working through Edelman's writings when such complacency repeatedly intrudes upon otherwise trenchant analyses of modern politics. Unfortunately, and perhaps more troublesome, such examples suggest that Edelman never seems to have recognized that the main line of his arguments might put in jeopardy his own political commitments. As

Karl Mannheim (1946, 249) observed, since ideological bias is typically "perceived only in the thought of the opponent," there is an inherent "subconscious reluctance to think out the implications of a concretely formulated insight to a point where the theoretical formulations latent in it would be clear enough to have a disquieting effect on one's own position." For example, Edelman notes that Herbert Hoover might have been unfairly assigned responsibility for the Great Depression. Yet Edelman then goes on to note that the cause of this calamity was probably "business mismanagement, mindless stock market speculation, and the inherent risks of finance capitalism." This is to substitute the platitudes of liberal academic convention (at least the platitudes commonplace outside of economics departments) for careful scholarly analysis.

Had Edelman recognized the problem, however, what could he have done about it? Even without adopting the extreme skepticism sometimes implied in his writings about the difficulty of understanding a complex world, what choice have we, or he, but to rely on putative experts' judgments in areas in which we cannot judge for ourselves?

Edelman must be ranked alongside Walter Lippmann as an analyst of the epistemological basis of public political ignorance. But Lippmann's elitist solutions were not options for Edelman, who recognized that experts can be as deluded as members of the public. That Edelman himself may have suffered ideological delusions is of small consequence compared to the implication that he had no choice in the matter.

Indeed, although his own writings are often biased by his political commitments, Edelman recognized that his arguments could be turned against themselves. Reflecting on this problem, Edelman (1988, 4) noted that

> relativism is unsettling. It leaves us without a reassuring test of what is real and of who we are; and relativist propositions cannot be verified or falsified in the positivist sense because they pose the Mannheim Paradox problem: observers who postulate that the meanings of observations vary with the social situation or with something else must take the same skeptical and tentative position with respect to their own relativism.

Unfortunately, Edelman did not take his own recommendation seriously enough, and was thus unable to fully develop the radical critique of *all* mass politics (not just conservative varieties) that could

emerge from his analysis of the elite control of information and political symbolism in modern democracies.

REFERENCES

Bensel, Richard. 2003. "The American Ballot Box: Law, Identity, and the Polling Place in the Mid-Nineteenth Century." *Studies in American Political Development* 17: 1–27.

Benson, Lee. 1961. *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy: New York as a Test Case*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Carpenter, Daniel. 2001. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862–1928*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy.* New York: Harper & Row.

Edelman, Murray. 1964. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Edelman, Murray. 1988. *Constructing the Political Spectacle.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Friedman, Jeffrey. 2005. "Popper, Weber, and Hayek: The Epistemology and Politics of Ignorance." *Critical Review* 17(1–2): i–lviii.

Friedman, Jeffrey. 2007. "After Converse: Toward a Theory of the Social Diffusion of Attitudes." Forthcoming, *Critical Review.*

Galambos, Louis. 1970. "The Emerging Organizational Synthesis in Modern American History." *Business History Review* 44.

Hayek, Friedrich. 1948. "The Use of Knowledge in Society." In idem, *Individualism and Economic Order*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hofstadter, Richard. 1960. *The Age of Reform*. New York: Vintage Books.

Lippmann, Walter. [1922] 1977. *Public Opinion*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Mannheim, Karl. 1936. *Ideology and Utopia*. London: Routledge.

Pateman, Carole. 1970. *Participation and Democratic Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schumpeter, Joseph A. 1950. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, 3rd ed. New York: Harper & Row.

Somin, Ilya. 1998. "Voter Ignorance and the Democratic Ideal." *Critical Review* 12(4): 413–58.

Tetlock, Philip E. 2005. *Expert Political Judgment: How Good is It? How Can We Know?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stephen Earl Bennett

POPULISM, ELITISM, AND THE POPULIST IDEOLOGY OF ELITES: THE RECEPTION OF THE WORK OF MURRAY EDELMAN

ABSTRACT: *Over the course of his career, Murray Edelman made one of the few sustained attempts by a theoretically inclined political scientist to explore the effects of the public's overwhelming ignorance of politics. In his early work, he focused on political elites' manipulation of an ignorant public through the deployment of symbolism. In his later work, however, he suggested that even elites are the puppets of their ideologies. His early work has been well received; his later work has gone largely unremarked. The reason may have to do with the very thing that Edelman was, in his later work, addressing: the (populist) ideological biases of his politically elite (academic) audience.*

If one seeks the legacy of Murray Edelman (1919–2001), it may be found in something he wrote in 1994 (250–51): "Political behavior and attitudes stem less from rational calculation than from the dubious influences on political calculation of threatening social and economic conditions, the subtle associations of language, the construction of leaders, issues, and enemies to serve political interests, the inevitable presence of multiple and contradictory realities, and the marked effects of symbols and images on political beliefs."

Such observations are, of course, commonplace in any sophisticated discussion of politics. But their disturbing implications are usu-

---

Critical Review 17 (2005), nos. 3–4. ISSN 0891-3811. www.criticalreview.com

Stephen Earl Bennett, Adjunct Professor of Political Science at the University of Southern Indiana and Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the University of Cincinnati, is the Associate Editor of Critical Review.

ally themselves politicized: charges of political manipulation are hurled solely against one's political opponents, rather than being the basis of questions about inherent tendencies in all politics, even one's own. Edelman started out in the conventional vein, spotting the manipulative tendencies only of those who disagreed with his left-wing views. This work was well received in the academy, for methodological as well as political reasons. But while the tides of politics in the academy eventually ran even stronger in Edelman's direction than they had at the beginning of his career, methodological fashions shifted against him. Perhaps more importantly, as Edelman tried to explore the basis of political manipulation from a vantage-point of scholarly detachment, he asked fundamental questions that his peers seemed to find unworthy of attention—or unwelcome in the answers they invited.

When Edelman's *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* was published in 1964—the work's central thrust having been anticipated in his 1960 article in *The American Political Science Review*—behavioralism was the dominant paradigm in political science (see, e.g., Eulau 1963 and Somit and Tanenhaus 1967). Behavioralism was inspired by the idea that facts and values should be kept segregated, and that one way of doing so was to confine social-scientific hypotheses to observable actions. This encouraged attention to mass political behaviors such as voting and survey responses, which were easily observable and, moreover, quantifiable. Edelman was never a quantificationist, but he was a behavioralist, and he did think—hard—about the causes of mass political behavior.

The behavioralist approach had always had its critics (see Storing 1962 and Charlesworth 1967). But within a few years of the beginning of Edelman's career, David Easton (1969)—an early proponent of the approach—conceded in his presidential address to the American Political Science Association that the discipline was experiencing a "revolution," inspired by the New Left, that rejected the behavioralists' separation of facts and values. Today, among political scientists who cling to the fact/value distinction, the behavioral approach competes primarily with rational-choice theory for methodological dominance.

Edelman (2001, 1) could not sympathize with rational-choice theory, for he believed that human beings so frequently make mistakes that "rationality is probably the exception" rather than the rule. Indeed, a factor in his early acceptance among behavioralists was proba-

bly the fact that their own research, from the 1940s through at least the early 1960s, tended to highlight the ways in which modern mass publics were too ignorant and, arguably, irrational to live up to the requirements of normative democratic theory.

The Separation of Democratic Values and Political Facts

In the view of the mainstream of pre-1960s behavioralists, large portions of the citizenry were politically apathetic and ignorant (Berelson 1952), as well as being prone to authoritarianism (Lipset 1960) and hostile to civil liberties and minorities (McClosky 1964; McClosky, Hoffman, and O'Hara 1960; Prothro and Grigg 1960; Stouffer 1955). Behavioralists had often concluded that democracy's health and well-being depended more on elites than on mass publics. Some behavioralists, but not all (see, e.g., Key 1966), blamed the human condition itself for failing to live up to normative democratic theory's expectations. As Robert Dahl (1961, 279) put it (he would later change his mind: Dahl 1989 and 1998),

> one of the central facts of political life is that politics—local, state, national, international—lies for most people at the outer periphery of attention, interest, concern and activity. At the focus of most men's lives are primary activities involving food, sex, love, family, work, shelter, comfort, friendship, social esteem, and the like. Activities like these—not politics—are the primary concerns of most men and women. . . . It would clear the air of a good deal of cant if instead of assuming that politics is a normal and natural concern for human beings, one were to make the contrary assumption that whatever lip service citizens pay to conventional attitudes, politics is a remote, alien, and unrewarding activity.

Edelman's work echoes the behavioralists' emphasis on the public's incapacity to shape public policy. Edelman contended that the mass public was ignorant and passive. Worse, ordinary citizens incorrectly believed that their votes controlled elites and influenced public policy. David Ricci (1984) points out that in these respects, Edelman took essentially the same position as such behavioralists as Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1963). When it came to locating responsibility for the problem and detailing the process, however, Edelman parted company with most behavioralists. Both in *The Symbolic Uses*

of Politics and elsewhere, Edelman argued that ordinary citizens' political dispositions and behaviors stem from the symbolic atmosphere created by elites. The behavioralists tended to be Progressives in their politics: they thought that the public could be educated and led in left-wing directions by a well-informed elite (Taylor 2004). But Edelman made his initial mark by integrating the behavioralist grasp of public ignorance with a less sanguine view of elites—less sanguine from the perspective of the left. Edelman clearly was not making a case for elite rule. His focus was on the deleterious effects of elites' *manipulation* of mass ignorance.

Edelman's trajectory would eventually make him a man without a party. Even the left-wing social movements with which he might have been expected to sympathize politically were led by elites, and his later work condemned political elites as victims of impersonal manipulation by the very symbols with which they manipulated their followers. As Edelman wrote at the beginning of his last book, "the Marxist concept of false consciousness, meaning an erroneous assumption about the sources of one's own thought, applies to the elite as much as to the masses" (2001, 1–2). Like those of the masses, the elites' dispositions and behaviors are a product of their "everyday lives" (2001, 4). Consequently, "the idea that innovation, change, benefits, and mistakes in policy formation stem from the work of conspicuous leaders makes historical accounts entertaining and dramatic but is also a major source of confusion and misrepresentation" (2001, 67).

One of the key components of Edelman's notion of symbolic politics was his focus on the role that language plays in political life. As he wrote in 1994 (239), "language . . . is the fundamental form of political action, giving meaning to other actions." In this sense, Edelman was indebted to George Orwell (1954; 1961, 246–56), a debt he acknowledged in several places (Edelman 1971, 73; Edelman 1985, 125 and 175; Edelman 1988, 71 and 111). Orwell (1954, 177) had argued that "political language . . . is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." Like Orwell, Edelman could not be satisfied with platitudes about either noble masses or well-meaning elites, for his linguistic orientation located the problem with politics outside of anyone's control, in the very language they used.

Edelman's Vanishing Act among Political Scientists

Assessing an author's disciplinary impact is always a tricky affair, and any judgment should be regarded as incomplete. But it is indicative of what I take to be the state of things that references to Edelman's work are seldom found in the first eight volumes of *The Annual Review of Political Science,* edited by Nelson W. Polsby. Likewise, in two of the three collections of essays that the American Political Science Association has authorized since 1980, seeking to summarize and assess "the state of the discipline" (Finifter, ed., 1983; Finifter, ed., 1993; Katznelson and Milner, eds., 2002), one looks in vain for any citation of Edelman's corpus. It is true that Doris Graber's chapter on "Political Communication," in the 1993 volume, cites Edelman four times, and includes his 1964, 1971, and 1988 books in her list of references (1993). Graber, however, is not only a specialist in public opinion, but one who relies on open-ended, "qualitative" interviews. Her disciplinary and methodological position is therefore most atypical—but very much like Edelman's non-quantitative behavioralism.

It is only when one narrows one's scope to surveys of scholarship in the subfields of political communication, communication science, and political psychology that Edelman's work assumes greater importance. In the *Handbook of Political Communication*, Graber 1981 cites Edelman five times, Cobb and Elder 1981 refers to him three times, Simons and Mechling 1981 cites him twice, and Fichten 1981 mentions him once. Pettegrew and Logan 1987 also cites Edelman in the *Handbook of Communication Science*. Finally, Billig 2003, a chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, cites Edelman once.

When *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* appeared, the recognition was much broader. James C. Davies (1965, 695)—the author in 1963 of a major analysis of grassroots political behavior—proclaimed Edelman's book to be "one of those lucid, tightly reasoned books that are an intellectual pleasure to read, because its argument—and its virtues and defects—are so pellucidly visible." Although Davies felt that Edelman had veered close to reductionism—an unusual reductionism that boiled human action down to the actors' reliance on symbols—he decided that Edelman avoided the trap. Hence, his book was "very worthy of our attention" (ibid., 696). Richard Dawson (1965, 194)—the co-author of a major study of political socialization (Dawson and Prewitt 1969)—felt that "both the tone and the substance of the

book fit in with the current preoccupation of students of politics with questions about the functions and meaning of politics." Dawson (1965, 196) concluded that "Edelman presents a good argument that research on the symbolic aspects of politics is a subject well worth pursuing."

In these reviews, we perhaps see a natural sympathy toward Edelman's perspective stimulated by many decades of behavioralist realism about the true capacities of democratic politics. Indeed, George E. G. Catlin (1966, 162)—whom John Gunnell (2005) has recently hailed as a major precursor to the behavioral movement in political science—was so unimpressed by any novelty in Edelman's basic approach that he remained "unconvinced that Edelman's journey is really necessary." His was one of the very few negative reviews of *The Symbolic Uses of Politics.* (Catlin [1966, 163] was put off by Edelman's emphasis of "the Jungian term 'symbol.'")

Only seven years later, however, Edelman published the first of a series of books that were not so warmly received. The obligatory *American Political Science Review* notice of Edelman's *Politics as Symbolic Action* (Ross 1974) was lukewarm, at best. And under the growing influence of the fervently pro-democracy, pro-"social movement" New Left, Edelman's emphasis on public ignorance appears to have been unwelcome. Thus, William E. Connelly (1979, 847) was sharply critical of Edelman's 1977 volume, *Political Language.* Although allowing that it was an absorbing book, Connelly maintained that it was "seriously flawed." Connelly was concerned, for one thing, about Edelman's increasingly pessimistic tone. "By exposing all vocabularies and endorsing none, Edelman implicitly endorses the cynical view that all uses of language are thoroughly manipulative. But he cannot accept that thesis thoroughly, or else it would undermine the credibility of his own thesis."

By the same token, William C. Mitchell (1979, 264), reviewing Edelman's 1988 effort, *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, depicted Edelman as "presenting a devastating portrait of modern-day democratic politics—one that verges, at times, on the cynical—but a cynicism, not of Frank Kent nor H. L. Mencken," but rather of the subdued but still hopeful left. While "the lofty disengagement of [Walter] Lippmann," the Progressive who so completely lacked hope for democracy, "is nowhere to be found," Mitchell noted that like Lippmann, "Edelman offers mostly a counsel of despair." Mitchell, however, offers a highly unusual diagnosis of the problem: namely, that

Edelman "does not consider the possibilities of simply reducing the role of politics in everyday life" (ibid., 265). This is a rare note for any political scientist to sound, in any context, let alone that of the largely uncritical embrace of participatory and, later, deliberative democracy that has characterized political science since the 1960s.

Mitchell's solution to the problem of public ignorance aside, his assessment of the later Edelman as cynic, like Connelly's, has much to recommend it.

Edelman's Growing Pessimism

The recurring theme in Edelman's early work is that elites use symbols to manipulate and pacify mass publics. One finds similarities to the early work of Seymour Martin Lipset, who, in *Political Man* (1960, 253–58), wrote about the greater tendency among members of the American working class—when compared to their European counterparts—to subscribe to the so-called Horatio Alger myth. Their stubborn belief in the possibility of upward social mobility contributes to American workers' greater tendency to support parties committed to moderate reform, in contrast to European labor's backing for Socialist or Communist parties. Lipset (ibid., 254) pointed out that "divergent value systems also play a role here, since the American and European upper classes differ sharply in their conceptions of egalitarianism." In other words, values held and myths propagated by the American upper classes mold the mindset, and influence the voting behavior, of the working class. This thesis is not much different from Edelman's early argument.

Edelman's tone changes in his later work. He begins *The Politics of Misinformation* (2001, 1) by saying that "this book presents a view of the events and the people we encounter in everyday life that is more pessimistic, disturbing, even frightening than the conventional view." He adds that the view presented in *The Politics of Misinformation* will be "more realistic and more explanatory of the dilemmas we constantly encounter than the conventional outlook." Here, Edelman (2001, 1–2) makes it clear that elites as well as the mass public fall victim to their language, such that the notion of "false consciousness" applies every bit as well to elites as to the masses that elites seek to pacify.

One might be tempted to explain Edelman's increasing pessimism

as the natural reaction of a man of the 1960s left to developments in American politics, such as the election and re-election of Ronald Reagan and the more recent outcome of the 2000 presidential contest. But if one compares Edelman's later works, especially *The Politics of Misinformation*, with the circumstance-induced pessimism of someone like the late Wilson Carey McWilliams, another political scientist unabashedly on the left, it seems that this explanation may be inadequate. McWilliams (1995 and 2000) allowed that the outcome of many U.S. elections over the last quarter of the twentieth century had left him disappointed. Yet despite his disappointment, McWilliams was never—in print, at least—dejected. A sturdy optimism runs through his writings that cannot be found in the later Edelman. It is one thing for someone on the left to lose faith in the American electorate. It is another thing to lose faith in democracy itself.

The latter is what seems to have happened to Edelman, and this may account for the rapid diminution in the attention paid to him by political scientists—even the post-1960s behavioralists who still dominate the study of public opinion, voting behavior, and political communication. As for rational-choice theory, which accounts for public ignorance as a rational response to the small chance that any voter's opinion will make a difference in a large electorate, Edelman (1997, 102) wrote that it enables academics and policy makers to avoid confronting the irrationality of twentieth-century politics, which produced "needless wars, the Holocaust and other genocidal operations, and domestic policies that increase poverty, crime, homelessness, and drug abuse, and ruin educational institutions and other aspects of the infrastructure." "For those with a stake in the status quo," Edelman writes, "a comforting response to these disturbing trends is to persuade themselves and a wider public that policy choice is a rational choice and can or should be evaluated by criteria based on that premise" (ibid.). (In the same article, Edelman had equally critical things to say about the defenses of democracy to be found in systems theory and pluralist theory.)

Edelman's "Disappearance" in Historical Context

Evidence about the politics of scholars in general, and political scientists in particular, has—ironically—been spotty, at best. To say that the

nature and origins of their own politics does not interest political scientists (or at least that such an interest does not animate their research) would be a gross understatement.

There have, nonetheless, been a handful of studies of academics in general, and social scientists in particular, and these have found the academics to be disproportionately to the left ideologically and Democratic in partisanship (Eitzen and Maranell 1968; Ladd and Lipset 1971 and 1975; Lipset and Ladd 1972; Spaulding and Turner 1968; Turner, McClintock, and Spaulding 1963). Ladd and Lipset (1975, 26) found that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, American university professors were a bit more than twice as likely as the public to describe their ideology as "Left" or "Liberal" (46 percent versus 20 percent), somewhat less likely to say that their political orientation was "middle-of-the-road" (27 percent versus 38 percent), and considerably less likely to label their political ideology as "moderately" or "strongly" conservative (28 percent versus 42 percent). Moreover, Ladd and Lipset found that social scientists were even more likely than professors in general to say they were on the left. Self-described leftists outnumbered right-wing social scientists by 44 percent (Ladd and Lipset 1975, 60).

Most of these studies are not only few in number, but old in provenance. One might wonder if findings from the 1960s and 1970s have any bearing on the present. But what is striking is that more recent work, however methodologically questionable some of it is when compared to the earlier research, shows uniformedly a marked shift even farther to the left over the last 30–40 years (*The American Enterprise* 2002; Bosworth 2002; Kimball 1998; Lee 2002; Rothman, Nevitte, and Lichter 2005; Rothman, Lichter, and Nevitte 2005; Schweikart 2002; Zinsmeister 2005). Moreover, faculty in elite institutions of higher learning tend to be even farther to the left ideologically, and even more likely to vote Democratic or fringe-left, than teachers at less research-oriented institutions. Assuming that all of this is the result of the New Left's long march through the academic institutions, one can infer that the scholars who might have been expected to pick up the threads of Edelman's research in their own work may have been disproportionately committed to the very thing—democracy—that his later work, especially, calls into question.

Critics of the more recent studies of academic "bias" (e.g., Lazare 2004) often suggest either that they are suspect because they are undertaken by conservatives or appear in right-leaning venues, or that

Table 1. American professors' political orientations, 1989/90–2004/05.

	Far Left	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Far Right
1989–1990					
2-Year Institutions	2.2%	27.1%	45.1%	25.1%	0.5%
4-Year Institutions	5.7%	39.5%	33.7%	15.7%	0.4%
1992–1993					
2-Year Institutions	1.7%	31.2%	39.4%	25.1%	0.6%
4-Year Institutions	4.9%	41.3%	33.7%	19.6%	0.5%
1995–1996					
2-Year Institutions	2.2%	27.6%	43.6%	26.1%	0.6%
4-Year Institutions	5.6%	40.6%	36.0%	17.4%	0.4%
1998–1999					
2-Year Institutions	3.4%	32.6%	43.4%	20.2%	0.4%
4-Year Institutions	5.8%	41.7%	35.3%	16.8%	0.3%
2001–2002					
2-Year Institutions	3.3%	33.0%	40.9%	22.6%	0.3%
4-Year Institutions	5.9%	45.1%	32.3%	16.3%	0.3%
2004–2005					
2-Year Institutions	5.3%	33.3%	35.1%	25.2%	1.1%
4-Year Institutions	8.7%	46.5%	27.4%	16.9%	0.5%

Sources: Surveys of American college and university faculty conducted by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute.

they are based on slender evidence. But there are data that escape such criticisms, especially those published in 2005 by Daniel Klein, Stanley Rothman, and their associates. Moreover, at roughly two-year intervals since 1989–1990, UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (hereafter HERI) has conducted surveys of American college and university faculty (see Astin, Korn, and Dey 1991; Dey, Ramirez, Korn, and Astin 1993; Lindholm, Astin, Sax, and Korn 2002; Lindholm, Szelényi, Hurtado, and Korn 2005; Sax, Astin, Arredondo, and Korn 1996; Sax, Astin, Korn, and Gilmartin 1999) that bear out the Klein and Lipset findings. On each occasion, the HERI database has

been 30,000–40,000 academics. Among the many items in this survey is a self-identification test, in which a respondent can label herself as "Far Left," "Liberal," "Moderate," "Conservative," or "Far Right." Unlike measures of partisanship and voting behavior, these responses make it possible to trace faculty *ideological* orientations between 1989–1990 and 2004–2005. Table 1 displays the information.

There are several important messages in the HERI data. First, even within the brief period of 1989–90 to 2004–2005, American faculty drifted noticeably leftward. If we look at all faculty, slightly over 40 percent classified themselves as either "Far Leftists" or "Liberals" in 1989–1990, while just over 50 percent did so in 2004–2005. Self-described Moderates made up two-fifths of all faculty in 1989–1990, but only 29 percent in 2004–2005. The ranks of "Conservatives" and those on the "Far Right," combined, didn't even break 20 percent of all professors, either in 1989–1990 or 2004–2005. It bears noting that "all professors" includes teachers in agriculture, business, and medical schools and chemistry, biology, mathematics, and physics departments—not the social scientists (and, these days, the humanists) who, as Ladd and Lipset showed, were far more likely to be on the left, and who are the only ones who might be expected to pick up on Edelman's work in their own research and teaching. (The HERI data cannot be disaggregated by discipline, but Klein and Charlotta Stern 2005 report that Democrats outnumber Republicans in political-science departments by a ratio of 6.7 to 1. Partisanship and ideology are not the same, but they usually overlap, especially among the highly educated.)

Edelman's later work challenged the commitment to democracy—especially the more-democracy-is-always-better, post-1960s view—that, one may confidently assert, increasingly characterized the potential audience for his work. Moreover, the *reason* for his shift from mere pessimism about the possibility of rescuing democracy from elite manipulation, toward cynicism about democracy itself, poses a challenge to the adherent of *any* ideology. Edelman became convinced that even the relatively well-informed ideologue is the victim of language and symbols—culture—that have a life of their own. If they have a life of their own, then their hegemony cannot be blamed on those who are relatively adept at manipulating them, and the analyst of their manipulation cannot exclude the possibility that he himself is being "manipulated" by them. The self-evident truth of the post-New Left outlook is by now widely assumed in the academic

world; Edelman, if closely heeded, challenges the self-evidence of any truth.

Edelman began his career by writing about the symbolic *uses* of politics. He ended it by writing about the ways that political symbols are in control, even of those who attempt to use them. There is no better demagogue than one who sincerely believes in the symbols he manipulates; this is a lesson one might well draw from the work of the paragon of behavioralist public-opinion research, Philip E. Converse (1964). However, it is a lesson that flies in the face of both populist and elitist versions of democracy, and poses challenges both political and methodological that have not, as yet, been met.

REFERENCES

American Enterprise, The. 2002. "The Shame of America's One-Party Campuses." 13 (6): 18–25.

Astin, Alexander W., William S. Korn, and Eric L. Dey. 1991. *The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 1989–90 HERI Faculty Survey.* Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles.

Bennett, W. Lance. 2004. "Global Media and Politics: Transnational Communication Regimes and Political Cultures." *Annual Review of Political Science* 7: 125–48.

Berelson, Bernard R. 1952. "Democratic Theory and Public Opinion." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 16 (Autumn): 313–30.

Berger, Charles R., and Steven H. Chaffee, eds. 1987. *Handbook of Communication Science.* Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage.

Billig, Michael. 2003. "Political Rhetoric." In *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology,* ed. David O. Sears, Leonnie Huddy, and Robert Jervis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bosworth, Brandon. 2002. "Left-Wing Anti-Semitism on Campus." *The American Enterprise* 13(6): 36.

Charlesworth, James C., ed. 1967. *Contemporary Political Analysis.* New York: Free Press.

Cobb, Roger W., and Charles D. Elder. 1981. "Communication and Public Policy." In *Handbook of Political Communication,* ed. Dan D. Nimmo and Keith R. Sanders. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage.

Connelly, William E. 1979. Review of Murray Edelman, *Political Language: Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail. American Political Science Review* 73 (September): 847.

Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent,* ed. David E. Apter. New York: Free Press.

Dahl, Robert A. 1961a. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Dahl, Robert A. 1961b. "The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest." *American Political Science Review* 55 (December): 763–72.

Dahl, Robert A. 1989. *Democracy and Its Critics.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Dahl, Robert A. 1998. *On Democracy.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Dey, Eric L., Claudia E. Ramirez, William S. Korn, and Alexander W. Astin. 1993. *The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 1992–93 HERI Faculty Survey.* Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles.

Easton, David. 1969. "The New Revolution in Political Science." *American Political Science Review* 63 (December): 1051–61.

Edelman, Murray. 1960. "Symbols and Political Quiescence." *American Political Science Review* 54 (September): 695–704.

Edelman, Murray. [1964] 1985. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Edelman, Murray. 1971. *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence*. Chicago: Markham Publishing.

Edelman, Murray. 1977. *Political Language: Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail.* New York: Academic Press.

Edelman, Murray. 1988. *Constructing the Political Spectacle.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Edelman, Murray. 1994. "The Social Psychology of Politics." In *The Dynamics of American Politics: Approaches and Interpretations,* ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Calvin Jillson. Boulder: Westview.

Edelman, Murray. 2001. *The Politics of Misinformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eitzen, D. Stanley, and Gary M. Maranell. 1968. "The Political Party Affiliation of College Professors." *Social Forces* 47 (December): 145–53.

Eulau, Heinz. 1963. *The Behavioral Persuasion in Politics.* New York: Random House.

Fichten, Richard. 1981. "Appendix A: European Research." In Nimmo and Sanders 1981.

Finifter, Ada W., ed. 1983. *Political Science: The State of the Discipline.* Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association.

Finifter Ada W., ed. 1993. *Political Science: The State of the Discipline, II.* Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association.

Graber, Doris A. 1981. "Political Languages." In Nimmo and Sanders 1981.

Graber, Doris A. 1991. "Media and Politics." In *Political Science: Looking to the Future,* vol. 3: *Political Behavior,* ed. William J. Crotty. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Graber, Doris A. 1993. "Political Communication: Scope, Progress, Promise." In Finifter 1993.

Graber, Doris A. 2003. "The Media and Democracy: Beyond Myths and Stereotypes." *Annual Review of Political Science* 6: 139–60.

Katznelson, Ira, and Helen V. Milner, eds. 2002. *Political Science: State of the Discipline.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Key, V. O., Jr. 1961. *Public Opinion and American Democracy.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Key, V. O., Jr. 1966. "Public Opinion and the Decay of Democracy." In *Political Opinion and Electoral Behavior: Essays and Studies,* ed. Edward C. Dreyer and Walter A. Rosenbaum. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsorth.

Kimball, Roger. 1998. *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Our Higher Education.* Rev. ed. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.

Klein, Daniel B, and Charlotta Stern. 2004–2005. "Political Diversity in Six Disciplines." *Academic Questions,* 18 (Winter): 40–52.

Klein, Daniel B., and Charlotta Stern. 2005. "Professors and Their Politics: The Policy Views of Social Scientists." *Critical Review* 17(3–4):257–303.

Kritzer, Herbert, Virginia Sapiro, and John Witte. 2002. "On the Death of Professor Emeritus Murray J. Edelman." Madison: University of Wisconsin Faculty Document 1605. February 4.

Ladd, Everett Carll, Jr., and Seymour Martin Lipset. 1971. "The Politics of American Political Scientists." *PS* 4 (Spring): 135–44.

Ladd, Everett Carll, Jr., and Seymour Martin Lipset. 1975. *The Divided Academy: Professors and Politics.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lazare, Donald. 2004. "The Contradictions of Cultural Conservatism in the Assault on American Colleges." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 2.

Lee, Kenneth. 2002. "Time to Fight Back: An Anti-Discrimination Campaign Waiting to Happen?" *The American Enterprise* 13(6): 26–28.

Lindholm, Jennifer A., Alexander W. Astin, Linda J. Sax, and William S. Korn. 2002. *The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 2001–2002 HERI Faculty Survey.* Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles.

Lindholm, Jennifer A., Katalin Szelényi, Sylvia Hurtado, and William S. Korn. 2005. *The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 2004–2005 HERI Faculty Survey.* Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1960. *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics.* Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1982. "The Academic Mind at the Top: The Political Behavior and Values of Faculty Elites." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 46 (Summer): 143–68.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1994. "The State of American Sociology." *Sociological Forum* 9 (June): 199–220.

Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Reinhard Bendix. 1959. *Social Mobility in Industrial Society.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Everett Carll Ladd, Jr. 1972. "The Politics of American Sociologists." *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (July): 67–104.

Mattson, Kevin. 2003. "What's Wrong with a Rock Star Intellectual?" *The Common Review* 3 (2): 20–29.

McClosky, Herbert. 1964. "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics." *American Political Science Review* 58 (June): 361–82.

McClosky, Herbert, Paul J. Hoffman, and Rosemary O'Hara. 1960. "Issue Conflict and Consensus among Party Leaders and Followers." *American Political Science Review* 54 (June): 406–27.

McWilliams, Wilson Carey. 1995. *The Politics of Disappointment: American Elections 1976–94*. Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House.

McWilliams, Wilson Carey. 2000. *Beyond the Politics of Disappointment? American Elections 1980–1998*. New York: Chatham House.

Mitchell, William C. 1989. Review of Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle. American Political Science Review* 83 (March): 264–65.

Nimmo, Dan D., and Keith R. Sanders, eds. 1981. *Handbook of Political Communication*. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage.

Orwell, George. [1946] 1954. "Politics and the English Language." In idem, *A Collection of Essays*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor.

Orwell, George. [1949] 1961. *1984*. New York: New American Library.

Pettegrew, Lloyd S., and Robert Logan. 1987. "The Health Care Context." In *Handbook of Communication Science,* ed. Charles R. Berger and Steven H. Chaffee. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage.

Prothro, James W., and Charles W. Grigg. 1960. "Fundamental Principles of Democracy." *Journal of Politics* 22 (Spring): 276–94.

Ricci, David M. 1984. *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Ross, Marc Howard. 1974. Review of Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence. American Political Science Review* 68 (March): 257–58.

Rothman, Stanley, S. Robert Lichter, and Neil Nevitte. 2005. "Politics and Professional Advancement among College Faculty." *The Forum* 3(1): 1–16.

Rothman, Stanley, Neil Nevitte, and S. Robert Lichter. 2005. "Politics and Professional Advancement." *Academic Questions* 18 (Spring): 71–84.

Sax, Linda J., Alexander W. Astin, Marisol Arredondo, and William S. Korn. 1996. *The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 1995–96 HERI Faculty Survey.* Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles.

Sax, Linda J., Alexander W. Astin, William S. Korn, and Shannon K. Gilmartin. 1999. *The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 1998–1999 HERI Faculty Survey.* Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles.

Schweikart, Larry. 2002. "History to the Left of Us." *The American Enterprise* 13(6): 30–31.

Simons, Herbert W., and Elizabeth W. Mechling. 1981. "The Rhetoric of Political Movements." In Nimmo and Sanders 1981.

Somit, Albert, and Joseph Tanenhaus. 1967. *The Development of American Political Science: From Burgess to Behavioralism*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Spaulding, Charles B., and Henry A. Turner. 1968. "Political Orientation and Field of Specialization among College Professors." *Sociology of Education* 41 (Summer): 247–62.

Storing, Herbert J., ed. 1962. *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Stouffer, Samuel A. 1955. *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties: A Cross-Section of the Nation Speaks Its Mind*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

Taylor, Bob Pepperman. 2004. *Citizenship and Democratic Doubt: The Legacy of Progressive Thought*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Turner, Henry A., Charles G. McClintock, and Charles B. Spaulding. 1963. "The Political Party Affiliation of American Political Scientists." *Western Political Quarterly* 16 (September): 650–65.

Zinsmeister, Karl. 2005. "Case Closed: There's No Longer Any Way To Deny It: College Campuses are the Most Politically Undiverse Places in America." *The American Enterprise* (January–February).

Mark Fenster

MURRAY EDELMAN, POLEMICIST OF PUBLIC IGNORANCE

ABSTRACT: *Murray Edelman's work raised significant theoretical and methodological questions regarding the symbolic nature of politics, and specifically the role played by non-rational beliefs (those that lack real-world grounding) in the shaping of political preferences. According to Edelman, beneath an apparently functional and accountable democratic state lies a symbolic system that renders an ignorant public quiescent. The state, the media, civil society, interpersonal relations, even popular art are part of a mass spectacle kept afloat by empty symbolic beliefs. However suggestive it is, the weaknesses of Edelman's theoretical and methodological approach, and the relative strengths of more recent research on the politics of cultural symbols, render Edelman's work unable to serve as either model or springboard for the contemporary study of political symbols.*

Murray Edelman's writings on political symbols posed a series of important questions that fell between disciplines and did not rest securely within any particular methodology. Trained as a political scientist, Edelman abandoned an early emphasis on the operations of federal administrative agencies in favor of studying the creation and continuing legitimation of political order through symbols; and the means by which the public understands and, more commonly, misunderstands political issues and electoral choices. Well before it became common to do so, he questioned rational- and informed-actor models of politi-

Critical Review 17 (2005), nos. 3–4. ISSN 0891-3811. www.criticalreview.com

Mark Fenster, associate professor of law at the University of Florida, P.O. Box 117625, Gainesvile, FL 32611, fenster@law.ufl.edu, the author of *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minnesota, 1999), thanks Trysh Travis and Jeffrey Friedman for invaluable encouragement and comments.

cal behavior, instead arguing that the symbolic basis of political communication and the pervasive role of culture and the media in political and legal systems render the public ignorant, irrational, and quiescent.

As such, Edelman's work could, at least in principle, represent a meeting point among a number of distinct intellectual movements whose present distance from each other seems more the product of the vicissitudes of intellectual history, disciplinary boundaries, methodological biases, and differing political commitments than of necessary conceptual separation. For example, Edelman's work could offer a bridge between different social sciences, pointing the way by which the so-called "cultural turn" in anthropology, history, and sociology (see Novick 1988, 573–629) could meet up with the increased interest among political theorists in culture and voter ignorance, and the focus in social-choice theory, political psychology, and law and economics on heuristics and social norms. Furthermore, given his interest in symbolic communication, mediated images, and ideology, Edelman's theory of political symbols could provide a foundation on which the "cultural studies" movement within the humanities and social sciences (see Denning 2004, 1–10) could study more thoroughly not merely the politics of culture but the culture of politics—enabling its practitioners, as a consequence, more informed consideration of their own politics. Edelman's corpus at least has the potential of offering a roadmap to broader, more collaborative insights among disparate bodies of scholarship.

But in practice, Edelman's work cannot serve this grand unifying cause.[1] The problem lies not in the questions Edelman asked, which are still valuable, but in the ways he sought to answer them. Influenced and ultimately limited by postwar theories of "mass society," by his political tendencies, and by his inclination towards impressionistic social criticism rather than theory building or rigorous analysis, Edelman's work lacks conceptual complexity and methodological sophistication. My purpose is to identify Edelman's weaknesses, and to explain how the questions Edelman placed before us remain worth pursuing through other means.

Symbolic Politics

I begin with Edelman's conception of symbols, and—since this is ultimately what concerned Edelman—the effects of the symbolic core of politics on government and on the public.

Edelman was largely uninterested in providing close readings, historical studies, or precise typologies of political symbols. Rather, as the titles of his major works from 1964 to 2001 make plain, he focused on the "uses" (Edelman 1964) and "construction" (Edelman 1988) of political symbols, the "action" they perform (Edelman 1971), the "success" that they enjoy (Edelman 1977), and the "misinformation" they produce (Edelman 2001). His core thesis was that politics is symbolic and spectacular, and as such misinforms the public and renders it passive. Instead of tackling what Edelman saw as the "real" public interest or solving problems of actual importance, politics addresses psychological desires, offering drama without empirical truth or "realistic detail" (Edelman 1964, 7–9).[2]

The symbolic political system, Edelman (1964, 117, 131) argued, is pre-constituted and self-regulating, and serves as an unconscious structure of society and social interaction. The symbols of politics have emerged from a general predisposition of modern bureaucracy, technology, capitalism, and democracy, rather than as the product of any willful human agent or group. Intentional human agency therefore plays little role in creating the symbolic system. Edelman thus claimed to reject not only theories presuming the existence of a public composed of individuals who make political decisions based on stable, discernible preferences, but also theories presuming the existence of an ideological system operated by, and for the benefit of, a powerful ruling class.

Edelman's repudiation of human design as the origin of the symbolic system is obvious enough. He clearly disdained the tendency, which came to dominate much of the discipline of political science during his career, to assume a rational-actor model of political behavior. But, at least in part because of Edelman's polemical tone and leftist political commitments, his critics tended to cast him as a proponent of a Marxist theory of symbols as instrumental to class rule. The evidence about that, however, is mixed. On the one hand, Edelman (1964, 126) described the political–symbolic system as expressing "the ideology of the community, facilitat[ing] uncritical acceptance of conventional assumptions, and imped[ing] the expression of critical or heretical ideas." Symbolic political acts—which is to say, all political acts—neither meet, nor are intended to meet, actually existing needs. And symbolic politics distracts from the exploitative and destructive reality that occurs below the symbolic surface, rendering the public a quiescent, unthinking mass that is subject to manipulation.

Indeed, a conformist public is gratified by the notion that the political realm is able to relieve conflict and complexity, resolve the nation's and the world's tensions, and reaffirm the rationality and functionality of government (1964, 9, 14–17, 33–38). Such characterizations of popular politics appear to be stumbling towards a theory of false consciousness.

For Edelman, however, political symbols were not mere tools wielded by "capital" or some secretive, powerful group in order to produce false consciousness and other debilitating or mystifying psychological effects. "There is no implication here," he wrote, "that elites consciously mold political myths and rituals to serve their ends. Attempts at such manipulation usually become known for what they are and fail. What we find is social role taking, not deception" (1964, 20). Although political symbols might have consequences that incidentally aid elites, Edelman argued, those elites themselves believe in political symbols. As elites, it is precisely their role to take advantage of the symbols that serve their ends, but not to knowingly *produce* them. And while the less powerful are manipulated most perniciously by the symbolic world of politics, everyone—save, perhaps, Edelman and his sympathetic readers—is both a subject and a willing contributor to the spectacle. Symbols permeate the consciousness of (almost) all, to an equal degree.

Edelman's theory of political symbols and ideology, then, appears less dramatic or "vulgar" than the idea of an ideological superstructure produced by an economic base whose central determinant is capitalism.[3] However, while Edelman may have disavowed the simplicity of absolute control, his seemingly more complex theory of symbolic power is only superficially distinct from a vulgar instrumentalism. Although elites may be subject to the same symbolic universe as the masses, Edelman holds that elites are better able to discern hidden truths lurking beneath the symbolic surface and utilize them to their advantage. Representing only "a very small fraction of the population," Edelman's elites (which include, among others, professional politicians, businessmen seeking government contracts, and local reformers pushing for narrow improvements to municipal government) engage in "concrete," rather than merely symbolic, political activity (1964, 9–10). Eschewing indirect, ineffectual democratic engagement with deceptive symbols and meaningless rituals, elites instead exert real, direct influence and achieve the tangible goals they seek (ibid., 12, 16).

Edelman confidently assumed that he had successfully distinguished

himself from Marxist instrumentalism—and concluded that instrumentalism was something to avoid at all costs. But he nonetheless posited a hierarchy of symbolic production, elite manipulation, and passive reception in which the public is subject to a symbolic spectacle exploited and largely controlled by a privileged minority. His later work continued to argue that the "spectacle"—the term he used to describe the symbolic system he had identified in his earlier work—served as a tactic that elites believe in, help construct, and ultimately exploit (1988, 125).

Had he wanted to elaborate a more complicated, less instrumental theory of ideology in modern societies, he could have delved into the surplus of Marxist, non-Marxist, and post-Marxist approaches that philosophers and social theorists developed throughout the postwar era (see generally Thompson 1990, 28–121). His failure to do so is a crucial weakness in his work.

Although Edelman describes phenonema that are consistent with the large body of research done by public-opinion and political-psychology researchers, which has detailed the depth and breadth of public ignorance (see Somin 1998), his aim is different than theirs. Edelman, I believe, would have liked to perform what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1964, 56), addressing political scientists in the same year in which Edelman's first book appeared, characterized as the difficult task of "examining ideologies as systems of interacting symbols, as patterns of interworking meanings," rather than as dependent variables of the sort studied in traditional political psychology, or independent variables of the sort studied by public-opinion researchers. For Geertz, the social sciences of the mid-1960s had failed to consider sufficiently "how symbols symbolize, how they function to mediate meanings" (ibid., 57). What Geertz—like Edelman—sought was research that would inquire into *how* people believe, and how their beliefs are shaped by the symbolic universe they inhabit, rather than (or in addition to) what people believe and how they enact or fail to enact their beliefs.

This is tricky stuff, to put it mildly. The study of symbols and ideology inherently resists quantification, because a researcher cannot trust survey and interview subjects to articulate the underlying logic of their beliefs, feelings, and thoughts in a thorough and accurate way. In addition, such research requires consideration of the ambiguous and evolving form and content of symbolic communication, and it deals as much with those ideas and matters that are absent and un-thought, or that lie outside the symbols that are available for expression and reception, as with those that are considered. Moreover, interpretive studies and theo-

ries of culture build slowly and incrementally, based on delicate distinctions and thick descriptions rather than sweeping abstractions, and rarely result in predictive models (Geertz 1973, 24–26). Perhaps understandably, those who would demand the relative security and certainty that positivism and rational-choice theory claim to offer run from efforts like Edelman's as quickly as Edelman ran from theirs. But if performed well, a cultural, symbolic analysis could enlighten efforts to find and explain the conditions of ignorance and irrationality better than can statistical work or a priori modeling.

Beginning his project at the cusp of the interpretive turn heralded by Geertz's 1964 paper, Edelman could have helped this movement along. Having identified the problem of symbolic communication, however, he remained stuck at the issue of its causes ("spectacle" and "symbols," viewed abstractly) and consequences (quiescence). Because he largely failed, over the course of his career, to consider insights from, for instance, the empirical sociology and anthropology of Pierre Bourdieu (1977 and 1984), or Mannheim's sociology of knowledge (1936), or Gramsci's writings on hegemony (1971), or Habermas's concept of the deformed public sphere and fragmented consciousness of modernity (1987, 1989), Edelman's work is impoverished and limited.[4] Lacking a clear, robust theory of ideology, and failing to refer to competing ones, Edelman's work had little with which to replace vulgar instrumentalism, save a slightly less vulgar version of it.

The Symbolic State

Edelman failed to explain whether the state produced or was produced by the system of political symbols he identified—or whether some more complex interrelationship could explain the state's ability to perform its exploitative and perfidious functions while maintaining its legitimacy. Put another way, he never made clear whether the state is merely a tool of elites, or if it operates with some autonomy.

Consider, for example, his treatment of the symbolic and real processes of federal regulation in the United States. Edelman characterized the typical regulatory program as the result of a massive symbolic campaign in which legislators, regulators, and the media engage in abstract, hortatory pronouncements identifying and describing a public problem and explaining how the proposed program will successfully address it. Assuming their symbolic and bureaucratic roles, lawmakers

and members of the executive branch create, express, and promote widely accepted values of the general public interest. Such efforts comfort the public by suggesting that government shares its concerns and is willing and able to address the pressing issues of the day (Edelman 1964, 54–66). But regulatory programs actually serve merely as symbolic surfaces covering a more complicated, hidden truth: that elites capture regulatory agencies and control governmental allocation of resources by manipulating technical rules, bureaucratic procedures, and the regulatory enforcement process (Edelman 1977, 78–79). Because politicians, bureaucrats, and private interests utilize political symbols to demonstrate to the public the supposed benefits of the legislation they so cleverly manipulate, the sham regulatory system is free of public observation (Edelman 1964, 27; 1977, 148). This process generates significant misperceptions: that policy making is participatory and addresses real social problems; that some groups and their actions are hostile and evil, while others are friendly and benevolent; and that political leadership, through the regulatory state, furthers the public interest (Edelman 1971, 37–41; 1988, 12–36).

As a result, Edelman argued, the state perpetuates both existing hierarchies and the illusion that the public good is being served. He thus proposed a deeply pessimistic critique of the operations and justifications of the contemporary democratic state, in which political-theoretic notions of self-rule, deliberation, pluralist coalition building, and representative government serve merely as promises of what can never be obtained in reality—but can be obtained in the world of symbolic illusion. Edelman's is at least as dark a view of politics as Marx's, but it suggests an even darker possibility: that there is no post-revolutionary future. Had Edelman stipulated that elites create and utilize symbols in a fully knowing and purposive manner, he would have conceded that the individual or collective agency of non-elites is also possible, that political activity could matter, and that incremental or radical political reform might make politics more accountable and participatory, or even enable the masses to lift the ideological veil and seize control of the ideological apparatus. In so doing, he would have conceptualized the state as something other than the inevitable object of elite capture.[5] But Edelman offered no such hope of disrupting the symbolic realm of politics and ending the instrumental use of the state. He resisted any concession that political change—of whatever variety, whether towards a transformative leftist vision of participatory democracy or a more centrist vision of political reform—was possible. His conclusion, ultimately, was

that politics doesn't matter, since the state, captured by a small set of interests, persuades its citizens of its value through the management and exploitation of legitimating symbols.

From Mass Society to Mass Culture to Mass Politics

Edelman's conception of a pervasive symbolic system sustaining a state of illusions is, like his understanding of the mass public, largely a product of the intellectual context from which he emerged. In Edelman's work, the public enjoys no agency. The only respect in which it refuses the spectacle of modernity is through the willful apathy and ignorance that people demonstrate by declining, or forgetting, to vote (Edelman 1988, 33).[6] People retreat into their private lives—lives that Edelman described as filled with empty rituals, barren encounters with others, and interests that lead inexorably away from the organization of discontent that would produce meaningful political or social change. This is, indeed, a rational response—not to the low odds of one's vote making a difference, but to the removed, spectacular world of symbols and fetishes.

Political participation, however, is marked by the same quiescence that results from political disengagement (Edelman 2001, 22; Edelman 1988, 35, 96). Even people's political discussions, structured by social convention and the limited symbolic universe they inhabit, serve as an "escape valve" for their discontent rather than as a means to mobilize their interests and activity (Edelman 2001, 22). Alternative visions of a vibrant public incorrectly found a democratic possibility where none existed. The popular, radical utopianism of the "new social movements," as well as the philosophical utopianism of Habermas's public sphere and ideal-speech situation, were all fantasies that could not explain what Edelman (1988, 110, 129–30) saw as the empirical realities of the mass spectacle.

This conception of the public's relationship to politics (and culture) closely resembles that of 1950s and 1960s intellectuals, many of them qualitative social scientists who, like Edelman, were distressed by the rise of modern mass society. Responding to the rise of Cold War politics and the industrial production and consumption of culture, these critics feared that an authoritarian state could be built on the foundation of an American public rendered anxious, isolated, conformist, and alienated by the mass media (Schaub 1991, 15–19).

The concept of "the mass" had emerged prior to America's entry into World War II. In an influential essay, Herbert Blumer ([1939] 1966, 44) defined "mass behavior" as the "spontaneous, indigenous, and elementary" reactions of "an aggregation of individuals who are separate, detached, anonymous, and thus, homogeneous." Postwar intellectuals who further developed this concept, including the social scientists C. Wright Mills (1956, 298–324) and David Riesman (1950) and the cultural critic Dwight MacDonald (1962), feared the political control that a mass-mediated mass democracy enabled; the social alienation of the masses by an industrial economy, lonely urban environments, and the impersonal postwar suburbs; and the consolidation of information control that the industrial production and distribution of culture allowed.

Their bleak view was not uncontested. Political centrists described the mass public as sharing a Cold War consensus that, rather than being a signal of creeping fascism, represented an "end of ideology" (Bell 1960) and the triumph of a functional pluralist democracy (Kornhauser 1959). But centrists themselves expressed some of the mass-society critics' concerns, especially about the relationship between postwar mass politics and the rise of McCarthyism and the "radical right" in the early 1960s (Bell 1960, 103–23; Hofstadter 1966).

Both sets of concerned intellectuals—centrist liberal pluralists, fearful that extremism could threaten representative democracy and the capitalist market; and radicals, fearful that neofascist masses would enable the rise of a "power elite"—worried, to varying degrees, about either the possibility or the existence of a largely passive public (Ross 1989, 50–55). Though voiced in different political pitches, such concerns pervaded the thoughts of public intellectuals and anxious academics during the 1950s and 1960s, when Edelman was being educated and was doing his first research. Mass-society worries filled popular and widely discussed books (e.g., Reisman's *The Lonely Crowd* and Bell's *The End of Ideology*), exhaustive social-scientific studies (e.g., Adorno et al.'s *The Authoritarian Personality*), and major articles and special issues of leading literary journals. These concerns also dominated the work of political scientists studying public opinion and scholars in the new field of mass communications, both of whom studied the mass media's effects on the mass public.

The second edition of Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz's *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication* (1966) is emblematic of

this intellectual ferment. In its eleven parts and more than four dozen entries, the book provides a relatively diverse set of approaches to a variety of questions regarding the production, reception, regulation, and, especially, the effects of the new mass media. Emphasizing the close relationship between public opinion and mass communication, on the one hand; and, on the other, the prevailing political and social concerns of the day—from the Cold War and the threat of nuclear warfare to racial integration and the war on poverty—the book sought to convey the diversity and importance of research on mass culture. Authors in this new scholarly tradition shared the assumption that the "public" had become, well, a mass: a docile blob, plastic enough to be easily shaped by cultural messages.

This historical context helps explain Edelman's conception of the public as a largely undifferentiated entity, bereft of agency and manipulated by mass culture; of elites as both members of that entity and beneficiaries of its passivity; and of mass politics as a system within which domination occurs. Like Lewis Kornhauser and Seymour Martin Lipset, the mainstream sociologists he cited in his early work, Edelman (1964, 18) was concerned about an emerging anonymous public, seduced and controlled by symbolic messages; and he was frightened about the rise of an excitable, intolerant, and even violent radical right that continually "discovered" non-existent threats to the nation's well-being (ibid., 167–70). Inverting individualist notions of choice and preferences, he worked from the thesis that "mass publics respond to currently conspicuous political symbols: not to 'facts,' and not to moral codes embedded in the character or soul, but to the gestures and speeches that make up the drama of the state" (ibid. 172). Modernity was at fault:

> Alienation, anomie, despair of being able to chart one's own course in a complex, cold, and bewildering world have become characteristic of a large part of the population of advanced countries. As the world can be neither understood nor influenced, attachment to reassuring symbols rather than to one's own efforts becomes chronic. (Ibid., 76.)

Technological and social change had created both an industrial economy and a lonely, frightened crowd, Edelman argued, that needed reassurance and leadership and that, as a result, adopted a form of working-class authoritarianism: a blind trust in strong leadership that left people exceptionally vulnerable to cultural manipulation and irrational hysteria

(ibid., 74–77, 181–82). Like radical critics, he condemned the development of what appeared to be a naturally evolving "consensus" or "pluralistic democracy." This democracy was a sham, the result of a symbolic system that managed the ignorant masses.

Edelman also shared mass-society critics' fear of mass culture. In one of his final books, *From Art to Politics* (1995), Edelman offered a vision of high art—both literary and visual—as the paragon of provocative, rather than passivity-inducing, culture. Great artistic works provide depth and ambiguity in their form and content, challenge conventional assumptions and political pieties, and ultimately provide a means to understand truth. By contrast, Edelman argued, popular works of art are largely false, mass-produced "kitsch" that displace attention from the disturbing realities of contemporary life. In presenting this cultural binary, Edelman explicitly adopted the theory Clement Greenberg (1939) had developed in his classic essay, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," an influential text among Cold War intellectuals who sought to contain the mass culture that appeared to threaten formal hierarchies of art and culture. For Edelman, mass culture mapped directly onto mass politics, as politicians use kitschy political symbols as a form of propaganda to manipulate the massified public.

Edelman (1988, 126) maintained that high art offers some respite from the onslaught of kitsch, perhaps even an "antidote" that might counter the banality of political symbols with a freer form of expression.[7] But its potential to do so was limited. A culmination of a twentieth-century tradition of intellectual concern about mass popular culture, the Greenberg critique suggested both that the masses were the victims of industrial society, one product of which was mass-produced culture, and that the masses were themselves at least partially to blame for their own predicament (Gorman 1996, 152–57). Edelman's distaste for the popular and for the masses shared this powerful fatalism. Like Greenberg, he could see through the triviality of popular taste and was convinced that the masses were wrong, but he profoundly doubted that a symbolic system or spectacle that was so universal and functional to modernity could ever be destroyed or changed.

Its connections to earlier moments of intellectual history haunt and, ultimately, bind Edelman's work. The mass-society thesis is rooted in skepticism about democracy developed by both conservatives (from Hegel to Tocqueville, Ortega y Gasset, and Schumpeter [1950, ch. 22]) and leftists (Bellamy 2003; Femia 2001). It also parallels fin-de-siècle fears of popular democracy like those found in Pareto's theory of

"non-logical" actions (1935) and Gustave Le Bon's conception of the crowd's "popular mind" (1896). Hence the odd mix of cultural elitism and political anti-elitism in Edelman's thought. Despite what he saw as obvious evidence of their exploitation by powerful elites, Edelman's masses are frustratingly ignorant and passive. They know no better than what they are told, and they respond to symbols in predictable ways. These kitschy symbols produce a limited and banal set of beliefs—unlike real art, the subtle road to verity.

Symbols as Propaganda

The mass-society debates were not the only evident influence on Edelman. His work strikingly parallels that of Walter Lippmann in the early 1920s, whose influential books *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925) expressed profound skepticism about the public's presumed role in a democracy. Citing the simplistic stereotypes and open-ended symbols upon which the public relies to make sense of the complicated and remote events of politics, Lippmann concluded that power was, and should be, in the hands of small elites, and that the individual in a modern democracy cannot perceive, understand, or direct the government that rules him (Purcell 1973, 105–107). But Lippmann, unlike Edelman, was untroubled by this relationship between elites and the people, and argued for a sophisticated "manufacture of consent" to protect leaders from the vicissitudes of the public (Lippmann 1922, 238–39).

Closer in time to Edelman's career was the enormously influential scholarship of Harold Lasswell, whose work on propaganda and political communication largely focused on the theoretical and practical issues of how to create a capable, powerful government of progressive experts that could win the consent of the governed by managing public opinion. Propaganda, Lasswell (1927b, 629) explained, is "the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols." "To illuminate the mechanisms of propaganda," he wrote, "is to reveal the secret springs of social action, and to expose to the most searching criticism our prevailing dogmas of sovereignty, of democracy, of honesty, and of the sanctity of individual opinion" (Lasswell 1927a, 222).

Appropriating terminology and concepts from across the social sciences, including quantitative methods and behavioral psychology,

Lasswell sought a theory and practice of symbolic propaganda for constructing an effective and modern mass politics (Oren 2003, 137–38). Although his postwar work showed greater sensitivity to democracy as an ideal, he continued to emphasize the role of elite leadership and the managed presentation of information to the masses (Seidelman and Harpham 1985, 142–45). Lasswell saw in public ignorance an opportunity for intellectual elites to elevate politics by educating and enlightening the public with the insights of what he confidently called the "policy sciences" (Torgerson 1993, 237–38; Ricci 1984, ch. 3). He exemplified the more typical Progressive-era faith in technocratic democracy, and as such has been the target of criticism from both the Straussian right (Horwitz 1962) and, more recently from populist-left historians (Gary 1999, 55–84; Smith 1994, 55–84; Sproule 1997, 67–71).

Unlike Lasswell, Edelman repudiated both propaganda and the enlightening possibilities of quantitative social science. Edelman even avoided using such terms as *propaganda*—which, like *ideology,* implies the instrumentalism from which he sought to distance himself.[8] But he shared Lasswell's assumptions about propaganda's ability to control a mass populace, as well as Lippmann's disdain for an apathetic, easily manipulated public. Edelman described as fact that for which Lasswell and Lippmann had hoped (and which the mass-society critics had feared): an all-encompassing system in which the opinions and tastes of the masses are shaped by the dominant political, social, and cultural institutions. Combining a vision of politics as symbolic propaganda with a dread of the results, Edelman offered an unrelentingly pessimistic vision of politics as little more than a comforting, empty illusion.

Edelman's Absent Methodology

What, then, does Edelman offer contemporary students of political culture? I consider the question in two parts, beginning with methodological issues and closing with some conceptual ones.

Regarding social-science methodology, Edelman, as usual, offered important criticisms but no affirmative insights. He rejected positivist political scientists' belief that political ideas can be read directly through opinion surveys. He doubted, in fact, that any method could persuasively find evidence of a coherent, informed public opinion, except insofar as that evidence was itself the product of the assumptions and bi-

ases embedded in the research design. It is a familiar point, but one that can hardly be overemphasized: since social scientists can't gain direct access to people's minds, the observation of potentially quantifiable behaviors, such as votes or survey responses, cannot possibly circumvent the social scientist's need to interpret those behaviors in order to *infer* their putative causes in the actors' beliefs. Quantification cannot produce "objective" social science, in the sense of being shielded from the taint of the interpreting scientist's *own* beliefs about the ultimate causes of the behaviors he is quantifying. Counting up people's behaviors is no substitute for interpreting them, and social scientists who treat behavior as self-interpreting, or who try to reduce its determinants to non-subjective (e.g., socioeconomic) factors through statistical correlation, are necessarily hiding their own interpretations of the behavior they study, or their own theories about which factors are causal.

Correlating political actions with putatively objective factors also requires the assumption that the actors reason clearly about accurately perceived facts that will help them achieve the policies that will fulfill their political "preferences," which are "given" to them by the objective factors. But opinion surveys and psychological experiments are inherently limited means of ascertaining what political preferences are in a given place and time, let alone how they are formed (Edelman 1977, 10–11): the limits lie in the researcher's interpretive and causal assumptions, which are too often obscured behind the facade of quantificationist objectivity. Indeed, quantitative studies of public opinion (along with rational-choice models) are at a disadvantage compared to qualitative methods when they purport to bypass (or assume away, in the case of rational-choice theory) the symbolic systems that shape the beliefs, or at least the words, that people experience as causal at the phenomenological level (Edelman 1985, 195–96, 201) (cf. Mannheim 1936, 39–40).

Having raised these issues, however, Edelman left us without any means to make inquiries that would enable further study of the symbolic world. Edelman's own method was to write brief, highly abstract monographs about particular types of political symbols, relying for support on the faith of his readers, the conclusions of a few secondary sources, and his readers' agreement with brief illustrative examples of the interpretations that Edelman favored. This is unimpressive as an academic or even a non-professional intellectual methodology. One can only replicate Edelman's results or appreciate his argument if one already shares his critical position.

Consider, by contrast, C. Wright Mills. He, too, spent copious energy making a mockery of the foolish "rigors" of quantitative "Abstracted Empiricism" (as well as the foolish bloat of "Grand Theory") (Mills 1959). But at least he offered a portrait of properly crafted social-scientific method (even if he, too, sometimes launched into rhetorical overdrive that left empirical grounding behind), and at least he provided detailed demonstrations of what he meant. Edelman's works are less the product of a craft in which empirical data (however qualitative) are marshalled in favor of theoretical conclusions than of a camera that somehow churns out snapshots of an always-dysfunctional politics.

At times, Edelman did describe symbolic production and consumption in convincing detail. This occurred most often when he considered specific types of institutions. Because these more narrow analyses led him to explain the social context within which particular means of explaining and understanding power make sense to members of the public, they are much more incisive than his flat, broad theoretical statements. For example, his work on the "helping professions" of therapy, social work, and prisons (Edelman 1977, chs. 4 and 5), although marred by a dystopian conception of those professions' motivations—coupled with an anomalously utopian assumption that revolutionary political change and de-institutionalization would transform the incarcerated, the poor, and the mentally ill—at least focused on the internal discourses of the latter groups of individuals, rather than solely on the imposition of symbols on undifferentiated masses. Similarly, his early study of regulatory agencies (Edelman 1964, 24–25, 46–53) enhanced the Weberian conception of bureaucracy by considering the symbolic processes of administration that legitimate an organization both internally, for its employees and managers, and externally, for regulated industries and the general public.

Toward the end of his life, Edelman wrote an introduction to a special issue of the journal *Political Communication* in which some of the contributors attempted, of all things, to adapt his work to quantitative inquiry. As part of this *Festschrift*, one article provided a sympathetic literature review of efforts by social scientists to verify Edelman's views through quantitative research, and while conceding the difficulty of doing so, offered suggestions for future research. Ironically, these suggestions—to historicize; to provide more precise textual and institutional analyses; and to study the actual practices and responses of individuals (Hershey 1993, 135–37)—strayed from, and

implicitly challenged, Edelman's theory of a singular, pervasive, virtually omnipotent symbolic universe. To study symbols closely is, ultimately, to complicate one's interpretation of them—and Edelman's vision defied complication.

Criticizing Edelman for his stark unconcern with methodological rigor may seem unfair, since he did not pretend to be a methodologist. But although he was neither an empirical social scientist nor an exacting builder of theoretical concepts, he wrote with a social-scientific authority that implicitly, and on occasion explicitly, claimed dispassionate distance from the object of his study. Hovering—indeed, towering—above the push and pull of political claims and practices, he did make the pretense of being the master diagnostician of the pathologies of our age. There should, therefore, be some rationale behind the diagnosis, establishing that it is not itself a symptom of the disease. In fact, however, many of Edelman's conclusions about the nature of mass politics were rooted in his own assumptions about the correct position in live political debates. His method, such as it was, buried these assumptions. Thus, when Edelman (1977, 8–12) "observed" the symbolic evocation of contradictory beliefs regarding the poor, he identified the ideological basis of these "stock explanations" for the causes of poverty in, on the right, conservative and classical-liberal assumptions about individual responsibility; and, on the left, liberal claims about institutional and social causes. In disdaining both explanations, he presumed, without explanation or argument, that the obviously correct approach was neither to institutionalize the poor nor to dismantle the welfare state.

Having political commitments is perfectly acceptable; dismissing opposing views as mere bunkum, however, in the course of a critique of political symbols in general (rather than the particular symbols with which one disagrees), renders the assumptions and commitments underlying one's critique impervious to criticism. Edelman's critique of symbolic politics was inextricable from his critique of the substantive politics covered up by those symbols. But his rhetoric and methodology were such that his own substantive political commitments about the real, as opposed to the foolishly "symbolic," political positions that are capable of swaying the masses were never announced or defended (although they were clearly left-wing).

Once he had established his critical approach, and his reputation, through *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, Edelman sought neither to persuade nor to prove. He merely reiterated, and thereby reconfirmed, his assumptions. In the end, his work was social criticism dressed up as so-

cial science.[9] His critique and ultimate rejection of traditional social-science methodology may well have been a heretical and important act for a mid-century political scientist to commit (Bennett 1993, 108–109); but by offering only self-confirming analysis as the alternative, Edelman neither solved the methodological crisis he sought to create, nor succeeded in displacing the approaches he mocked.

Edelman's Neglect of Communications Theory

As a result of these conceptual and methodological flaws, Edelman's work has limited value for either analyzing or transcending symbolic politics. Lacking a non-impressionistic empirical grounding, shunning nuance in favor of broad declarations, and demonstrating a singular lack of faith in anyone other than himself (and readers attracted to his passionate pessimism), Edelman's approach merely replaced the simplistic conception of rational political preferences that he criticized, and the Marxist conception of instrumental ideology that he shunned, with an equally simplistic conception of government-propagated symbols that inexorably and fully shape individual demands and expectations. For the homologies between political behavior, political preferences, and objective interests that he found in mainstream political science, he substituted an equally unambivalent correspondence between political behavior and susceptibility to political myths, individual personality, and, later, such collective factors as gender, ethnicity, and class (Edelman 1971, 63–64; 1988, 100). Indeed, in his final works, long after post-structuralist and postmodern theory and the ethnographic study of media reception had made plain the complicated nature of symbolic meaning, Edelman only grudgingly conceded that political symbols could be ambiguous. But he quickly followed that admission with the argument that such ambiguity does not enable a range of meanings and interpretations that might open the possibility for new symbols and new political possibilities to emerge. Instead, Edelman (2001, 102–3) contended, different groups merely resolve ambiguities of meaning in their own distinct ways, providing elites further opportunity for the manipulative promotion of irrationality and misunderstanding by serving up symbols that will elicit predictable responses.

This view of political communication ignores research in cultural studies, much of which developed after Edelman's initial monograph, but the roots of which can be found in the prewar discovery of "propa-

ganda" (Sproul 1997). Unlike political economists or institutional analysts of mass communications, Edelman paid no attention to the structural foundations of media production and the institutions and processes by which symbols are created (Goodman 2004, 1445–55; Turow 1997), and thus the specific social relationships between producer, text, and audience, and between state and citizen, established by each new communications technology (Carey 1989; Innis 1951). Edelman also ignored the fact that even the most stubborn of rational-actor proponents have recognized the cognitive limits and shortcuts that lead the public to act in irrational, or at least in less than perfectly rational, ways (see, e.g., Lupia et al. 2000). Unlike interpretive and cultural studies of the media, as well as more recent social-scientific studies of media reception, Edelman resisted the possibility that audiences actively interpret mass–produced texts within specific social contexts and settings (Ang 1991). And unlike social-movement theorists, by the end of his career Edelman saw no possibility for widespread collective political action (Gamson 1992, 66–67).

Although Edelman clearly kept abreast of the so-called cultural turn in the social sciences and the social turn in the humanities, which led to an interdisciplinary convergence of efforts to study the relationships among power, social structure, and culture, he had little interest in exploring the complexity of symbolic meaning or the social contexts in which individuals and groups make meaning of politics. Although he occasionally and briefly cited and applied a few of the major ideas of, say, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, he merely appropriated and simplified their more complicated discussions of discourse, institutions, and texts within a barren world of ideological mystification.[10] The issue of whether Foucault or Derrida is a figure to emulate is less significant than what Edelman's lack of engagement with scholars working on the same issues says about the value of his work for contemporary scholarship. He failed, ultimately, to move beyond the mass-society debates, as scholars in other fields did.

Thus, there is no reason for scholars studying the cultural symbols of politics to consider Edelman's work; indeed, they tend to ignore it and, ultimately, to overturn many of the assumptions of his approach. Consider, for example, the large body of scholarship published within the past decade concerning the widespread belief in conspiracy theories. The previous wave of academic study of conspiratorialist political extremism had contemporaneously studied the period between McCarthyism and Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential bid. This work as-

sumed that extreme anti-communists and anti-intellectual populists shared a pathological attraction to demonology in place of rational political thought (Rogin 1987, ch. 9). For Hofstadter (1966), most famously, populist political extremism constituted a "paranoid style" that lacked the substantive, interest-based foundation required by a functional representative democracy. An element of the centrist critique of mass society, this pluralist view of conspiracy politics presaged Edelman, although without Edelman's radical political gloss. Had Edelman turned his attention to conspiracy theory and populism, what would he have offered that was substantively different from the consensus/pluralist approach?[11] Judging from his other work, it seems likely that in his hands, conspiracy theories and the populist politics of which they were a part would have been just more instances of the political spectacle's tendency towards mass delusion.

During the past decade, numerous qualitative, interpretive scholars, including anthropologists (e.g., Marcus 1999 and West and Sanders 2003), postmodern political theorists (e.g., Dean 2002), historians (Goldberg 2002; Kazin 1998), and scholars in media and cultural studies and English (Fenster 1999, Knight 2001, Melley 1999), have returned to the topic of political extremism and refined the mass-society approach to political symbols. Rather than posit a symbolic subculture or system that represents or imposes a pathological regime of imaginary politics, this diverse body of work inquires instead into populism's and conspiracy theory's narrative and interpretive logic, precise historical contexts, fluid relationship to mainstream political discourse, and effects on the institutional practices of political parties. Historical and close analyses of political texts and practices have drawn a far more complicated picture of how the symbols of populist politics and conspiracy are created, appropriated, employed, and of how they affect their believers. This picture provides a significantly more useful and empirically verifiable understanding of the processes that Edelman identified but that he failed, ultimately, to consider at the level of detail and complexity necessary for the task.

* * *

Because of its internal flaws and the historical context from which it emerged (and to which it remains bound), Edelman's work embodies two core propensities of left political thought that do not necessarily travel together: a deep distrust of the state and an equally deep disgust with the public. Unlike progressive and socialist leftists who favor state-

based solutions to market failures and capitalist exploitation, and unlike populist leftists who favor the collective private actions of new social movements as a means to expand self-rule and social justice, Edelman was skeptical of the likelihood of any meaningful structural change. Lacking hope, he was left with little but pessimism and cynicism—something he readily admitted. Edelman (1988, 4) equated pessimism with an apparent ability to perceive fully the truth of political symbols, the spectacle generally, and their consequences. His was not an effort to reveal the degradations of mass society or the consequences of propaganda in order to construct a better world, whether through reform, radical change, or, as in Harold Lasswell's case, utilization of political symbols by experts for functional ends. Edelman certainly preferred a different world, but offered no hope for efforts to bring one about. No, Edelman's project was a polemic, an elegy for the hapless fools trapped in an endless cycle of ignorance and disaster.

NOTES

1. My focus in this essay is solely upon Edelman's work on political symbols, and not on his role as teacher or intellectual mentor to other academics. A recent article in a prominent legal sociology journal argues that Edelman profoundly influenced that field, claiming, as proof, the later academic success of many of his former students and colleagues (Ewick and Sarat 2004). I have no reason to challenge the latter claim. But to the extent that the article's authors also implicitly suggest that an historical reconnection to Edelman's work would reinvigorate any current field, I disagree.
2. One can find in Edelman's work instances in which he sought to problematize a binary between the symbolic and the real. In reconsidering *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* for a new printing twenty years after its initial publication, for example, he denied the existence of "an objective political 'reality' from which symbols can divert attention" (Edelman 1985, 200). But later in the same essay, he also alleged that some "policymaking . . . directly affects how well people live" but "remains largely unpublicized" (1985, 200, 211).
3. I leave open the question of whether the "vulgar" Marxist theory of ideology from which Edelman and his supporters distinguish his work is in fact an accurate portrayal of the entirety of Marx's work. I also leave aside, for the moment, whether Edelman's conception of symbols is much different from the theories of ideology developed by Western Marxist and post-Marxist theorists after 1968—theories that Edelman ignored in his later work, when he should have had access to them.
4. Of these theorists, Edelman wrote only about Bourdieu's work more than in passing. Bourdieu considered issues of language and symbolic power in

great detail, both empirically and in building theoretical models that, like Edelman, attempted to avoid reductionist conceptions of ideology (see especially Bourdieu 1977). But even in this case, other than a review of one of Bourdieu's books (Edelman 1992), Edelman never cited Bourdieu or overtly incorporated any insights from Bourdieu's writings into his own work.

5. In his "Afterword" to a reissue of *Symbolic Uses*, Edelman (1985, 198) claimed that his work, "though generally pessimistic about politics . . . carries an optimistic implication: that the forms of behavior we deplore are not inherent in human nature or the personality, but changeable if social and economic institutions change." This statement seems superficially true, as far as it goes. But because Edelman's emphasis was always on the relative immutability of the symbolic system/spectacle's deepest structures—including the mass delusion that covers exploitative social and economic institutions—Edelman's claim about his work seems largely inconsistent with his central thesis, to the point of being disingenuous.
6. During the 1970s, Edelman (1977, 124–25) conceded that mass, coordinated political resistance could bring about substantive social and political change (such as the expansion of the social safety net and antidiscrimination laws in Western democracies), but he seemed to lose faith in the possibility of such resistance recurring—or even, perhaps, in the extent of the changes in the first place.
7. In a very curious thread running through one of his books, Edelman (1977, 86–89, 154–55) extended the opposition between high art and degraded mass culture further, into an oddly Randian excess, as he lamented the defeat of the "autonomous person" by bureaucracy and a society mired in mediocrity. Although he never returned to the notion, it demonstrates the latent liberal within him and the relative incoherence of his deeply pessimistic politics.
8. In this sense, his work is distinct from that of Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988), who similarly disdain Lippmann's normative assumptions, but who find Lippmann's description of the "manufacture of consent"—and the instrumentalism it invokes—accurate.
9. This is not intended to demean social criticism, but to distinguish between the aspirations of social science (even in a postmodern and post-disciplinary age) and those of criticism, and to clarify the importance of that distinction in evaluating Edelman's work. My frustration is not that Edelman practiced social criticism, but that he and his supporters would claim that he engaged in something more authoritative and replicable.
10. Equally telling, Edelman used the word *spectacle*, in *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (1988), his last major monograph, to describe the same social phenomena as the "symbols" on which his earlier work focused—without ever discussing or refererring to Guy Debord's famous, earlier use of the term in *Society of the Spectacle*, a seminal document of the 1968 student riots in Paris and a foundational text for postmodern media critique. Debord's work, and the associated tradition stretching from Henri Lefebvre to Jean Baudrillard,

and from Marshall McLuhan to the cultural study of the mass media, seems to have provoked little interest on Edelman's part, despite the similarities and overlaps between that field and his own work. Without imposing on him a duty to cite and discuss others' work encyclopedically, one could at least expect some historical acknowledgement of the term *spectacle*'s prior, similar use, and explanation of how his usage follows or departs from Debord's.

11. Edelman might have been expected to differ with Hofstadter by attempting to recuperate *leftist* populists, with whose politics he would have had more sympathy. But this would not have been a departure from his general approach to the symbolic use of populist conspiracy theories.

REFERENCES

Adorno, T. W., Else Frenkel-Brunswik, and Daniel J. Levinson. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Row.

Ang, Ien. 1991. *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. London: Routledge.

Bell, Daniel. 1960. *The End of Ideology*. New York: The Free Press.

Bellamy, Richard. 2003. "The Advent of the Masses and the Making of the Modern Theory of Democracy." In *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Terrence Ball and Richard Bellamy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bennett, W. Lance. 1993. "Constructing Publics and Their Opinions." *Political Communication* 10: 101–20.

Berelson, Bernard, and Morris Janowitz. 1966. *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, 2nd ed. New York: The Free Press.

Blumer, Herbert. [1939] 1966. "The Mass, the Public, and Public Opinion." In *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication,* ed. Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz. New York: The Free Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Carey, James W. *Communication as Culture*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Dean, Jodi. 2002. *Publicity's Secret*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Debord, Guy. [1967] 1995. *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: Zone Books.

Denning, Michael. 2004. *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*. London: Verso.

Edelman, Murray. 1964. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Edelman, Murray. 1971. *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence.* New York: Academic Press.

Edelman, Murray. 1977. *Political Language: Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail.* New York: Academic Press.

Edelman, Murray. 1985. "Afterword, 1984: Reflections on Symbolism and Politics." In idem, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Edelman, Murray. 1988. *Constructing the Political Spectacle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Edelman, Murray. 1992. Review of Pierre Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power*. *Contemporary Sociology* 21: 717–19.

Edelman, Murray. 1993. "Introduction." *Political Communication* 10(1): 99–100.

Edelman, Murray. 1995. *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Edelman, Murray. 2001. *The Politics of Misinformation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ewick, Patricia, and Austin Sarat. 2004. "Hidden in Plain View: Murray Edelman in the Law and Society Tradition." *Law & Social Inquiry* 29: 439–63.

Femia, Joseph V. 2001. *Against the Masses: Varieties of Anti-Democratic Thought Since the French Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fenster, Mark. 1999. *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gamson, William A. 1992. "Social Psychology of Collective Action." In *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Gary, Brett. 1999. *The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties from World War I to the Cold War*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Geertz, Clifford. 1964. "Ideology As a Cultural System." In *Ideology and Discontent: International Yearbook of Political Behavior Research* 5: 47–76.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Goodman, Ellen P. 2004. "Media Policy Out of the Box: Content Abundance, Attention Scarcity, and the Failures of Digital Markets." *Berkeley Technology Law Journal* 19: 1389–1472.

Gorman, Paul R. 1996. *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. New York: International Publishers.

Greenberg, Clement. [1939] 1986. *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1: *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939–1944*, ed. John O'Brian. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. [1962] 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Bürger with Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2: *Lifeworld and System*, trans. Thomas McCarthy. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. 1988. *Manufacturing Consent*. New York: Pantheon.

Hershey, Marjorie Randon. 1993. "Election Research as Spectacle: The Edelman Vision and the Empirical Study of Elections." *Political Communication* 10: 121–40.

Hofstadter, Richard. 1966. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. New York: Knopf.

Horwitz, Robert. 1962. "Scientific Propaganda: Harold D. Lasswell." In *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*, ed. Herbert J. Storing. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Innis, Harold. 1951. *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Kazin, Michael. 1998. *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, rev. ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Knight, Peter. 2001. *Conspiracy Culture: From Kennedy to "The X-Files."* London: Routledge.

Lasswell, Harold D. 1927a. *Propaganda Technique in the World War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Lasswell, Harold D. 1927b. "The Theory of Political Propaganda." *American Political Science Review* 21: 627–31.

Le Bon, Gustave. [1896] 1920. *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. London: T. Fisher Unwin.

Lippmann, Walter. 1922. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Lippmann, Walter. 1925. *The Phantom Public*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Lupia, Arthur, Mathew D. McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin. 2000. *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Macdonald, Dwight. 1962. *Against the American Grain*. New York: Random House.

Mannheim, Karl. 1936. *Ideology and Utopia*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Marcus, George E. 1999. *Paranoia within Reason: A Casebook on Conspiracy as Explanation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Melley, Timothy. 2000. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *The Power Elite*. London: Oxford University Press.

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Novick, Peter. 1988. *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oren, Ido. 2003. *Our Enemies and US: America's Rivalries and the Making of Political Science.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Pareto, Vilfredo. 1935. *The Mind and Society* (4 vols.), trans. Andrew Bongiorno and Arthur Livingston. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Purcell, Edward. 1973. *The Crisis of Democratic Theory*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

Ricci, David M. 1984. *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Riesman, David, with Nathan Glaser and Reuel Denney. 1950. *The Lonely Crowd*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Rogers, Everett M. 1986. *Communication Technology: The New Media in Society.* New York: Free Press.

Rogin, Michael. 1987. *Ronald Reagan: The Movie*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ross, Andrew. 1989. *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Schaub, Thomas Hill. 1991. *American Fiction in the Cold War*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Schumpeter, Joseph A. 1950. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy,* 3rd ed. New York: Harper & Row.

Seidelman, Raymond; & Edward J. Harpham. 1985. *Disenchanted Realists: Political Science and the American Crisis, 1884–1984*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Smith, Mark C. 1994. *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate Over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918–1941*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Somin, Ilya. 1998. "Voter Ignorance and the Democratic Ideal," *Critical Review* 12: 413–58.

Sproule, J. Michael. 1997. *Propaganda and Democracy: The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, John B. 1990. *Ideology and Modern Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Torgerson, Douglas. 1993. "Policy Analysis and Public Life: The Restoration of *Phronïsis*?" In *Political Science in History*, ed. James Farr, John S. Dryzek, and Stephen T. Leonard. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Turow, Joseph. 1997. *Media Systems in Society: Understanding Industries, Strategies, and Power*, 2nd ed. New York: Longman.

West, Harry G., and Todd Sanders, eds. 2003. *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion in the New World Order*

Spencer H. MacCallum

RESIDENTIAL POLITICS: HOW DEMOCRACY ERODES COMMUNITY

ABSTRACT: *Residential subdivisions governed democratically by homeowners' associations often fall short of their residents' expectations. The fault may lie in the developers' practice of subdividing rather than leasing residential land. Given the widespread success of land leasing in commercial real estate, subdividing residential land seems anomalous, and may be explained by a variety of public policies enacted since World War II that have constrained developers to subdivide rather than lease land for residential purposes. By promoting subdivision, these policies have subjected homeowners to the obsessive rule making, conflict, and counterproductive decision making that characterize democratic institutions. Entrepreneurial management, on the other hand, as practiced in multi-tenant commercial properties, has the potential of promoting true residential "community."*

In the United States, the last third of the twentieth century saw the spread of a new level of government below that of the municipality: the democratically governed subdivision.

Except for the very smallest, virtually every newer subdivision in the United States, including condominiums, townhouses, and other planned real-estate developments, is contractually bound to be democratically governed. Therefore I will not always use the "democratically governed" modifier, but will simply call them "political" subdivisions to

Critical Review 17 (2005), nos. 3–4. ISSN 0891-3811. www.criticalreview.com

Spencer MacCallum, sm@look.net, a social anthropologist living in Casas Grandes, Mexico, is the author of *The Art of Community* (Institute for Humane Studies, 1970) and of numerous articles on social organization.

distinguish them from older subdivisions, whose residents were subject only to municipal and higher levels of government.

The newer subdivisions' democratic or "political" government flows from the fact that by the terms of the agreement signed by owners of houses in such subdivisions, the subdivision's homeowners collectively (through a homeowners' association) own the streets and other common areas and facilities of their development, and they even have a collective proprietary interest in one another's lifestyles insofar as the latter might be thought to affect the resale values of their houses. These common interests are addressed by the homeowners' association's democratically elected board, whose constituents are the homeowners who, together, own the common areas of the subdivision. When one buys a house in such a subdivision, one automatically buys along with it the right to vote for, and the obligation to obey, an executive committee whose task is to deal with the common concerns that are built into the legal structure of the subdivision. A regime of restrictive covenants set up by the developer before the first lot is sold, and thereafter perpetuated in the property deeds of each home, mandates the "citizenship" of all present and future homeowners.

These political subdivisions evolved slowly from the 1920s and 30s, when they first acquired legal standing to exercise police and tax powers. But from the mid-1960s they spread rapidly, jumping from fewer than 500 in 1965 to more than 250,000 four decades later. Their boards now exercise jurisdiction over more than 50 million Americans. Virtually all new residential housing in major metropolitan areas is governed this way (CAI 2003).

Despite this robust growth, which would seem to imply broad consumer satisfaction, the quality of life advertised to buyers entering such a subdivision is often illusory. This is suggested by litigation statistics, which show the number of appellate cases involving such subdivisions growing almost twice as fast as the number of subdivisions (Winokur 1994, 93–94). The high incidence of complaints and litigation indicates widespread management problems.

The response of disaffected homeowners has been not only to sue, but to form "homeowners' rights" groups seeking municipal, state, and federal legislation and oversight to bring subdivisions into closer conformity with the rules regulating other levels of government. They network through the American Homeowners Resource Center (AHRC),

whose web site is receiving more than three million hits a month and is growing by 400 percent a year.

Fortunately, there is an alternative to collective ownership and democratic control of a commons. An entirely different arrangement is found in commercial real estate. The key to the difference is that in commercial real estate, the land, instead of being subdivided, is kept in single ownership and parceled into its various uses through leasing (rental). This permits profit-oriented management of the infrastructure and of the lease terms by a single entity—but one without conflicting wills, as in an electorate or a homeowners' association board.

This alternative way of managing property is as widespread in commercial real estate as political management is in residential real estate. Analyzing the nonpolitical—or, as I will say, "entrepreneurial"—alternative to political management will help us to understand, by way of contrast, what has driven subdivision development, and what has caused its problems.

Although land leasing is being used with great success in multiple-tenant commercial real estate—as exemplified, for example, in the spread of hotels and shopping malls—current government policy discourages its use in residential real estate. Some of the major obstacles are the mortgage-interest deduction, which applies only to payments for homes owned by the taxpayer (not for homes or home sites rented by him), mightily encouraging homeownership rather than leasing; federal subsidies for building political subdivisions, offered by the F.H.A., H.U.D., F.N.M.A., F.H.L.M.C., and V.A.; and, until 2003, the taxation of dividends at virtually double the rate levied on capital gains. This last factor, which discouraged conservative, long-term investment that would produce dividends in the form of rents generated by leasing, will be reinstated if the dividend-tax cut is not renewed in 2008. If so, then in light of the tax implications, it will continue to make more sense to engage in short-term land subdivision for capital gains than in long-term management for rental dividends.

But for the legally uneven playing field, there is every reason to believe that leasing would bring innovation and variety to the residential housing market, providing many attractive forms of community life that today's homeowners rarely enjoy. For it is becoming abundantly clear that subdivision, and especially political subdivision, militates against precisely the sense and enjoyment of community that one might expect would be encouraged by democracy.

Conceptualizing Community

The concept of "community" is ambiguous. The lengthy search among social scientists for a definition of *community* that all could agree upon suggests an analogy from the physical sciences. Since its discovery by Max Planck in 1900, the quantum has remained a key concept of physical science. It is the smallest event that can be experienced even with the aid of instruments. But for decades the nature of the quantum posed a conundrum; it seemed now a wave and now a particle. During roughly the same years, sociologists faced a similar conundrum. The notion of community seemed a promising candidate to be a key concept in their discipline, but what exactly was "community"? Was it fundamentally a place, or a network of personal relationships? If one of these were missing, could the remainder still be called a community?

The reason for this ambivalence is that before the Industrial Revolution, when mobility and communication were negligible, the village where one lived corresponded almost perfectly with the network of one's personal acquaintances. But with advances in travel and communications technology in the nineteenth century, the spatial and the interpersonal dimensions of human life began to separate. Moving from place to place, people had to break and then re-establish their network of personal ties more often. As the notion of community itself became confused, writers lamented a "loss of community," which they saw as giving rise to widespread feelings of anomie, rootlessness, and alienation.

Today, the geographical and personal dimensions of community have almost completely separated—yet we find that it's not so bad after all. With rapid mobility and the ease of communicating across any distance, interpersonal networks are becoming not only more extensive, but more stable. Technological advances allow us to visit and interact with comparative ease. Geographic place is less crucial for personal relationships; to the extent that face-to-face interaction is desired, almost anywhere will serve. The logical end point toward which technology seems to be moving is that those who once gathered at the neighborhood pub will convene with equal ease in the streets of Bangladesh, Soho, or at the poles of the earth or even beyond—and all at once, if they like. Community in the sense of personal ties has been freed of place and given a new range of possibilities.

Sociologists were reluctant to abandon the search for consensus on a

definition of "community." But the concept combines two dimensions, geographic place and personal relationships, that had been associated only by the accident of primitive transportation and communication. When spatial "community" is intended, the phrase "community of place" is now sometimes used in the literature. But the definitional problem remains: of the many different kinds of populated places, what makes only some of them communities of place? What of a restaurant, a bus, a motel, or a floor in an office building? People in these places have ties, but often they are merely contractual, impersonal, and otherwise indirect. Because of the attenuated personal dimension, most people would not call such aggregations of people in a given place "communities."

To describe such aggregations, as well as aggregations more usually considered communal, I propose using the term *ruim*, which is an old Danish word for space or place. Since it is a cognate of the English word *room*, it can be pronounced the same way.

"*Ruim*" designates a certain spatially bounded and widely recurring type of human behavior, namely the occupation by several people of a spatial domain differentiated into private and common areas; along with some allocation of responsibility for performing the activities that will be required if the arrangement is to continue. An advantage of this concept is that it includes many phenomena we might never have thought to call a "community"—such as a theater during a performance, an office building when it is occupied, or a bus with passengers—that have varying degrees of collectivity to them.

On the other hand, since "community" is more familiar to the tongue and to the ear, we can continue to use that term so long as we are clear that we are not limiting our meaning to its conventional usage. I will favor the word *ruim* whenever I want to emphasize the more inclusive category of locales and relationships beyond the strictly personal.

Community Governance

A story that was popular years ago described a young Lothario who, when the husband returned unexpectedly, sought refuge in a closet. Becoming suspicious, the husband flung open the closet and found the intruder cowering naked. "What the hell are you doing here?" he de-

manded, to which the young man stammered, "E-e-everybody's got to be someplace!"

He was right, of course. All human activity has to occur in geographical space. And our use of space, especially when acting in concert with others, requires some degree of coordination, or management. Without spatial management, collective human activity would be mere fleeting conjunctions of events with no staying power.

Managed space occupied conjointly by two or more persons constitutes a *ruim*. Collective activities that have any staying power, from the casual (riding in a plane with strangers) to the profound (worshipping in a church with family members) all take place within a *ruim*, whether managed well or poorly. The management or governance needs of a *ruim*—the tasks required for its continuity—vary according to the activity it is supposed to foster, but normally these tasks include the selection of participants; the allocation to them of space; the design and upkeep of common areas and facilities; and leadership, including dispute management.

Before the advent of states, *ruim* governance was mostly consensual. To the extent that there was any formality about such governance, it stemmed either from the systematics of kinship or from rudimentary contractual agreements. In the first case, seigneurial patterns of land tenure tended to prevail, in which decisions were normally ratified (even if not always formulated) by a designated senior of a kin group. In the second case, manorial forms frequently evolved, conferring land, on agreed terms, upon unrelated families or individuals.

Both systems served their purposes well under conditions of infrequent change among small, homogeneous populations. However, Fred Gearing (1962) has shown how such arrangements could become impaired when population numbers exceeded the optimum for face-to-face relations. Sometimes this happened when environmental conditions prevented growing villages from "hiving off" and thereby reestablishing optimum population size. A crucial example: villages dependent on flood irrigation from a single river, as in early Sumeria. Because of this dependence, new villages were not free to locate just anywhere, but had to remain close to the river. In time, this constraint on village location produced a buildup of population far beyond what was optimal for a kinship system. The inevitably growing conflicts over water were beyond the power of kinship systematics to resolve.

With greater and sustained likelihood of attack came the need for a regularized defense, including the construction of defensive walls,

which in turn led to the establishment of a standing, specialized police or military force. A standing militia is not normally tolerated in tribal society, since allegiance to one's military commander, who both disciplines and provides the wherewithal to live, soon takes precedence over kinship relations and customary law. Gearing (1962) describes similar dynamics at work among the eighteenth-century Cherokee engaged in arms trade with the English, and among nineteenth-century Plains Indians hunting buffalo. Such environmental stresses may explain how states first arose and spread, introducing systems of institutionalized coercion that perpetuated themselves even after the conditions that gave rise to them might have passed.

Thus might *propriety* have first yielded to *rulership.* Although it is a minority view now, I predict that rulership will one day be commonly understood not as a third method of *ruim* management, alongside kinship and contract, but as a social pathology arising under conditions of environmental stress and signaling the absence, failure, or immaturity of reciprocal and consensual relations. In any event, the following discussion will show that contemporary subdivision governance takes on aspects of rulership, whereas leasehold governance is in the tradition of contractual *ruim* management. This contrast can best be seen against the background of the two altogether different histories of subdivision and of land leasing in the United States.

Subdividing America

Whether large-scale and systematic or small and casual, subdivision has been the characteristic pattern of American settlement from early colonial times. While subdivision is commonly thought of as a recent suburban phenomenon, the fact is that most settlements throughout the colonial period began and developed as such. They even resembled modern subdivisions in that their governance was by the vote of the landowners. This is the origin of the property qualification for the franchise in American towns and cities, which lasted well into the nineteenth century.

Land speculators were instrumental in the founding of most early American settlements. George Washington surveyed lands for Lord Fairfax and other large landowners eager to attract population and subdivide their holdings, since these were worth little in their wilderness state. Subdivision was equally desired by the buyers of land. For immi-

grants to America, ownership even of a small piece of land symbolized escape from the oppressive regimes of Europe, where such ownership typically had been the prerogative of the nobility who, in varying degrees, had made up the government. In America, every man was a king, and his home was his castle. In the light of the European experience, tenancy implied lower or inferior class and dependency, which ran counter to the American credo of equality and independence.

Such was the attraction of separate homeownership on one's own plot of land that it spawned a populist movement for homesteading as the United States acquired territories to the west. Successive political administrations reaching for the popular vote fanned this particular flame until it became a fundamental part of the American dream, myth, and tradition. Nor did it soon burn out. After each war, following a precedent older than the Roman Empire, the United States government subsidized or granted land outright to returning veterans. Veterans-Administration and other federal home-subsidy programs that helped spawn the current regime of political subdivision are part of the legacy of World War II.

But American government policy went still further in promoting single-family, detached homes on subdivided lots. Such building is encouraged not only by the mortgage-interest deduction and the disparity between the high tax rates on dividends and the low tax rates on capital gains, but by federal mortgage insurance, which is offered only for homes in subdivisions governed by a qualified homeowners' association. This insurance confers a competitive advantage upon developers who turn *ruim* management over to politics.

Thus do historical accident, cultural bias, and government policy combine to produce a disincentive for residential land-leasing. Within these constraints, Americans continue to own their own plot of ground—even if theirs be only a paper ownership requiring payments to a mortgage holder and compromised by extensive control of their lives by neighbors acting through their homeowners' association.

The Economic Value of Community

The dominance of collectively governed, planned neighborhoods was a long time coming. Around the turn of the twentieth century, prescient developers first discovered that the crucial site qualities are those conferred by surrounding land uses and natural features. Hence the adage

that the three most important features of real estate are location, location, and location. This discovery suggested a practical application: plan a whole tract as an integrated neighborhood before selling off the parts, and each part will increase in value through its relation to the rest. Profit will come from systematically building in positive "neighborhood effects."

A few planned neighborhoods had been built before, motivated more by social and aesthetic considerations than economic ones. But the early twentieth century is referred to as the "era of the community builders" because that is when the idea of integrated neighborhood developments took off.

Pioneering community builders corresponded and socialized with one another, and from their intellectual contact came some of the finest residential neighborhoods in the United States. Edward H. Bouton's Roland Park in Baltimore, begun in 1891, led to Jesse Clyde Nichols's Country Club District in Kansas City in 1906 and Hugh Potter's River Oaks in Houston in 1925. In 1936, these developers founded the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to serve as a focal point for research and information exchange. Offsetting that laudable founding purpose is the fact that the ULI, more than any other single organization, forged a strong partnership between the real-estate industry and the federal government, and thereby contributed in a major way to the politicization of subdivisions.

But because they well understood the complementarity of land uses, the pioneers of the nonpolitical subdivision made great strides in neighborhood design. They studied and improved upon conventional street layout, and they experimented with clustering retail stores and integral parking, permitting the orderly introduction of businesses into a neighborhood of homes, and producing the first convenience shopping centers. The benefit of this last was reciprocal: residents liked having "built-in" stores with convenient traffic patterns and parking, while the businesses liked having "built-in" customers. Nor did these early pioneering developers overlook parks and recreational areas, schools, and churches.

Nevertheless, it was insufficient merely to create an attractive residential and business environment. Environment has to be maintained. Buyers wanted assurance that their investment would hold its value in years to come. This raised two problems inherent in subdivision.

One problem is the obsolescence—rapid or gradual, but inevitable—of any given developmental plan relative to the best use of the land in a

given area. Lot size and the layout of streets and common areas become obsolete as fashion and the technology of transportation and construction change.

A classic instance was the problem that arose for subdivided trailer parks when double- and triple-wide models were first introduced (MacCallum 1970, 31–32). The wider models had not been anticipated by trailer-park developers, who designed the parks with lots that accommodated only the once-standard single-wides. Fortunately, most trailer parks had been retained under single ownership as multiple-tenant income properties, and these could be replatted. Those that had been subdivided became islands of deteriorating land value.

The layout of a development becomes rigid once the land title is fragmented. No longer does anyone have the authority that enabled the developer initially, as sole landowner, to design the neighborhood. Little further planning or redevelopment is possible—short of invoking eminent domain or, alternatively, waiting until growing obsolescence brings land values down to a point where it becomes economical to buy and reassemble the properties and start over. Meanwhile the land is used suboptimally, a condition called "blight."

The other significant drawback of subdivision has to do not with the obsolescence of physical arrangements, but with the activities of those using the land. What are perceived as undesirable neighbors, poorly maintained homes or common areas, or incompatible lifestyles, are all negative externalities that can affect the resale value of properties.

The Birth of the Political Subdivision

Dealing with such negative externalities of behavior and lifestyle was a problem from the outset. Early in the twentieth century, large developer-builders such as Jesse Clyde Nichols began to insert restrictive covenants into their property deeds to help ensure that the lots and houses they sold would maintain their value. Initially this helped the developer by assuring that his inventory would not decline in price before the last lot was sold, but it also conveyed an aura of exclusivity that became a selling point for prospective residents.

A weakness of such covenants soon became apparent, however. Once a subdivision is sold out and the developer is gone, the new property owners are left on their own to police the common interest. Enforcing deed restrictions among neighbors is a costly and delicate task. To make

enforcement more practical, therefore, and to better represent home ownership as a safe investment, developers began providing for a homeowners' association to manage the commons and enforce rules in the private areas. The associations were voluntary at first, but the larger developers soon made membership mandatory.

Nichols experimented with mandatory homeowners' associations and popularized the concept in the real-estate industry, as he did the idea of partnering with local governments. In the 1920s, these concepts were promoted by a circle of lawyers, political scientists, architects, planners, and public-administration experts who, inspired by the Garden City movement in England, collaborated to build an experimental new town which they hoped would revolutionize American community development. The new town—Radburn, New Jersey—would be a subdivision and would boast a new form of democratic government. It would be based on the Progressive-era town council/city manager plan, enacted through deed restrictions that imposed a mandatory-membership homeowners' association. Begun in 1928, Radburn is regarded as the first modern—i.e., political—subdivision.

For decades, political subdivisions did not spread widely beyond Radburn. Deed restrictions mandating homeowners' associations were used mainly in luxury subdivisions, where restrictive covenants allowed not only exclusivity but, in particular, racial and ethnic exclusion. The dramatic spread of political subdivision began in the 1960s, for very different reasons.

Most residential construction having been suspended during the Depression and World War II, the end of the war released pent-up demand for housing. Postwar suburbia was a mass market, and corporate America quickly learned to mass-produce homes by assembly-line methods, turning them out a thousand at a time. For nearly 20 years, however, these mass-produced homes were built in traditional subdivisions, without restrictive covenants or homeowners' associations.

Mass-produced housing soon consumed most of the suburban land that could be developed without expensive preparation. As the inventory of readily developable land was used up, it became too expensive for developers to continue in the old way. Between 1950 and 1988, the cost of acquiring and preparing land for development rose from 11 percent to 30 percent of total home-construction cost (CAI 1988, 6). If the large corporations now dominating the field were to continue making profits, they would have to build more houses on less land. How could that be made palatable to home buyers?

In the early 1960s, the F.H.A. and the Urban Land Institute jointly promoted the concept of "planned-unit developments" to preserve the suburban look while increasing density. Instead of giving each home its own yard, developers began to cluster homes around a common green area, which they then enhanced with amenities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, and gate houses that were beyond the means of an individual homeowner. But complex commons require management. The developer could manage them initially, but when he left, the burden of responsibility would shift to the residents. To provide management continuity, the developers turned to the political-subdivision formula of a commons governed by a mandatory homeowners' association, something then still regarded as experimental even in the exclusive neighborhoods where it was sometimes being used.

Within the housing industry, questions were raised from the beginning as to whether this model would be viable when replicated in a mass market (McKenzie 1994, 107–110). But there seemed little choice. Subdivision was so ingrained in the industry that no one thought of land-leasing as a viable alternative. Consequently, the development industry began aggressively pushing political subdivision. The Urban Land Institute opined authoritatively that "the homes association is an ideal tool for building better communities" (ULI 1964, 4), while the closely allied F.H.A. prepared the way both legally, by promoting special development ordinances among local governments, and financially, by offering federal mortgage insurance for homes in such developments. In 1963, the F.H.A. took the key step of requiring a mandatory-membership homeowners' association in any development that was to qualify for federal mortgage insurance (F.H.A 1964, 52), the rationale being that such homes would be more likely to retain their value. This federally subsidized bonanza for political-subdivision builders diverted investment from home construction and renovation in the inner cities, where federal insurance was not available, adding impetus to the already massive middle-class exodus to "suburbia," which now meant, almost exclusively, political subdivisions.

In cities, the same period witnessed the debut of politically governed apartment buildings—condominiums—which subdivided their space not only horizontally but vertically. Condominium ownership was attractive in areas where rent-control laws were making apartment houses unprofitable. The advantage to apartment dwellers was that they could now become homeowners, with the attendant tax benefits and capital-gains possibilities. But atomized apartment ownership was unfeasible,

since many apartment buildings had elevators and all had common utilities. The industry and government were quick to introduce and promote mandatory democratic condominium associations, and their novelty and cachet helped popularize political management generally.

Still another factor came into play, both in cities and in the suburbs. Federal aid to cities began to dry up in the early 1970s, and developers found it increasingly necessary to provide services and infrastructure that formerly had been provided by municipalities. Political subdivision provided a way for this infrastructure to be privately owned and maintained, enabling financially strapped muncipalities to cut down on expenditures even as more homes were being built, increasing the cities' property-tax base. Municipal governments were anxious, therefore, to promote housing developments that provided their own services, and many cities and towns now require this of all new housing.

Controlling the Subdivision

Unfortunately, the management of homeowners' associations ran into difficulties with independent-minded residents almost from the beginning. These troublemakers alarmed the large corporate land developers, whose profitability would be threatened if the perception spread that politically managed subdivision was not viable. The industry had to respond. The strategy it decided upon was to strengthen the authority of governing boards over the homeowners who elected them. If residents were permitted to question board decisions and challenge the enforcement of rules and restrictions, homeowners' associations might break down. The industry aimed, therefore, at disallowing such challenges. Since the coalition lobby is well financed and organized and homeowners are not, the trend of legislation affecting political subdivisions has been uniformly to strengthen board authority over residents.

The industry coalition consists primarily of the Community Associations Institute (CAI), a trade and lobbying organization controlled by professional property managers, lawyers, and accountants who make their living from homeowners' associations; the Urban Land Institute, a trade and lobbying organization of real-estate developers and home builders; and the F.H.A., which is closely allied with the development industry. But the formidable power of this coalition is not all that explains the trend in housing law.

Many residents feel that rules violations should be prosecuted only if

they involve some provable harm or inconvenience to others. This would preserve the sense of privacy, freedom, and control implied in traditional home ownership (McKenzie 1994,172). But the success of political subdivision depends on the willingness of courts to back boards' enforcement of their rules, and the courts have been predisposed to go along with the boards because they judge these to be matters of private contract in which the judiciary ought not to interfere. As a practical matter, therefore, the courts are biased in favor of the boards. Adding to this is the fact that the courts have yet to agree on an applicable body of law for homeowners' associations. Are the latter governments, businesses, or mutual-benefit organizations (Sproul 1994)? Different courts look to different statutes, or else apply the common-law test of "reasonable" behavior.

Such ambiguity favors the industry, for if a homeowners' association were to be construed by the courts as a government, its actions would be subject to constitutional review, which they now are not. If state and federal constitutional protections of individual rights applied, the authority of the boards would be diminished. If, on the other hand, homeowners' associations were construed to be businesses, they would be subject to full civil liability, which governments are not. Occupying a gray area in which they are not clearly subject either to constitutional review or full civil liability has the effect of giving boards more authority than they would otherwise have.

In a sense, virtually all towns and cities in the United States are democratically governed subdivisions in that, de jure, they are governed by the voting majority of their residents (even though, de facto, they are naturally governed by smaller groups). In the Western world, at least, if voting is not already present, it can be predicted that any extensive subdivision of lands will give rise to it. This is so universal that it permits all but the smallest communities in the United States to be classified according to whether or not membership in the electorate is conditioned on property ownership. That is the main distinction between the governing board of a homeowners' association and the government of a municipality.

Except for the fact that they are elected under a property rule, the boards of homeowners' associations operate much as do all democratically elected governments—albeit with wider discretion because of the legal exemptions noted above. The making and enforcement of rules and regulations imports the worst qualities of politics into homeowners' associations, which are already sorely handicapped by inexperience

and apathy. Most homeowners have their own lives to pursue, with little time or inclination to spend long hours in association meetings. When they do participate, it may be to accomplish a given purpose—usually a negative one, as fear is a great motivator—and then resume their lives. The people who end up running the association are usually those with few outside interests, who are often the least qualified by experience; or those attracted to the power and theater of politics; or those with some private agenda.

Many first-time home buyers move to the suburbs hoping to experience not just the enjoyment of nature, but freedom from the intrusive rules, arbitrary authority, and office politics characteristic of the workplace. How disappointing to find that they must now endure on a regular basis, in what was to have been their haven from bureaucracy and politics, versions of the very pathologies from which they sought relief.

The Path Not Taken

It is one of the ironies of history that the building industry in the United States, now thoroughly imbued with the residential model of political management, came close to performing a serious experiment of a very different kind in, of all places, Radburn—the cradle of political subdivision.

The direct inspiration for Radburn was the work of Ebenezer Howard, the grand social experimenter who built the "Garden Cities" of Letchworth and Welwyn on rural land outside London at the end of the nineteenth century. Many planning features of Radburn and of contemporary subdivisions, such as functional zoning, density control, design control, and greenbelts, were adapted from Howard's Garden Cities. Radburn was a self-conscious effort to transplant Howard's ideas to America. But half of his legacy, and certainly to his mind the greater half, failed to survive the trans-Atlantic crossing. Howard did not build his Garden Cities as subdivisions. Influenced by long British tradition, his genius was to build his cities on the land-lease principle, making them equivalent to large-scale, outdoor hotels. Anticipating that lease revenues would be sufficient to fund the administration, Howard saw no need for local taxation.

Radburn's backers debated whether it should be developed on the land-lease pattern, but democratic ideology won the day. The decision to develop Radburn as a subdivision seriously compromised Howard's

legacy; for now, when the developer moved on, the new community would be left without either a source of ongoing revenue or a means of management. To avoid such an impasse, Radburn's supporters in the Regional Plan Association of America consciously applied principles of Progressive-era political science, a movement that tried to graft efficient management onto democratic politics. The result was the elected homeowners' association, endowed with whatever legislative and taxing powers its voting constituency saw fit to grant it.

Although Howard's land-lease principle was discarded at Radburn, a wholly independent tradition of property leasing had by then grown up on this side of the Atlantic. This is the tradition of multiple-tenant commercial properties—entrepreneurial rather than political *ruims*. An apt term for these properties would have been *proprietary community*, had that not already been preempted for political subdivisions, in recognition of their property qualification for voting. That term well describes a multiple-tenant commercial property, a *ruim* in which all relationships among the members are proprietary without exception. In a shopping mall, for example, no one's property is taxed or assessed, and no one's behavior anywhere on the property is circumscribed by rules established through voting or other political procedures.

English speakers in most areas outside the United States would call an entrepreneurial community an "estate." Its diagnostic feature is that title to the underlying ground (but not necessarily the buildings or other improvements on it) is kept intact, while the use of various sites is parceled out by lease. Because this preserves a concentrated entrepreneurial interest in the land, it makes it possible for the founder to seek to make a profit by well managing its use.

Under the rubric of "manorialism," parceling by leasehold is an old and familiar practice in agrarian societies throughout the world. Today, it is no longer chiefly identified with agriculture but, instead, has become the commercial land tenure of choice in many urban settings. Indeed, in America the growth of entrepreneurial commercial communities is one of the more dramatic and least remarked developments in the country's economic history.

Hotels were the first distinctly modern version of entrepreneurial community in the United States, the earliest being Boston's Tremont House, which opened its doors in 1829. Later in the nineteenth century, the office building (acclaimed as a "skyscraper") and the apartment house each made its dramatic debut. But the main growth of entrepre-

neurial communities, like that of political subdivisions, followed on the heels of World War II.

Most conspicuous in this growth was the shopping center, which arrived on the postwar scene barely in time to save the United States from inundation beneath the snarl and sprawl of commercial strip development—as anyone observing America at the time will remember. There were fewer than a dozen shopping centers at the close of World War II, and these were small, experimental convenience centers called "park-and-shops." Now shopping centers in the United States number more than 50,000, and some are vast malls combining hundreds of stores and other kinds of businesses with a broad spectrum of cultural activities that cater to vast geographical regions.

In addition to hotels and shopping centers, the major forms of multi-tenant commercial *ruims* include office buildings and office parks, land-lease manufactured-home communities, marinas, mobile-home parks, rental-apartment complexes, industrial estates, medical clinics, and research parks. Many lesser forms could be named, including even passenger ships, trains, and planes—which are unique in their rapid turnover of clientele and in offering as a service variability of location.

One noteworthy aspect of the growth of multiple-tenant commercial properties has been a trend among many toward greater population size and heterogeneity. At the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, with its chapels, medical services, restaurants, shopping, and entertainment, no guest need leave the hotel for any basic need. The hotel claims to be a self-contained city, which is not such a stretch, given that its population of 35,000–70,000 daily (counting staff, registered guests, and visitors) is two to four times that of Boston at the time of the War of Independence. The trend toward greater size and heterogeneity suggests that "private" approaches to *ruim* administration might one day offer "public" services over wide areas in lieu of local government as we know it today. Certainly, the proposition that rents instead of taxes could fund the operation of a city was amply proved by Howard's garden cities, Letchworth and Welwyn. By the time they were nationalized by the Labour Government in 1962, these two English cities had for several decades provided a combined population of 80,000 with a full spectrum of public services without levying taxes (MacCallum 1972, 17–24).

Although financed entirely from ground rents, Letchworth and Welwyn differed importantly from multi-tenant commercial properties in the United States in being established as nonprofit trusts whose direc-

tors were elected by the townspeople. Letchworth's accountant, C. B. Purdom (1949, 14), considered this a defect, observing that "the absence of any equity interest was to prove well-nigh fatal to the company." It explained, he thought, considerable inertia and unresponsiveness in the management of the two cities. But if this was a handicap, it was only one of a long list, any of which might have killed a weaker venture. Among other problems were insufficiently long-term initial financing; extreme leasing concessions to attract shops and industry to an untried location; commercial and industrial leases ranging from 99 to 999 years, without any provision for periodic renegotiation; the burdens imposed by two world wars; depreciation of the British pound by 75 percent; nationalization of the utilities business on which Letchworth depended for much of its revenue; and finally, in 1954, nationalization of development values in all land, effectively removing the economic basis of the Garden Cities (MacCallum 1972, 21–22). That both cities remained solvent to the end clearly vindicates Howard's belief in the feasibility of financing local government from land revenue.

More significant than mere relief from the burden of local taxation, however, is the fact that land-leasing enables a *ruim* to be entrepreneurially managed, opening possibilities for a superior quality of life.

The Tragedy of the Democratic Commons

Why are democratic communities any less likely than entrepreneurial communities to produce good management?

The elected representatives in a democratic community are vulnerable to being overwhelmed by the conflicting views of the voters—in the case of democratically governed subdivisions, the owners of different parcels of land. These views are colored by conflicting perceptions of self-interest, interpersonal and ideological agendas, and simple ignorance of what is going on and how things might be done better: in other words, by politics. Commercial residential *ruim*s, on the other hand, by virtue of being set up to profit by rendering services to their customers, would bring the dynamics of markets into the administration of residential life—"community" as traditionally conceived.

For community administration to become entrepreneurial would mean, in part, that there would be a manager who could make decisions relatively free of bias as compared to participants in the conventional political process. In any matter requiring a policy decision, the

entrepreneur has a strong incentive to be (or to hire) just such a person, seeking the optimal decision for the community as a whole. Such a manager is in an ideal position to provide leadership because he is interested in attracting and keeping as many of his tenants as possible, and, by the same token, to be disinterested when adjudicating among them.

Political communities, by contrast, legally disperse de jure authority among all the voters. The lowest-common-denominator interest of this electorate is individual self-preservation: maintaining the status quo and preventing the deterioration in value of one's own home. Anything more creative is apt to die on the barricades of conflicting agendas. Moreover, while it is possible for homeowners' associations to hire management firms, these firms are an added expense that may be politically unpopular when they produce higher association assessments. Nor can management firms be empowered to undo the underlying democratic structure of legal authority in the development, which would be necessary in order to make other changes that might displease current residents (including a change that would give the manager the right to set assessments). This situation stymies the proliferation of, and competition among, creative managers offering different visions of community living. Entrepreneurship is not mere management of the status quo; the competition we see among different types and brands of hotels to innovate (in ways that customers might not imagine in advance would be beneficial) is nowhere to be found in residential *ruins*, and it is hard to imagine hotel entrepreneurship surviving a conferral by subdivision of ownership authority upon the residents of hotel rooms.

Voting, on which the political subdivision depends, serves as the great legitimizer of modern politics (Weissberg 1996, 11–13; Smith 1998). But it is not a means either of discovering truth or of making informed decisions. It is a way of fighting without engaging in overt violence, an example of what anthropologists call "ritual combat." Rather than resort to direct combat, contesting factions in democracies marshal numbers to their cause through covert lobbying and overt rhetorical confrontation. They then let the electoral tally symbolize victory for one side or the other, the primitive idea presumably being that he who had marshaled the most bodies would have come out the winner in battle, had it come to that.

Voting is a method of overriding real or imagined differences of interest. The entrepreneurial community, however, has no need of voting because the entrepreneur's unitary interest in the land permits a single

person to make decisions about common areas and services. Fortunate and exceptional is the non-entrepreneurial community in which elected leadership is endowed with enough vision, charisma, and courage to overcome such conflicts and produce creative, concerted action.

Conflict in democratically governed communities often stems from the land being subdivided. In a subdivision, while the common interest of all homeowners is for property values to rise (or at least not fall), the particular interest of each individual is identified with a separate location. Since each location has unique attributes, the various owners' interests never completely mesh. In the subdivision, therefore, some overriding authority must impose costs on the owners of some locations. The dispersion of authority among the individual title holders lays the groundwork for factional political conflict.

Consider a parallel situation in commercial real estate, one that contributed to the rise of the shopping center. By the mid-twentieth century, the streets and parking capacity of many downtown business districts had become obsolete as the surrounding towns grew. Widening the streets and providing off-street parking would have served the interests of most property owners, but when it came to which side of the street to widen or whose property to take for parking, the interests of the businesses disproporionately affected would sometimes create a political stalemate that led to a decline in business for all. Unified but undemocratic ownership could have gradually made changes to accommodate growth as leases expired or came up for renewal.

The ability to transcend conflicts of interest is, as in the preceding example, often connected to greater flexibility in land use. When the developer of a subdivision departs, the layout of the *ruim* is frozen. The use of restrictive covenants only makes the problem more difficult, especially in a time of accelerating technological change, by blocking the reassembly of parcels and their conversion to new uses. Land leasing, however, introduces flexibility in land usage. This flexibility extends even to the basic layout of streets and common areas. An entrepreneurial community need not be allowed to deteriorate to the point where it can be reassembled only because low property values make the residents eager to leave.

A dramatic reminder of the importance of preserving flexibility in land use was the demise of Chicago's Central Manufacturing District (CMD), a story told by Robert C. Arne (2002). Possibly the most outstanding achievement of private planning and complex community de-

velopment in U.S. history, the CMD was a subdivision, albeit not a politically governed one. The reason for its success was that its developer, Frederick Henry Prince, took a long-term view in planning it and did not abandon its management after he developed it. The reason he stayed on and continued to provide guidance, management, and community services was that his main financial interest was not in the CMD itself, but in the railroad that served it. A profitable railroad required a successful community of industries, and he developed one to an extraordinary degree.

Prince's model and inspiration was Trafford Park Industrial Estate in Manchester, England. But once more, a key element in a British model failed to survive: Prince subdivided the land. We can only speculate that his reason may have been to free up development capital by selling off the sites as they were improved. In any event, his decision to subdivide set the layout of the CMD in concrete, so to speak, such that when transport technology eventually changed and trucking took over much of the role of railroads, the CMD could not adapt. Prince's sons sold the declining railroad and what they owned of the CMD itself. They left behind a blighted area. Had Prince leased rather than sold sites, the various industries locating there could have applied their capital more productively in their specialized lines of business rather than tying it up in real estate. Prince's heirs would have owned a several-hundred-acre parcel of prime land in downtown Chicago, which they could have guided to other uses. Furthermore, all of south Chicago would have benefited from the stabilizing effect of a major, prosperous development.

Similar casualties, already noted, were the early mobile-home parks that had been developed as subdivisions. Designed to accommodate single-wide homes, they could not adapt when double- and triple-wides were introduced, and so they became blighted. Those that had been maintained under single ownership as income-generating properties, however, had the flexibility to accommodate the new housing. These and Chicago's CMD are object lessons in an age of ever-accelerating change.

Creativity vs. Bureaucracy

In the subdivision, no one has the means to continuously enhance the value of the community as a whole. The developer, whose profits de-

pend upon sales of the original units rather than the ongoing satisfaction of the residents, is typically devoted to the short term. For example, he will often set annual assessments unrealistically low to make units more attractive to new buyers. A study by Stephen E. Barton and Carol J. Silverman (1987, 21) found that the financial reserves of subdivisions averaged only 40 percent of the annual association budget, instead of the 75 percent recommended by most industry experts. A focus on initial sales alone was also surely a contributing factor in the rash of quality-control problems encountered in the construction of subdivision housing from the late 1970s through the 1990 recession. Surveys cited by Evan McKenzie (1994, 30) suggest that as many as one-third of all subdivisions had major defects in original construction.

Once the developer leaves the subdivision, it is in the hands of its residents, who must use political means to solve any problems that arise. Even where elected board members are aesthetically motivated, they lack the required authority and resources to maintain a beautiful and otherwise livable community—let alone to improve it and adapt it to change—unless they can persuade their constituents to part with new fees. Moreover, as amateurs volunteering their services, they typically lack the expertise necessary to make effective use even of resources they have.

Under political governance, communities all too often fail to respond to their residents' needs. When trying to evaluate the promises and rhetoric of homeowners'-association politicians, resident-voters are, in effect, asked to become experts on landscaping, road maintenance, and the other issues about which homeowners' associations must routinely make decisions. Under proprietary auspices, dissatisfied customers have no need to be informed about such important but mundane matters, nor need they theorize about why things have gone awry with the snow-removal service or the availability of parking—or why the rent is due to increase while the quality of life has declined. They can simply fail to renew their leases, leading to less revenue for the entrepreneur. Conversely, if things are going well, they needn't concern themselves with why that is the case. All they need to do is renew their leases.

If homeowners could turn to a viable market in entrepreneurial communities, they might exit from poorly managed political ones. But the various subsidies received by political communities have made this impossible, so people have little choice but to live in politicized com-

munities where de jure decision-making authority is ultimately vested in *themselves*: voters who are susceptible to manipulation and misinformation by opposing factions that want to control change.

De facto decision-making authority is often, of course, a different story. The effective authority that is exercised by the association board *does* allow change to occur—in fact, it allows too much, of the wrong kind. One might expect that individual ownership would convey more security than a lease, but when individual ownership is coupled with collective management, everything is subject to arbitrary change. Even though a supermajority may sometimes be required, there is nothing in the covenants, conditions, and restrictions governing political subdivisions that can't be undone by vote.

In practice, it may not even require that. Nellie Huang (1994) notes that

> by law, a majority of the homeowners in an association have to approve any change in the bylaws. But many boards sidestep this by simply changing their house rules, which are as binding as bylaws but can usually be rewritten without asking all the homeowners. "Even if you were to be given the rules today, they would probably already be out of date because [boards are] constantly making changes to the rules at whim," says Elizabeth McMahon, a co-founder of the American Homeowners' Resource Center, a San Juan Capistrano, California consumer group.

Consequently, nobody really knows what they are agreeing to when buying into a development. To some, this may be acceptable. Especially as they become accustomed to it, they may feel that newly issued rules prohibiting the garage door from being in the up position more than three hours a day, forbidding parking in one's driveway, dictating the color of a child's swing set, disallowing certain kinds of plants in one's back yard, or specifying the color, material, and place of purchase of curtains visible from the street are minor annoyances, a small price to pay for living in the community. But should the behavior of the board that sets, interprets, and enforces such rules become insufferable, the residents' only recourse is to petition higher levels of government for relief, either by suing the association or by lobbying a legislature to regulate some aspect of board behavior. This is a costly and arduous recourse, however, and the outcome is anything but assured. Moreover, the very fact that control of one's lifestyle and use of one's property are subject to the vagaries of an elected board and the fortunes of neigh-

borhood politics can make even a successful outcome in the courts dangerous if it puts one crosswise with the directors. Consequently, many homeowners simply choose to endure the problem.

A land lease, on the other hand, cannot be amended at unpredictable times by board members or faceless voters. All the rules that will ever apply are stipulated at the outset by the contracting parties. They know where they will stand for the term of the lease, however long or short they care to make it.

The rules in a land-lease community, moreover, need not be enforced in overbearing fashion. Managers who err on the side of being either too bureaucratically rigid or too arbitrarily flexible will find themselves losing tenants to competitors who strike a better balance. A typical case of striking such a balance (MacCallum 1971) involved a shopping-mall tenant who had been fitted with a cast after breaking a leg in a weekend skiing accident. On Monday morning, he parked his car near his store rather than in the designated area for tenant and employee parking; like most malls, this one specified in its leases that parking spaces near the stores are reserved for customer use. The tenant received a warning from a security guard that day and another one on Tuesday. However, when the mall's manager discovered the circumstances, he stopped the guards from issuing further notices. The tenant later resumed parking in the appropriate area. The manager commented, "There are mitigating circumstances you must take into consideration. You have to use your head and be reasonable." In another instance, however, a nurse employed in the same mall openly flouted the parking rule not once but several times, for no good reason. The outcome here was quite different: the doctor who employed the nurse was given the choice of firing her or leaving the mall.

That this same reasonableness can be exercised in a residential context is suggested by the case (MacCallum 1971) of an older woman in a mobile-home community who, in clear violation of a no-pets rule, saved the life of a kitten and gave it a home. Worse, she let it wander. The manager spoke to her twice but did nothing more until some of the woman's neighbors complained. When the woman next stopped at the office for her mail, the manager sat down with her and told her she would have to move out of the park if the kitten continued to roam. The woman cried. Afterwards, the manager called the neighbors in and told them what she'd said to the woman. She added, "Do you want her to leave—and take your chances on a new neighbor whom you don't know?" The upshot was that the kitten continued to wander and there

were no further complaints. The neighbors felt they had been listened to. "Kitty is on probation" is how the manager summed it up. The manager of another mobile-home community disclosed the presence of both children and animals in violation of the rules, remarking, similarly, that "they're all on probation." In marked contrast with homeowners' associations, the policy of these managers was that rules need not be enforced in the absence of complaints.

The fact that the manager of an entrepreneurial community has discretion in rule enforcement does not guarantee that he or she will always make good decisions. The point is that an owner or his agent is more likely to exercise discretion wisely than a popularly elected board member, who is relatively insulated from the consequences of bad decisions. So attenuated is his proprietary interest in the subdivision as a whole that he feels little compunction about indulging in rigid behavior that might needlessly offend other residents.

Indeed, beyond its responsibility for common-area maintenance, the board has a legal mandate to enforce the covenants, conditions, and restrictions (CC&Rs), requiring it, in effect, to handle all cases alike rather than weighing their merits—not only to sidestep politically toxic charges of favoritism, but to avoid weakening residents' overall commitment to the CC&Rs. Cookie-cutter treatment is also fostered by the fact that the board is operating with commonly appropriated funds, a fiduciary relationship that legally circumscribes its behavior. Once a rule is promulgated, it must be enforced aggressively and inflexibly if the board members and the managers hired by them are to protect themselves from personal liability for error under the "business judgment rule" (Sproul 1994, 81–82).

Unsurprisingly in light of these incentives, Barton and Silverman (1994, 310) conclude that managers of political subdivisions see "people problems" as "an annoyance and impediment to getting the real work done. Differences among residents are perceived only as troublesome interference with the smooth operation of the association or, at best, as business for lawyers." In the same vein, Evan McKenzie (1994) notes that "legalistic managerialism" pervades the world of the political subdivision. Residents come to be regarded as subjects, i.e., as persons who are subject to the board's authority. Because compliance is the all-important goal, noncompliant subjects must be made an example of.

The following cases, which are not at all uncommon, typify this kind of thinking:

> In Monroe, New Jersey, a homes association took a married couple to court because the wife, at age 45, was three years younger than the association's age minimum for residency. The association won. The court ordered the 60-year-old husband to sell, rent the unit, or live without his wife. (United Press International 1987.)
>
> In Delaware County, Pennsylvania, when a resident put up a four-foot-high fence of black fabric in his back yard to keep his young son from falling off a 400-foot cliff, his homes association took him to court, contending that he had violated a rule against fences. The court ruled in his favor. (Goldstein 1991.)
>
> In 2003, Claudio and Luz Trujillo bought their dream home in Glenville, Illinois, a perfect place to raise their children, Jaime, 10, and Melissa, 5. But Jaime was disabled by a seizure disorder and had to use a wheelchair. He was made to enter the building through a rear service door lest his chair mar the front entrance. Filing suit under the Fair Housing Act, the Trujillos won a settlement allowing Jaime to use the front door. "My concern," says Claudio, "was that my son be treated with dignity." (Jerome 2004.)
>
> Courtly, a development of expensive homes near Philadelphia, began construction in the late 1980s. A couple bought one of the homes in 1989 and brought their son's metal swing set with them when they moved in. A year later the association told them to take the swing set down, even though there were as yet no written rules regarding swing sets. When the rules finally appeared, they prescribed that all swing sets be made of wood. Why? "It has to do with what the overall community should look like," said an attorney for the association. The couple then submitted a petition supporting the swing set that was signed by three-fourths of the homeowners, along with Environmental Protection Agency warnings about the dangers to children, in this case, aged 2 and 4, posed by the poisonous chemicals used in pressure-treated wood, the type needed for swing sets. The association's response was to impose a daily fine of $10 until the set was removed, refusing all offers of compromise, which included painting the swing set in earth tones. The association, besides passing rules governing the placement of firewood, rabbit hutches, and trash cans on the curb, also banned "offensive conduct"—defined simply as "activity which in the judgment of the Board of Directors is noxious or offensive to other home lot owners." (McCullough 1991.)

McKenzie (1994, 202) describes a homeowners' association meeting he attended:

> The group spent a good deal of time discussing how to help a neighborhood association appeal a case it had lost against a homeowner. The association had cited a . . . homeowner for violating the rule against television antennas by installing a satellite dish, which he had concealed from view inside a structure. The point, members of the BHOC argued, was that a satellite dish is an antenna. The fact that in this case it neither looked like an antenna (in fact, it was not visible to anyone) nor sat atop the roof was deemed irrelevant by the board.

The Politicization of Daily Life

Aggravating top-down imperatives for imperiousness in the management of subdivisions are pressures emanating from the bottom up. Since few people in an increasingly mobile society anticipate spending a lifetime in one place, the importance of liquidity and safety in a real-estate investment looms large. A couple buying a new home in a subdivision may be making the largest single investment they will ever make. Understandably, they are concerned that the investment hold its value. But a house is not a productive investment; it is a speculative one, the future value of which depends upon neighborhood factors largely outside the couple's control.

The only means for protecting themselves is to try to control the local factors affecting the value of their investment. Unfortunately, apart from the vote they may cast for members of the association board, the consequences of which are imponderable, their most viable option is to try control who their neighbors are and how they live. The homeowner thus has a financial incentive to be adversarial rather than friendly toward her neighbors.

The result often is a sterile neighborhood, off limits to unknown visitors, more resembling a Victorian parlor than a comfortable living room—the ultimate manifestation of the suburban soullessness that has become a standard target of novelists and filmmakers. Some residents make it their civic duty to spy on their neighbors. A homemaker complained:

> I find that the neighbors come to visit outwardly acting friendly but they are really checking up on you. My neighbors reported me for having a clothes line in my back yard, out of sight of the road, when they were supposedly visiting casually. (Alexander 1994, 161.)

The subtle but corrosive effect upon neighborliness of homeowners' financial fears—i.e., the diminution of the feeling of "community"—would for all intents and purposes disappear in an entrepreneurial community. The reason is not merely that each homeowner's investment would be perhaps a third lower, since they would have bought only a house and not the land under it, but something more fundamental. There would be a community entrepreneur whose full-time business it would be to maintain and build the attractiveness of the land component of the community and along with it, the value of all of the homes, leaving residents free to interact as friends and neighbors. The homeowner's investment would not hinge on a regime of restrictive covenants, the bureaucratic processes that regime mandates, and individuals' efforts to police one another's adherence to the rules issuing from those processes. The investment would be protected by a responsible business enterprise equipped with skills and resources dedicated to making the neighborhood one where people wanted to live. This the enterprise would accomplish through the pursuit of its business goal of optimizing the land revenues from the community. Such a goal is not best served by a regime of bureaucratic inflexibility; and the policing of any rules that might be called for would be shouldered by the manager, freeing community members from the need to side against one another.

Indeed, subdivisions are notorious for their litigiousness. McKenzie (1994, 32) writes that

> covenant enforcement litigation has become a profitable legal specialization for attorneys in states with many subdivisions, as has its corollary: suit, or countersuit, by members against their boards for negligence, breach of their fiduciary duty to the members, abuse of authority, and suit under some theory of quasi-governmental liability, such as alleged violations of constitutional rights.

Because of the large numbers of association directors being harassed or threatened with lawsuits (44 percent during one year, according to Barton and Silverman 1994, 138), the California legislature in 1992 established tort immunity for board members, giving them protections not unlike those of municipal officials. "But in making the job of volunteer director less hazardous, this immunity reduced the incentive for board members to be consistently cognizant of the consequences their actions might have, for residents and others" (McKenzie 1994, 19, 162).

To alleviate the oppressive burden of lawsuits arising from political subdivisions, several states have considered or enacted special provisions for alternative dispute resolution. In Nevada, Eldon Hardy, the ombudsman for homeowners' associations, receives an average of 80 complaints a day from homeowners about their associations. His office appears to be the fastest growing in the Nevada state government. He calls the flood of complaints "one of the biggest problems this state has" (Willis 2003).

Land-lease communities offer a refreshing contrast. As can readily be imagined, competing tenants in a mall are not immune to differences. Yet of 41 cases examined in a field study of such disputes, only one involved a lawyer, and his only action was to write a letter to the mall manager (MacCallum 1971). Disputes among merchants in a mall are usually resolved internally by the manager, who personifies the common interest in serving his tenants evenhandedly.

The realization of their common interest requires that the merchants in a mall work together as a team. But need alone doesn't make it happen. A team needs a coach. The manager's leadership role entails peacekeeping tasks much like that of the headman of an African village. He allots time each day for walking casually through the mall, talking with his tenants. In the course of these contacts he hears of difficulties and complaints, usually from merchants other than those directly involved. One manager remarked that about 90 percent of the complaints he got were indirect: "Somebody says, 'So-and-so's been beefing about that.'" A manager will make it a point to learn about problems before they become serious, hear the stories of the offended parties, go back and forth between them, and mediate a solution—being careful, as one said, not to act precipitously, so as to give the parties "time to cool off." Recounting some of the ways he keeps in touch with his tenants, one manager reported that a Rotary Club consisting entirely of mall tenants had been formed, where 52 merchants met together every week. "We're very close here; it's just like a little town. Now at lunch today, I talked to seven of my tenants . . ." (MacCallum 1971).

A "Company Town"—Or a Political One?

Would anyone want to live in a community where the land was owned by a private company? What would prevent it from becoming exploitative?[1]

The standard argument against a town being in a single title is that a family is vulnerable once it invests in a home, puts down roots, makes friends, and settles into jobs and schools. It becomes difficult and costly to pick up and move again, all the more so because of the family's inability to know before actually moving whether someplace else will be any better. With the family more or less locked in, the owning entity can raise rents above market rates, engage in abusive behavior toward the family, or let the management of the town deteriorate. But the same considerations hold whether the economic and psychological investments one has made are in a home located in a political community or an entrepreneurial one. The real question, then, is which type of community is likelier to address, or to avoid, abusive or other undesirable forms of management.

Land leasing depoliticizes a community and, saving the energy and imagination expended upon politics, harnesses the energy and imagination of entrepreneurial competitors. In the kind of authority they exercise, community entrepreneurs differ altogether from the elected officials of homeowners' associations (or municipal governments). In the commercial real-estate market, competition tends to select for managers who use their authority in a manner that satisfies the lessees. There is no reason to expect that this would be any less the case in a residential real-estate market undistorted by the current regime of political encouragement and subsidy for subdivision. That regime, however, ensures that the conflicts, intrusiveness, and stasis endemic to democratic politics are liable to infect any residential *ruim* to which one might move, undermining its sense of "community" and other important values.

Because a well-run community is humanly satisfying, good business practice can be expected to encourage true neighborliness—which is something that tends to erode in modern subdivisions, where "community" is conflated with democratic political governance. Why this conflation is so common is something of a puzzle. The same scholars who are sensitive to the inhumanity of political subdivisions tend nonetheless to welcome their further politicization, ascribing the existing problems not to too much politics but to too little. It is as if the only form of community they can envision is that of the New England town meeting. Yet in our own lives, the most meaningful and satisfying of communities—families—are apolitical. To have to resort to voting or inflexible rule enforcement is a sign of a dysfunctional family, not a healthy one.

This same is true of the wider forms of "community" that have

given sociologists so much definitional trouble. If our goal is to extend the politicking of electoral competition or of the bureaucratic workplace into our most intimate circles, in a mindless celebration of "democracy," then suburbia as it is today should actually be seen as a sort of Utopia. That the modern suburb is hardly utopian suggests that politics may not, in fact, comprise the good life for man—and that true privatization may not be the antithesis of community that it is so often assumed to be.

NOTE

1. See Fishback 1992, chs. 8–9, on whether company towns were actually as exploitative as is commonly believed.

REFERENCES

Alexander, Gregory S. 1994. "Conditions of 'Voice': Passivity, Disappointment, and Democracy in Homeowner Associations." In Barton and Silverman 1994.

Arne, Robert C. 2002. "Entrepreneurial City Planning." Ch. 5 of Beito et al. 2002.

Barton, Stephen E., and Carol J. Silverman. 1994. *Common Interest Communities: Private Governments and the Public Interest*. Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies.

Barton, Stephen E., and Carol J. Silverman. 1987. *Common Interest Association Management Study*. Sacramento: Department of Real Estate.

Barton, Stephen E., and Carol J. Silverman. 1989. "The Political Life of Mandatory Homeowners' Associations." In *Residential Community Associations: Private Governments in the Intergovernmental Systems?* Washington, D.C.: Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

Beito, David T., Peter Gordon, and Alexander Tabarrok, eds. 2002. *The Voluntary City*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Boudreaux, Donald J., and Randall G. Holcombe. 2002. "Contractual Governments in Theory and Practice." In Beito et al. 2002.

Bridgman, Percy W. 1936. *The Nature of Physical Theory*. New York: Dover.

Community Associations Institute (CAI). 2003. Telephone interview with Frank Rathbun, Vice President, Communications and Public Relations. Alexandria, Va. (June 9).

Community Associations Institute (CAI). [1985] 1993. *Community Association Members' and Residents' Bill of Rights*. Alexandria, Va.: Community Associations Institute.

Community Associations Institute (CAI). 1988. *Community Associations Factbook*. Alexandria, Va.: Community Associations Institute.

Cromley, Elizabeth C. 1990. *Alone Together: A History of New York's Early Apartments*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Eskew, Garnett Laidlaw. 1959. *Of Land and Men*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute.

Federal Housing Administration (FHA). 1964. *Planned Unit Development with a Homes Association*. Revised. Land Planning Bulletin No. 6. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute.

Federal Housing Administration (FHA). 1964. *The Homes Association Handbook*. Technical Bulletin no. 50. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute.

Fishback, Price V. 1992. *Soft Coal, Hard Choices: The Economic Welfare of Bituminous Coal Miners, 1890–1930*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gearing, Frederick O. 1962. *Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the Eighteenth Century*. American Anthropological Association, Memoir 93.

Goldstein, Steve. 1991. "Don't Even Think About Pink Flamingos." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 27.

Hirschman, Albert O. 1970. *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Huang, Nellie S. 1994. "Ten Things Your Homeowners' Association Won't Tell You." *Smart Money*, December.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). 1975. *Condominium and Cooperative Study*, 3 vols. Washington, D.C.: Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Jerome, Richard, Shia Kapos, Oliver Jones, Lyndon Stambler, Siobhan Morrissey, Margaret Nelson, and Colleen O'Connor. "Loathe Thy Neighbor," People, October 4, 2004.

MacCallum, Spencer H. 1970. *The Art of Community*. Menlo Park, Calif.: Institute for Humane Studies.

MacCallum, Spencer H. 1971. "Jural Behavior in American Shopping Centers: Initial Views on the Proprietary Community." *Human Organization* 30(1): 3–10.

MacCallum, Spencer H. 1972. "Associated Individualism: A Victorian Dream of Freedom." *Reason* 4(1): 17–24.

MacCallum, Spencer H. 2002. "The Entrepreneurial Community in the Light of Advancing Business Practice and Technology." In *The Half-Life of Policy Rationales: How New Technology Affects Old Policy Issues,* ed. Fred E. Foldvary and Daniel B. Klein. New York: New York University Press.

Manne, Henry G. 1964. "Some Theoretical Aspects of Share Voting." *Columbia Law Review* 64: 1427–45.

McCullough, Marie. 1991. "It's a Swing Set! There Goes the Neighborhood." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 9.

McMichael, Stanley L. 1947. *How to Operate a Real Estate Business*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

McKenzie, Evan. 1994. *Privatopia: Homeowner Associations and the Rise of Residential Private Government*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Nelson, Robert H. [1999] 2002. "Privatizing the Neighborhood: A Proposal to Re-

place Zoning with Private Collective Property Rights to Existing Neighborhoods." In Beito et al. 2002.

Osborn, F. J. 1946. *Green-Belt Cities: The British Contribution*. London: Faber and Faber.

Purdom, C. B. 1949. *The Letchworth Achievement*. London: J. M. Dent and Sons.

Reichman, Uriel. 1976. "Residential Private Governments: An Introductory Survey." *University of Chicago Law Review* 43: 253–306.

Richardson, Harry W. 2002. "Foreword" to Mark Pennington, *Liberating the Land: The Case for Private Land-Use Planning*. London: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Silverman, Carol J., Stephen E. Barton, Jens Hillmer, and Patricia Ramos. 1989. *The Effects of California's Residential Real Estate Disclosure Requirements*. Sacramento: California Department of Real Estate.

Smith, L. Neil. 1998. "Pizzacracy: Majoritarianism Versus Unanimous Consent." *Freedom Network News*, March: 17–19.

Sproul, Curtis C. 1994. "The Many Faces of Community Associations Under California Law." In Barton and Silverman 1994.

United Press International. 1987. "Court Finds Wife Too Young for Retirement Condo." *San Diego Daily Transcript*, December 11.

Weissberg, Robert. 1997. "Election Day: A Means of Control." *The Voluntaryist* 89, December.

Willis, Larry. 2003. "State Ombudsman Flooded with Homeowner Association Woes." *Las Vegas Mercury*, November 18.

Winokur, James L. 1994. "Choice, Consent, and Citizenship in Common Interest Communities." In Barton and Silverman 1994.

Norton Garfinkle

SUPPLY-SIDE VS. DEMAND-SIDE TAX CUTS AND U.S. ECONOMIC GROWTH, 1951–2004

ABSTRACT: *Supply-side economists claim that a low top marginal income-tax rate accelerates investment, employment, and economic growth. But the economic literature cited to support the supply-side hypothesis provides little to no empirical support for it. And a more comprehensive empirical examination of key parameters of U.S. economic performance in the postwar period, undertaken here, shows no association between low top marginal income-tax rates and high real growth in investment, employment, or GDP. By contrast, the analysis yields strong evidence for the economic-growth benefits of a "demand-side" approach to taxation policy.*

Since the late 1970s, the dispute between "demand-side" and "supply-side" economists has dominated the debate over U.S. tax policy. Both sides acknowledge that tax cuts can stimulate the economy during a downturn, but the two sides view the problem through opposite ends of the telescope.

Demand-siders emphasize the centrality of "aggregate demand" in driving economic expansions and contractions. When demand-siders discuss the potential benefit of cutting taxes during a recession, they therefore emphasize the need to put money in the hands of the vast mass of consumers. More consumer spending, they believe, will, in turn, stimulate increased production, resulting in greater employment, investment, and growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Demand-

Critical Review 17 (2005), nos. 3–4. ISSN 0891-3811. www.criticalreview.com

Norton Garfinkle, ngarfinkle@omcnyc.com, the Chairman of the Future of American Democracy Foundation, is the author of *The American Dream vs. the Gospel of Weath: The Fight for a Middle-Class Economy* (Yale, 2006).

siders therefore favor tax cuts that are weighted toward the middle and lower ranks of earners—those living from paycheck to paycheck—who will naturally tend to spend more of any money they receive from tax reductions.

Supply-siders turn this approach on its head. They see production, or supply, as the main engine of economic growth. Their emphasis is therefore on increasing business investment: in their view, higher rates of investment will lead to higher rates of GDP growth. For supply-siders, a key feature of the tax code is its "incentive effects." By changing economic incentives, they believe, they can change economic behavior by encouraging more business investment on the part of upper-income taxpayers.

Supply-siders speak of lowering marginal tax rates across the board to increase incentives to "work, save, and invest." But the supply-siders' emphasis (and the feature that makes their program controversial) is clearly on lowering the *top* marginal rate, because of its presumed impact on economic growth. While supply-siders commonly argue that tax-rate cuts will increase incentives for "work effort" or productive economic activity across the board, lowering the top marginal rate is, they think, especially important in boosting "capital formation." An American Enterprise Institute book on tax reform, coedited by leading supply-side economist R. Glenn Hubbard, points out that "many fundamental [tax] reform proposals . . . promise economic benefits *by lowering marginal tax rates* and by changing the tax base to bypass those areas of the economy that are particularly costly if taxation distorts them. *The key sector is capital formation, which has long and widely been acknowledged as especially impaired by taxation*" (Hassett and Hubbard 2001, 1, emph. added).

A key contention of supply-side economics, therefore, is that lowering the top marginal income-tax rate increases the rewards for investing in business, which in turn accelerates growth in GDP and employment. According to congressional testimony in 2001 by Hubbard, then Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers,

> the key to the President's plan is its focus on reducing marginal tax rates. We are now quite familiar with the notion that accumulating physical capital, human capital . . . and new technologies is the heart of sustained economic growth and prosperity. *There is now a large body of evidence* that improving marginal incentives . . . is the key to ensuring these *investments* in our economic future. (U.S. Congress 2001, 7, emph. added.)

President Bush set forth essentially the same supply-side rationale for his tax cutting program on numerous occasions. Cutting the top marginal rate would, he maintained, enhance incentives for investment or, in his usual phrase, capital formation.

> I want Congress to also understand that it's not only important to drop the bottom rate, it's important to drop the top rate as well. By dropping the *top rate*, we encourage growth, *capital formation* and the entrepreneurial spirit. . . . (Bush 2001b, emph. added.)

> And we also drop the top rate, of course, from 39.6 percent to 33 percent. If you pay taxes, you ought to get relief. Everybody who — but everybody benefits, I'm convinced, when the top rate drops because of the effect it will have on the entrepreneurial class in America. . . . And you all can help by explaining clearly to people that reducing the top rate will help with job creation and *capital formation*; and as importantly, will help highlight the American Dream. . . . (Bush 2001a, emph. added.)

> Most small businesses are sole proprietorships, or limited partnerships, or Subchapter S corporations, which means that they pay tax at the individual income tax rate. And so, therefore, when you accelerate rate cuts, you're really *accelerating capital to be invested* by small businesses. And that's what Congress must understand. . . . *Capital expenditure equals jobs, and the more capital accumulation and capital expenditure* we can encourage, the more likely it is somebody is going to find work. . . . And so this plan focuses . . . on *capital accumulation, capital formation,* particularly at the small business sector of the American economy. (Bush 2003b, emph. added.)

> When we cut individual tax rates, we are stimulating capital formation in the small business sector of America. (Bush 2003a.)

Empirical Evidence for the Supply-Side Model

Given the centrality of this argument to the debate over fiscal policy, it is worth asking what the empirical evidence is for the supply-side theory that low top marginal income-tax rates increase economic growth. A review of the "large body" of theoretical literature on the subject shows the empirical evidence supporting this claim to be sparse to nonexistent. As William G. Gale and Peter R. Orszag (2004, 422) note, "empirical studies of the growth effects of actual U.S. tax cuts are relatively rare."

Surprisingly enough, among the few such studies are two by leading supply-side theorist Martin Feldstein that found virtually no net growth from the Reagan supply-side marginal rate cuts of 1981. Feldstein and Douglas W. Elmendorf (1989a, 1) note that "the rapid expansion of a nominal GNP [during the Reagan-era expansion of the 1980s] can be explained by monetary policy without any reference to changes in fiscal and tax policy." They found "no support for the proposition that the recovery reflected an increase in the supply of labor induced by the reduction in personal marginal tax rates." The verdict of leading supply-side economists on the first supply-side experiment, in other words, found no empirical evidence to support a direct relationship between marginal tax-rate cuts and growth. (See also Feldstein and Elmendorf 1989b.)

In recent years, the study most commonly cited by supply-side economists in support of the growth effects of their tax-cutting program is by Eric Engen and Jonathan Skinner (1996). For example, in arguing for making the recent Bush tax cuts permanent, Harvey S. Rosen (2004) cited estimates from the Engen and Skinner article as the main support for his claim that continued low marginal income-tax rates increase growth. Similarly, in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed backing the Bush supply-side tax policy, Hubbard (2004) cited Engen and Skinner as providing the main evidence that large tax burdens reduce growth.

Engen and Skinner examined time-series data on GDP growth levels, finding no evidence of a positive supply-side effect on growth. According to the authors, "The time-series correlation between marginal tax rates and growth rates yields a decidedly mixed picture; some decades were correlated positively and others negatively" (Engen and Skinner 1996, 625). Then, using a more speculative microeconomic analysis, they argue there are "modest [growth] effects" from tax cuts, but they acknowledged "the uncertainty inherent in nearly every empirical parameter used" in their microeconomic analysis (ibid., 617, 635). Turning to yet another methodology—a review of regression analyses of cross-country data on taxation and growth—they argue that lower tax burdens have a modest growth effect, but acknowledge the many deficiencies in the quality of the international data they use.

Engen and Skinner are addressing an important question: Does a low top marginal tax rate increase the rate of GDP growth? The straightforward approach to answering this question would be to examine actual rates of real GDP growth in the years with low top marginal tax rates. If low top marginal income tax rates are said to increase growth, then it

logically follows that we should see higher rates of real GDP growth in periods when the top marginal income tax rate is low. If low top marginal income tax rates have *not* been associated with high rates of growth in the past, then it hardly seems likely that cuts in the top marginal tax rate will produce high rates of growth in the present or future, and the supply-side case for enacting such cuts is severely attenuated. Engen and Skinner partly attempt to take this approach, examining rates of growth in the six years following the Kennedy-Johnson tax cuts of 1964 and the seven years following the Reagan tax cuts of 1982. Both tax cuts involved across-the-board reductions in marginal income-tax rates, including significant cuts in the top marginal rate. In the Kennedy-Johnson period, Engen and Skinner (1996, 624) found "a robust 4.8 percent" average rate of growth. In the Reagan period, they found "a healthy 3.9 percent" average rate of growth.

However, they conclude that the extent to which tax cuts caused growth is "unclear," in part because of the different states of the economy in the periods before the two tax cuts were enacted (Engen and Skinner 1996, 624). In the two years preceding the Kennedy-Johnson tax cuts, they note, GDP growth averaged more than 5 percent, while in the two years before the Reagan tax cuts, the economy was in recession. Engen and Skinner also cite the presence of other undetermined factors that may account for differential rates of growth, and note as well that it is impossible to separate the presumed supply-side incentive effects of lowering marginal tax rates from the well-established demand-side effects of reducing taxes across the board. How much of the growth effect was owing to supply-side incentives to "work, save, and invest," and how much was simply the result of increasing aggregate demand by putting more money in the hands of consumers? The Engen and Skinner analysis of the Kennedy-Johnson and Reagan tax cuts provides no answer to this question, which is central to evaluating the merits of the supply-side case.

In reality, Engen and Skinner's impression that the evidence is "unclear" is partly because the data are resistant to theoretically inspired supply-side conclusions. If cuts in the top marginal rate were truly associated with high growth rates, then presumably we would have seen stronger growth following the Reagan tax cuts than following the Kennedy-Johnson cuts, since Reagan's cut in the top marginal rate was deeper. Instead, we see the reverse. If one abandons the supply-side hypothesis that lower top marginal income-tax rates are necessarily associated with higher growth rates, much of the lack of clarity disappears.

Having concluded that the results of the time-series analysis of growth rates are "mixed," Engen and Skinner undertake a review of several microeconomic analyses of the relation between taxation, on the one hand, and investment and hiring, on the other. On the basis of this analysis, Engen and Skinner estimate that a 5-percent across-the-board cut in marginal rates should produce a 2.5-percent reduction in overall tax burden (taxes as proportion of GDP), other things being equal. Engen and Skinner (1996, 625) argue that the "more formal econometric methods" embodied in this alternative approach provide clearer answers. But in reality this approach provides less persuasive answers than a straightforward empirical analysis might have done—a problem reflected in the numerous caveats they offer.

Engen and Skinner try to support their conclusions by reviewing cross-country regression studies of the relationship between taxation and growth. But these cross-country analyses suffer from several important problems, some of which Engen and Skinner acknowledge. First, the data on taxation and growth from many countries are unreliable. Second, the U.S. economy differs in key respects from other economies in the developed world (for example, the United States has a much larger domestic market and a much smaller percentage of GDP devoted to exports), to say nothing of the profound differences between the mature U.S. economy and economies in the developing world. Third, as Engen and Skinner point out, the cross-country analyses capture only the effect of overall tax burdens (taxes as a percentage of GDP), and thus present the same problem of sorting out presumed supply-side incentive effects from demand-side effects. Finally, given the questionable reliability of much of the original data, statistical tools such as reduced-cross-section regressions yield relatively weak evidence of any relationships. The conclusion of the cross-country studies seems to be that taxes in general have a slightly inhibiting effect on growth, but Engen and Skinner (1996, 633) acknowledge that "almost all results are fragile in cross-country growth regressions."

Reviewing literature on taxation in relation to investment and hiring, Engen and Skinner develop a speculative set of coefficients that, they suggest, might reflect the impact of marginal tax rates in inhibiting hiring, investment, and economic growth. On the basis of these speculative numbers, Engen and Skinner predict a very modest growth effect from a sizeable hypothetical cut in marginal rates. They estimate the growth effect of their 5-percent tax cut to be between 0.2 and 0.3 per-

cent of GDP annually (but they add that such growth effects can be significant as they are compounded over time).

Engen and Skinner acknowledge "the uncertainty inherent in nearly every parameter used in [their] calculations." In the end, their evidence for a growth effect from a cut in marginal tax rates is far more speculative, and the predicted growth effect much less robust, than one would imagine from the frequent citation of their study by supporters of the supply-side theory. Certainly, the carefully hedged Engen and Skinner study provides little substantiation for the sweeping generalizations that are prevalent in the policy debates over taxation.

Marginal Tax Rates and Investment

This brings us to our second main question: Do cuts in the top marginal personal income tax rate increase investment and hiring? In 2004, the combined Bush tax cuts put an estimated $69 billion in the hands of high-income taxpayers (those with an adjusted gross income of $100,000 or more), compared to the amount these taxpayers would have paid under pre-Bush administration tax law (Tax Policy Center, 2004).

Supply-side theorists predict increased employment growth from cuts in the top marginal income-tax rate primarily due to decisions by entrepreneurs. A small body of literature (Carroll et al. 2000a, 2000b, and 2001) is presented to support the claim that cuts in marginal income-tax rates stimulate more business investment and expansion, and therefore hiring, by entrepreneurs. This literature goes back to a single empirical study of IRS data on the tax returns of a few thousand taxpayers who filed Schedule Cs (sole proprietorship) in both 1985 and 1988—that is, both before and after the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA86), which enacted a major cut in marginal income-tax rates.

For taxation purposes, Schedule C businesses are "pass-through" entities. That is, they pay no corporate tax. Business gains or losses are directly passed through to the business owner's adjusted gross income, and are thus taxed at individual income-tax rates. Therefore, supply-siders theorize, reductions in the top marginal individual income-tax rate will influence the business decisions of sole proprietors: by putting more money in the hands of the business owner, one may increase the incentives for business expansion through investment and hiring. The tax impact on Schedule C businesses could be expected to be similar for Part-

nerships and Subchapter S corporations, which are also pass-through entities for tax purposes. Participants in all three entities might be loosely defined as "entrepreneurs."

This theory clearly lay behind the statement by President Bush, quoted earlier, defending cuts in the top marginal rate on the grounds that they would increase investment by small businesses. Moreover, Rosen (2004), also on Bush's Council of Economic Advisers, cited the literature based on this study (of which he was a co-author) in arguing that low marginal rates increase investment—a major reason he gave for making the Bush tax cuts permanent. Hubbard (2001) cited the same literature in his congressional testimony urging approval of the first Bush tax cuts.

Rosen and his colleagues (Carroll et al. 2000a) analyzed the returns of taxpayers who filed Schedule Cs in both 1985 and 1988. Between 1985 and 1988, TRA86 reduced the top marginal personal income tax rate from 50 percent to 28 percent. Carroll et al. argued that Schedule C filers in the higher tax brackets, who therefore benefited from the 1986 top marginal rate cut, were more likely to invest in 1988 than taxpayers in lower brackets who did not benefit from that cut. They concluded that high top marginal tax rates reduce investment by entrepreneurs, and that a lower top marginal rate increases investment.

This conclusion requires close scrutiny. First, the inferences drawn by Carroll et al. from their own data seem, at best, questionable. The analysis focused on a tiny sample of Schedule C filers. Of some 19,255 tax returns examined, only 3,480 taxpayers filed Schedule Cs in both 1985 and 1988, and therefore fit the criteria of the study. Notably, of this small sample of Schedule C businesses, nearly half (49 percent) made no investment in either 1985 or 1988. In addition, the vast majority (80 percent) failed to make an investment in at least one of the two years. Schedule Cs are frequently used as vehicles for "outside income" from such activities as consulting, speaking, or writing. As evidenced by the investment patterns in the Carroll et al. sample, many Schedule C businesses have little in the way of physical capital—other than a home office with a computer and printer. To expect major business expansion to flow from investments in this sector seems highly unlikely.

Second, and most strikingly, in 1988, after the substantial top marginal tax-rate cut of 1986, the number of Schedule C filers in the Carroll et al. sample who made any investment actually *declined* from 45 percent to 40 percent. This hardly adds up to a robust case for the

proposition that cuts in the top marginal income tax rate *increase* business investment.

Carroll et al. acknowledge that these entrepreneurial entities (Schedule C sole proprietorships, Partnerships, and Subchapter S corporations) account for a just small fraction—about 10 percent—of total business investment in the U.S. economy. This figure suggests that even a substantial increase in investment by such entities would have comparatively little impact on overall levels of business investment. A 10 percent increase in investment by Schedule C, Partnership, and Subchapter S filers would translate into just a 1 percent increase in total investment in the economy.

The study of hiring by Schedule Cs (Carroll et al. 2000b) yielded broadly similar results. Between 1985 and 1988, the percentage of high-income business owners who had any employees declined from 43 to 42 percent.

It is surprising that small-business behavior has been a centerpiece of the supply-side case. We should consider what a relatively small pool of taxpayers these high-income "entrepreneurs" represent. According to Internal Revenue Service estimates for 2001, only 21 percent of high-income taxpayers (adjusted gross income of $100,000 or more) filed Schedule Cs with their returns. Among the same upper-income taxpayers, Partnerships and Subchapter S corporations accounted for only another 9 percent of tax returns. That is, about 70 percent of the high-income taxpayers who benefited from the 2001–2003 cuts in the top marginal rate owned no small business entity. Even if the data of the Carroll et al. study supported the conclusions the authors draw, cuts in the top marginal income tax rate would be a very blunt and inefficient instrument for encouraging total business investment or employment in the economy as a whole, since such cuts mostly benefit taxpayers who do not own small businesses.

Given these realities, we would expect to see little investment or hiring effect from cuts in the top marginal income-tax rate, and this indeed proves to be the case.

Back to the Evidence

It is time to return to the straightforward analysis that Engen and Skinner partly attempted, and then rejected in the face of what they called its "mixed" and "unclear" results. Supply-side theorists claim that a low

top marginal income-tax rate leads to higher rates of investment, employment, and GDP growth. If this is indeed the case, then the historical record of U.S. economic performance should yield evidence of this pattern.

We can approach this question in a more definitive way than Engen and Skinner by greatly expanding the time-series data under examination. Engen and Skinner focused their analysis primarily on two small sets of time-series data, the six years following the Kennedy-Johnson tax cuts and the seven years following the Reagan tax cuts (using the two years preceding each episode as a baseline). A more complete data set from the post-World War II period can provide more comprehensive results. To test the supply-side theory, let us examine the interrelationship of key economic indicators for the 54 years between 1951 and 2004.

I have divided the years in period into three equal groupings—"top one-third," "middle one-third," and "bottom one-third"—according to the relative performance of each year in terms of:[1] real GDP growth, top marginal income-tax rates, real growth in personal consumption expenditures, real growth in gross nonresidential fixed investment,[2] employment growth, and unemployment rate.

The choice of 1951 as a starting point was dictated by the following considerations. First, individual income-tax rates were minimal before 1941, and economic growth during the years 1941–1951 were atypical due to the war and its immediate aftermath. Second, 1951–2004 covers a substantial portion of the post-World War II economic era, including three major episodes of tax cutting that affected the top marginal rate. Third, a starting point of 1951 permits us to study 54 individual years and to divide them into three equal-size 18-year groups for each of the relevant economic parameters.

Table 1 summarizes the performance of the U.S. economy in the 18 years when the top marginal income tax rate was lowest (41 percent or less). It shows the number of these years in which the economy reached the "top," "middle," or "bottom" performance level as to real GDP growth, employment growth, the unemployment rate, and real growth in business investment (gross nonresidential fixed investment).

The most critical question is the relationship between low top marginal income-tax rates and real growth in GDP. Supply-side economists have argued that a low top marginal tax rate would lead to high growth in employment and a low unemployment rate. Yet, of the 18 years in

Table 1. Economic performance in the 18 years with the lowest top marginal income-tax rate.*

	Real GDP Growth	Employment Growth	Unemployment Rate	Real Investment Growth**
Years in Top Third	2	2	5	7
Years in Middle Third	11	9	8	6
Years in Bottom Third	5	7	5	5

*Top marginal tax rate of 41 percent or less.
**Real growth in gross nonresidential fixed investment.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Income and Product Accounts; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics; author's calculations.

which the top marginal income tax rate was lowest, only two were also among the 18 years with the highest real GDP growth. And of the 18 years in which top marginal tax rates were lowest, only two were among the 18 years with the highest employment growth, and only five were among the 18 years with the lowest unemployment rate.

The main mechanism by which a low top marginal income tax rate is said to increase economic growth is by encouraging increased business investment. Yet of the 18 years in which the top marginal tax rate was lowest, only 7 were also among the 18 years with the highest real growth of business investment. Notably, six out of these seven years occurred during the period from 1994 through 1999, immediately after the top marginal income tax rate was *increased* under President Clinton in 1993, from 31.0 percent to 40.8 percent (see data appendix cited in n1 below).[3]

It should be noted that in any given year, exogenous conditions may have contributed to high or low performance on one or more of the major economic variables. But if the supply-side claim is valid, one would expect to see some reflection of the association between "low" top marginal income tax rates and "high" performance in the other economic indicators in a sample of this size. The data yield no such pattern.[4]

An Alternative Theory, and Some Evidence

What of the demand-side model that the supply-siders have sought to displace? According to this model, a main driver of economic growth is consumer demand. Since consumer spending comprises two-thirds of the American economy, it is obvious to demand-siders that a substantial increase in consumer spending is likely to produce a substantial increase in GDP. Demand-siders further argue that while levels of business investment may vary substantially from year to year, consumption is the principal factor that drives the business cycle. As James Tobin (2001a, 4) wrote, "Economy-wide recessions and booms reflect fluctuations in aggregate demand rather than in the economy's productive capacity." Demand-side policies, therefore, "work by stimulating or discouraging spending on goods and services" (ibid.). A demand-side stimulus to the economy can be applied via either fiscal policy (reducing taxes and/or increasing government spending) or monetary policy (reducing interest rates and increasing the supply of money). In either case, the focus is on producing an increased overall demand for goods and services within the economy.

Demand-siders have been skeptical of supply-side claims about the incentive effects of tax cuts for high-income taxpayers. As Tobin (2001b, 4) explained, supply-side

> income tax cuts [are] meant to embody incentives for more productive and innovative behavior. Unfortunately these cuts in tax rates also bring windfalls for behavior that already took place. For example, offering concessions for capital gains on future acquisitions of assets might be socially useful, while reducing taxes on gains realized on holdings bought years ago clearly is not. The test is whether the taxpayer must, in order to benefit, *change* his behavior in the desired supply-side direction. If yes, the touted incentives work. If no, the individual taxpayers' gains have to be defended otherwise, as deserved and just.

For demand-siders, the legitimate economic purpose for tax cuts at a time of economic downturn is "to stimulate the economy by putting more money in the pockets of consumers." This language comes from a statement signed by 100 economists (Economic Policy Institute 2001), including seven Nobel laureates, criticizing the Bush administration's supply-side tax-cut proposals. In characteristic demand-side terms, the statement described the Bush tax cuts as

> too large, too skewed to the wealthy, and [arriving] too late to head off a recession. . . .Instead of an ill-conceived tax cut, the federal government should use this year's surplus to finance a temporary, one-time tax cut or "dividend." We should send a sizeable check this summer to every American, providing the immediate help the faltering economy needs. Compared with the President's tax cut proposal, a temporary dividend would be more equitable, more efficient, and *more appropriately targeted at the economic problem*."

Behind this proposal was the demand-side view that an increase in personal consumption, the major component of aggregate demand, is not only a main driver of GDP growth, but also of business investment and employment. At the core of the demand-side approach is the belief that risk-averse business managers' investment and hiring behavior respond primarily to increased demand for their products and services. Greater consumer demand translates into higher levels of production. To attempt to stimulate business investment in the absence of a growing demand for products and services is, in effect, to "push on a string."

President Bush and his economic team agreed on the need for an economic stimulus in his first term. Part of the announced rationale for the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts was to expand aggregate demand so as to help the economy recover from recession; and, indeed, rates were cut across the board to increase aggregate demand (White House 2002). Yet Bush and the demand-siders differed on three counts. First, the demand-siders rejected the supply-side theory that supply creates demand—the notion that, "if you build it, they will come." Second, the demand-siders objected to the substantial cuts in the top marginal rate, which drained the Treasury of billions in revenue to provide what they saw as unneeded windfall tax benefits to the richest taxpayers. Third, the demand-siders objected to the permanence of the tax cuts, which were bound to result in large federal deficits. The demand-siders who signed the 2001 statement believed it was possible to stimulate consumption, and aggregate demand, via a temporary rather than a more permanent structural change in the tax code.

Whereas Engen and Skinner found "unclear" and "mixed" results for the supply-side hypothesis in their time-series data, a much clearer set of relationships emerges if we examine our more extensive data through the opposite end of the telescope— from a demand-side perspective. Data from the 54 years between 1951 and 2004 provide ample historical evidence for the chief assumption of the demand-side

model—namely, that high growth in consumption is strongly associated with "high" performance on the other major economic variables.

First, consider real growth in GDP. The relationship between high real growth in personal consumption expenditures and high real growth in GDP is to be expected; indeed, it is almost axiomatic. Since consumption amounts to about two-thirds of GDP, increases in consumption and GDP tend to coincide. Fifteen of the 18 years in which growth in personal consumption expenditures were at their highest level were also among the 18 years with the highest GDP growth, as shown in Table 2. Consumption is the largest component of GDP, and so when it grows rapidly, GDP grows with it.

The data also show a strong association between growth in personal consumption expenditures and growth in employment. Eleven of the 18 years in which growth in personal consumption expenditures were at their highest level were also among the 18 years with the highest employment growth. The data show a similar relationship between high real growth in consumption and a low unemployment rate. Half of the 18 years with the highest growth in personal consumption expenditures were also among the18 years with the lowest unemployment rate.

Finally, while the 54-year record shows little association between low top marginal income-tax rates and high rates of business investment, the data do yield a strong association between high growth in consumption and high growth in business investment. Two-thirds of the 18 years of the highest growth in personal consumption expenditures were also among the 18 top years for business investment growth.

Figure 1 below shows the differences between demand-side and supply side perspectives with respect to the key variables in the analysis.

Demand-Side vs. Supply-Side Tax Cuts in Practice

The patterns of economic growth in the U.S. economy between 1951 and 2004 tend to support the demand-side view that personal consumption has a stronger relationship to the performance of the other key economic variables than do the personal investment effects of a low top marginal income-tax rate. This becomes even clearer if we examine more closely the impact of the three major tax reduction programs enacted during the period—the demand-side tax cut of 1964 and the supply-side tax cuts of 1982 and 2003.

The Kennedy-Johnson tax cut of 1964 (often referred to as the

Table 2. Economic performance in the 18 years with the highest real growth in personal consumption expenditures.

	Real GDP Growth	Employment Growth	Unemployment Rate	Real Investment Growth*
Top One-Third	15	11	9	12
Middle One-Third	3	6	4	5
Bottom One-Third	0	1	5	1

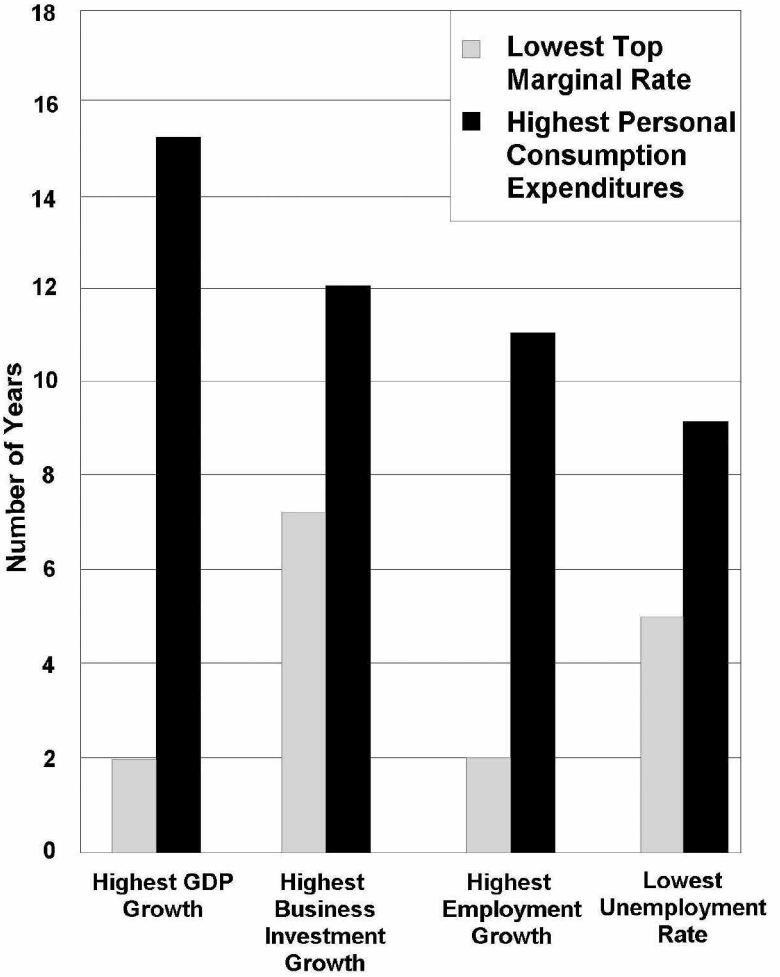
*Real growth in gross nonresidential fixed investment.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Income and Product Accounts; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics; author's calculations.

"Kennedy tax cut," since it was proposed by President Kennedy and enacted under President Johnson, following Kennedy's assassination) was designed on demand-side premises. Supply-side economists have sometimes cited the Kennedy tax cut as a precedent for the supply-side program, because it included a reduction of the top marginal income tax rate from 87 percent to 70 percent. But the Kennedy economic team, comprising leading neo-Keynesian economists of the day (including Tobin as an influential member in 1961–62), explicitly aimed to expand "aggregate demand." That is, they sought to put more money in the hands of consumers, whose spending would then stimulate higher GDP growth and stronger employment. The demand-side nature of the program can be seen in the structure of the tax reduction. The bulk of the tax cut went to middle- and lower-income taxpayers. *Nearly 60 percent of the tax cut went to taxpayers in the lower 85 percent of the income distribution,* according to contemporary estimates by the congressional Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation (Orszag 2001).

By contrast, the Reagan tax cut implemented in 1982, and the Bush tax cuts fully implemented in 2003, were largely focused on the supply-side objective of reducing the top marginal rate paid by top-bracket taxpayers. Unlike the Kennedy cut, both the Reagan and Bush tax cuts put more money in the hands of taxpayers with the highest incomes.

Figure 1. Correlation between growth in GDP, business investment, employment, and low marginal tax rates vs. high personal consumption expenditures.



According to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office (1988), *half of Reagan's tax cut went to households in the top 17.5 percent of the income distribution; the vast majority of households (82.5 percent) split the other half.* Moreover, as we have seen, Reagan's tax-cutting program provided substantial additional reductions in the top marginal rate paid by top-bracket taxpayers in 1987 and 1988. The Bush tax cuts were targeted

even more clearly to the upper end of the income scale. The Bush program included a reduction of the top marginal tax rate and substantial reductions in the rates paid on dividends, capital gains, and estate taxes. By 2004, according to the Tax Policy Center (2004), *over half (57.5 percent) of the combined Bush tax cuts went to taxpayers with the top 12.1 percent of incomes; the remainder of the tax cut (42.5 percent) was divided among the lower 87.9 percent of households.*

The Kennedy tax-cutting program resulted in immediate rate reductions in 1964 and 1965. Reagan's tax program included rate cuts in 1982, 1987, and 1988. Bush's tax program brought a substantial cut in rates in 2003. The data show that the Kennedy demand-side tax cuts were clearly associated with stronger performance on the major economic variables than were the supply-side tax cuts under Reagan or Bush:

- The Kennedy tax cuts were associated with an immediate jump in GDP growth in the two years they went into effect (5.8 percent in 1964 and 6.4 percent in 1965).
- The Reagan and Bush tax cuts were associated with middle or low rates of GDP growth in the four years they went into effect (–1.9 percent in 1982, 3.4 percent in 1987, 4.1 percent in 1988, and 3.0 percent in 2003).
- The Kennedy tax cuts were associated with very high growth in business investment (11.9 percent in 1964 and 17.4 percent in 1965).
- The Reagan and Bush tax cuts were associated with middle or low rates of business investment growth in each of the four years they went into effect (–3.8 percent in 1982, –0.1 percent in 1987, 5.2 percent in 1988, and 3.3 percent in 2003).

Possibly a major source of the differential in performance was the relative effect of the tax-cut programs on consumption. The Kennedy tax cuts had the strongest consumption effects:

- The Kennedy tax cuts were associated with high growth in personal consumption in the years they went into effect (6.0 percent in 1964 and 6.3 percent in 1965).
- By contrast, the Reagan and Bush tax cuts were associated with middle or low levels of personal consumption growth in the years they went into effect (1.4 percent in 1982, 3.3 percent in 1987, 4.1 percent in 1988, and 3.3 percent in 2003).

The Kennedy demand-side tax cut provided an illustration of what economists sometimes call a "virtuous cycle." In 1965, the year of the tax cut's full implementation, personal consumption expenditures grew by 6.3 percent in real terms, and business investment (gross nonresidential fixed investment) grew 17.4 percent in real terms, accompanied by strong growth in employment. By contrast, there was little evidence of a virtuous cycle in operation in the years of the Reagan and Bush supply-side tax cuts. Growth in the centerpiece of the supply-side program—business investment—was typically in the low to middle range in the years of the tax cuts. This relatively weak investment growth was accompanied by lackluster growth in GDP and employment.

A case could be made that the Reagan and Bush tax cuts did not provide a substantial increase in aggregate demand because they put less than half of the tax-cut money into the hands of the middle and lower-income consumers who were most likely to spend it. Growth in personal consumption was typically in the low to middle range in the year of each Reagan and Bush tax cut, while growth in personal consumption was in the top range in the two years of the Kennedy tax cuts. And as we have seen, GDP growth in each Kennedy tax-cut year was in the highest range, while GDP growth in the year of each Reagan and Bush cut was invariably in the low to middle range.

What if there was a lag in the immediate economic effects of the tax cuts, so that their impact was not fully felt until the year following their enactment? The data show a similar pattern with regard to GDP growth in the follow-on years:

- The Kennedy tax cuts were associated with very high GDP growth in each of the years after they went into effect (6.4 percent in 1965 and 6.5 percent in 1966).
- The Reagan and Bush tax cuts were associated with substantially lower levels of GDP growth than the Kennedy tax cuts in each of the years after they went into effect (4.5 percent in 1983, 4.1 percent in 1988, 3.5 percent in 1989, and 4.4 percent in 2004).
- The Kennedy tax cuts were associated with high business investment growth in the year following each cut (17.4 percent in 1965 and 12.5 percent in 1966).
- The Reagan tax cuts were associated with low to middle levels of investment growth in the three years immediately following implementation (–1.3 percent in 1983, 5.2 percent in 1988, 5.6 percent in 1989). In 2004, a high investment level—10.5 percent—can best be

understood as a response to the Bush administration's one-year, 50-percent "bonus depreciation" tax deduction for all business investment in 2004. Corporate taxpaying entities that account for roughly 90 percent of all business investment in the economy were primarily responsible for the high rate of business investment in 2004. It would be hard to attribute this investment level to a response by pass-through business owners to the 2003 reduction in the top marginal personal income tax rate, since these business owners account for only 10 percent of all business investment.

Again, the years immediately following the Kennedy tax cut were associated with much higher personal consumption growth than the years immediately following the Reagan and Bush tax cuts:

- The Kennedy tax cuts were associated with high personal consumption growth in the year following implementation (6.3 percent in 1965 and 5.7 percent in 1966).
- The Reagan and Bush tax cuts were associated with high personal consumption growth in only one of the 4 years following implementation (5.7 percent in 1983 vs. 4.1 percent in 1988, 2.8 percent in 1989, and 3.8 percent in 2004).

In short, the historical record provides little to no support for supply-side economists' claim that cuts in the top marginal income tax have, in recent memory, caused improved performance, whether measured in GDP growth, employment growth, or investment growth. By contrast, there is substantial evidence for the demand-side view that high personal consumption expenditures (the largest component of aggregate demand) are associated with high growth in GDP, employment, and investment. The empirical evidence for the effectiveness of demand-side measures in stimulating economic growth remains strong; empirical evidence for positive growth effects of supply-side cuts in the top marginal income tax rate has not been found.

While it could be argued that economic growth, though unimpressive following supply-side tax cuts, might have been lower without them—largely because of the (albeit somewhat muted) demand-side effects of these cuts—neither the existing literature nor the historical record provides evidence to support the theory that cuts in the top marginal rate had a significant positive growth effect. The central claim of the supply-side school—that low top marginal income-tax rates lead

to increased investment, employment, and GDP growth—is not supported by the empirical evidence. Given that cuts in the top marginal income-tax rate have also increased income inequality—and have resulted in large federal deficits—history's verdict on the supply-side program is likely to be unfavorable.

NOTES

1. Sources for data are as follows. GDP growth, growth in real personal consumption expenditures, real business investment growth (real growth in gross nonresidential fixed investment): U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Income and Product Accounts. Employment growth and unemployment rate: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Top marginal income tax rates: Tax Policy Center. For each statistical series, the author classified the 54 years into three 18-year groups described as "top", "middle" and "bottom" performance levels. See data appendix at <http://www.futureofamericandemocracyfoundation.org/chart.html>.
2. Figures for "gross" nonresidential fixed investment provide a better index of the behavioral effect of tax policy changes than the "net" figures, which include depreciation. Gross figures reflect the actual amount of money devoted to business investment in a given year.
3. One possible factor in the 1994–99 investment boom was that the Clinton-era tax program, which included an increase in the top marginal income tax rate, helped to reduce the federal deficit from 1993 onward, and began producing growing surpluses in 1998, as overall economic growth and tax revenue increased. The reduction in the deficit and the subsequent surpluses added substantially to total national saving. This increased level of saving made more money available for investment.
4. A study by William G. Gale and Samara R. Potter (2002) examines the federal tax burden, top income-tax rate, federal spending as percent of GDP, and average per-capita GDP growth rates for long periods in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They find no consistent correlation between low taxes and per-capita GDP growth. In particular, they note that the period 1870–1912, when there was no income tax, had the same average per-capita GDP growth (2.2 percent) as the period 1947–1999, when there were substantial income taxes.

REFERENCES

Bush, George W. 2001a. "Remarks by the President to Women Business Leaders," March 1. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/03/20010320-2.html>

Bush, George W. 2001b. "Remarks by the President at Electronic Industries Alliance Government Industry Dinner," May 8. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/05/20010509.html>

Bush, George W. 2003a. "President Welcomes Treasury Secretary John Snow to Cabinet: Remarks by the President at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Treasury Secretary John Snow, The Cash Room, The Treasury Building," February 7. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030207-1.html>

Bush, George W. 2003b. "President's Remarks to the Latino Coalition," February 26. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/200302263.html>

Carroll, Robert, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, Mark Rider, and Harvey S. Rosen. 2000a. "Entrepreneurs, Income Taxes, and Investment." In *Does Atlas Shrug? The Economic Consequences of Taxing the Rich*, ed. Joel Slemrod. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Carroll, Robert, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, Mark Rider, and Harvey S. Rosen. 2000b. "Income Taxes and Entrepreneurs' Use of Labor." *Journal of Labor Economics* 18(2): 324–51.

Carroll, Robert, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, Mark Rider, and Harvey S. Rosen. 2001. "Personal Income Taxes and the Growth of Small Firms." In *Tax Policy and the Economy*, vol. 15, ed. James Poterba. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Congressional Budget Office. 1988. *The Changing Distribution of Federal Taxes: A Closer Look at 1980*.

Congressional Budget Office. 2004a. *Effective Federal Tax Rates: 1979–2001*.

Congressional Budget Office. 2004b. Effective *Federal Tax Rates Under Current Law, 2001 to 2014*.

Economic Policy Institute. 2001. "Economists' Statement." Accessed May 4, 2005. <http://www.epinet.org/press_releases/economiststatement042001.pdf>

Engen, Eric, and Jonathan Skinner. 1996. "Taxation and Economic Growth." *National Tax Journal* 49(4): 617–42.

Feldstein, Martin. 1986. "Budget Deficits, Tax Rules, and Real Interest Rates." Working Paper 1970. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Feldstein, Martin, and Douglas W. Elmendorf. 1989a. "Budget Deficits, Tax Incentives, and Inflation: A Surprising Lesson from the 1983–1984 Recovery." Working Paper No. 2819. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Feldstein, Martin, and Douglas W. Elmendorf. 1989b. "Budget Deficits, Tax Incentives, and Inflation: A Surprising Lesson from the 1983–1984 Recovery." In *Tax Policy and the Economy*, vol. 3, ed. Lawrence H. Summers. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Gale, William G., and Peter R. Orszag. 2004. "Bush Administration Tax Policy: Effects on Long-Term Growth." *Tax Notes*, October 18: 415–23.

Gale, William G., and Samara R. Potter. 2002. "An Economic Evaluation of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001." *National Tax Journal* 15(1): 133–86.

Internal Revenue Service. 2005. "Selected Returns and Forms Filed or To Be Filed by Type During Specified Calendar Years 1980–2005." Accessed May 4, 2005. <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/05al22sr.xls>

Hassett, Kevin A., and R. Glenn Hubbard. 2001. *Transition Costs of Fundamental Tax Reform*. Washington: AEI Press.

Hubbard, R. Glenn. 2004. "The Second-Term Economy." *Wall Street Journal*, November 9.

Orszag, Peter R. 2001. "The Bush Tax Cut Is Now about the Same Size as the Reagan Tax Cuts." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Accessed April 19, 2005. <http://www.cbpp.org/4-19-01tax.htm>

Rosen, Harvey S. 2004. "The Case for Making the Tax Cuts Permanent." White House, May 10. Accessed May 4, 2005. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/nta-spring.html>

Tax Policy Center. 2004. "EGTRRA, JCWA, and JGTRRA: Distribution of Individual Income, Corporate, and Estate Tax Change by Cash Income Class, 2004," Table T04-0051. Accessed April 15, 2005. <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/TaxModel/tmdb/TMTemplate.cfm?DocID=625&topic2ID=40&topic3ID=81&DocTypeID=1>

Tobin, James. 2001a. "Monetary Policy." In *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*, ed. David R. Henderson. Accessed May 4, 2005. <http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/MonetaryPolicy.html>

Tobin, James. 2001b. "Fiscal Policy: Its Macroeconomics in Perspective," Cowles Foundation Discussion Paper No. 1301. Cowles Foundation for Research in Economics, Yale University.

U.S. Congress. 2001. "The Economic Outlook and Tax Policy." Hearing before the Joint Economic Committee, May 23. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

White House. 2002. *Economic Report of the President*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

INDEX TO VOL. 17 (2005)